

Solidarity

Issue No. 207 / May 2026

\$3/\$5



Fund
Disabled Lives
NOT BOMBS

STOP LABOR'S CUTS SCRAP THE NUCLEAR SUBS **FUND NDIS AND HOUSING NOT WAR**

PALESTINE

Standing up for right to
protest against repression

NDIS

Stopping cuts and
free market disaster

UNIONS

Britain's general strike
100 years on

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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Solidarity No. 207

May 2026
ISSN 1835-6834
Responsibility for election
comment is taken by James
Supple, 410 Elizabeth St, Surry
Hills NSW 2010.
Printed by El Faro, Newtown
NSW.

SUBSCRIBE TO SOLIDARITY MAGAZINE

Solidarity is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—pay by credit card online at www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe or send in this form with a cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

5 issues—\$15 One year (12 issues)—\$36 Two years (24 issues)—\$65

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Cheques payable to ISO Publishing. Send to PO Box 375 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

Things they say

It's not at the top of my to-do list right now. I'm focused on other matters.

Chris Bowen says climate change isn't a priority for him, despite being the Climate Change and Energy Minister

We've got to be honest with people, and we can't provide NDIS-like services at the state level

NSW Premier Chris Minns says not to expect good quality disability services for those kicked off the NDIS

We took over the ship, we took over the cargo, we took over the oil. It's a very profitable business. Who would have thought we were doing that? We are like pirates.

Donald Trump of the capture of an Iranian ship by US Navy

I am not under any pressure whatsoever... You know who is under time pressure they [Iran] are... because if they don't get their oil moving, their whole oil infrastructure is going to explode... they have a matter of days before that event takes place

Donald Trump on 24 April. We're still waiting

The biggest risk you can take is one you don't know you were taking.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent channels the "unknown unknowns" of former US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, in trying to convince reporters that Iran could hit European cities with a nuclear bomb.

President Trump has a different way of calculating percentages. There's two ways of calculating percentages. If you have a \$600 drug and you reduce it to \$10, that's a 600 per cent reduction.

US Health and human services secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. reveals his credentials for the job

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Rinehart's jet fuel for Hanson

GINA RINEHART, Australia's richest person worth over \$38 billion, has thrown her weight behind racist Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (ONP).

In 2012 Rinehart, no stranger to racism herself, said, "Australians need to work harder to compete with Africans who will labour for less than \$2 a day."

Pauline Hanson presents herself as a "battler" but her billionaire backer has a vicious hatred of workers' rights. Rinehart wants to lower the minimum wage, lower taxes on mining companies like her own and is a big fan of Donald Trump.

After backing Peter Dutton's failed campaign in 2022 and channelling over \$500,000 to the Liberals, Rinehart has now turned to Hanson.

Hanson has been getting plenty of free flights on Rinehart's private jets to cities and towns across Australia, not even bothering to properly declare most of them to Parliament, as required for gifts valued at over \$300, until exposed by the media.

Not content with that, Rinehart has now gifted One Nation a new Cirrus G7 private jet of its own, valued at \$1.3 million.

Rinehart is even paying for Hanson's wardrobe, with *The Guardian* reporting that she "owns at least half a dozen Kidman and Co shirts" produced by one of Rinehart's companies "that she now wears on high rotation". In April, Rinehart held a fund-raiser dinner for Hanson on her private jet as it circled Sydney.

Guests paid \$15,000 for the privilege. Apparently, there were also "other means of donating on the night" to ONP.

Banks' home loan profits

THE BIG four banks are making an average of \$228,900 profit on every home loan, Australia Institute research shows. Last year they made \$43 billion in profits, with home loans accounting for around 40 per cent of them.

In the first year of a home loan alone, the profit on it averages \$11,110 or \$214 a week. The surge in housing prices and interest rate rises have left mortgage holders struggling—but the banks are doing just fine.

Iran war cost \$2.5 billion a day

DONALD TRUMP'S war on Iran cost the US over \$2.5 billion a day in its opening stages. Harvard University's Linda Bilmes has estimated it cost \$22 billion over its first three to five days.

Most of the costs were from missile defence systems used to intercept Iranian missiles and drones.

The US used more Patriot missiles, one of its key missile defence weapons, in the first four days of the war than it sent to Ukraine over the last four years.

The Pentagon said that the cost had reached \$34 billion by the end of April, in testimony to the House armed services committee.

The head of the UN's humanitarian agency, Tom Fletcher, said this amount of money could have been used to save 87 million lives worldwide in countries facing poverty and war.

The Trump administration is asking Congress for a military budget of an obscene \$2 trillion for next year—up over 40 per cent.

Israel killing 'like we haven't since 1967'

ISRAEL is killing Palestinians in the West Bank at a level "not seen since 1967", when Israel invaded and occupied the area, according to a senior military figure. Avi Bluth, head of the Israeli army's Central Command told a closed meeting that looser rules of engagement were allowing soldiers to shoot more unarmed Palestinians, *Ha'aretz* reported.

He took credit for issuing these orders allowing more killing.

"In three years, we have killed 1500 terrorists", he claimed, though even he admitted 30 per cent of them were unarmed.

Showing a classic racist colonial attitude, he explained this was because "The Arabs understand that 'if someone rises to kill you, kill him first' is part of the rules of the Middle East".

He admitted to double standards where Israeli soldiers shoot to kill Palestinians who throw stones at soldiers, saying they had killed 42 of them in 2025 alone and describing this as "terrorism". But Israeli settlers who throw stones at the army when they fail to support their land grabs do not get the same treatment, he said.

No justice for Indigenous people under NT's police state



Indigenous activist Mililma May

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE in the Northern Territory are facing a "police state", Mililma May, Danggalaba Kulumbiringin Tiwi writer and community organiser, told *Solidarity's* Keep Left conference in April.

Darwin is heavily surveilled with security cameras, police and private security staff. May said that "Police Public Security Officers have just been created to carry out armed patrols of buses and shopping centres in Darwin. They are a new quasi-police body.

"When I did my research into how many police officers there are in the Northern Territory, and which state and jurisdiction has the most police officers, the Northern Territory ranks highest by far, with about 505 police officers per 100,000 people."

This is more than double the figure in SA, the next highest with 235 per 100,000 people. The population of the NT is 30 per cent Indigenous.

May said, "This number of police doesn't even include the private security, the PPSO officers and the TSD [public order unit, the Territory Safety Division]."

She also discovered that, "Darwin city council has 138 CCTV cameras that all have facial recognition technology".

The Albanese government further granted the NT, at the request of the Chief Minister, exemption from civil aviation legislation to allow police drones to surveil Alice Springs 24/7.

Another example of the police state targeting Indigenous people has been the evacuation of residents from Naiyu and Palumpa in response to flooding and Cyclone Narelle. This has resulted in about 400 people, almost all of them Indigenous, being "shipped into showgrounds and big compounds... that are all policed", May said.

"Everyone wears wristbands and they're not allowed to leave or enter the facility without signing in or out," she said. Security guards routinely search people on entry and some visitors have been refused access. May said, "These are people escaping the climate crisis and [they] have been shipped into Darwin since January."

Nationally, there have been more than 630 Aboriginal deaths in custody since the 1991 Royal Commission. This is increasing as the rate of imprisonment surges, jumping by 10 per cent in the year to June 2025. Since the NT Intervention began in 2007 levels of deprivation have massively increased.

Despite this brutal police occupation of the NT and the apartheid conditions forced upon Indigenous people, "in response to the deaths in custody there has been a movement building... and there's deep solidarity happening between Blackfellas regardless of what happened in the referendum" on the Voice to Parliament, May said.

Lorna Macritchie

EDITORIAL

Labor's budget failure on cost of living and its racist policies no antidote to One Nation

DESPITE LABOR'S boasts, there is nothing fair about its budget. The \$250 tax offset for workers is a joke. It won't be offered until 2028 and within inflation heading to 5 per cent, real wages are falling even further behind.

The changes to capital gains tax and negative gearing might raise more tax income, but they won't significantly change housing affordability. Labor could be expanding public housing to ensure there were houses for everyone, but it prefers to leave housing in the hands of profit-hungry developers.

The NDIS will be cut, but the increase in military spending is astounding. The money that could help close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage is being squandered on missiles to prepare for war on China.

Gas corporations will keep raking in billions in windfall profits but Labor's concern to run Australian capitalism will only mean more cost of living pain for workers and the poor.

Jim Chalmers' budget speech tried to pretend that Australian has nothing to do with Trump's war on Iran, but Australia is not a neutral bystander. Labor is providing material support and intelligence via Pine Gap and North West Cape for Trump's war.

Labor is also spending \$5.3 million this year to keep the CFMEU under government Administration, but predictably our union leaders have welcomed Labor's budget as a "budget of fairness for workers and young people". That has to be turned around. Any pay increase less than 5 per cent will be a further cut in real wages.

It is going to take a fight to stop Labor's cuts to the NDIS. Hundreds of disabled people and supporters turned out for the day of protest against the cuts on 9 May. We will need more demonstrations raising the demand for "welfare not warfare".

Thousands of people will be protesting to end the genocide and Free Palestine on Nakba Day in May. We need to connect the fight for Palestine to the fight against military spending and Australia's ties with US imperialism.

In July activists will converge on Pine Gap, the US spy base near Alice Springs. That convergence, combined with protests in the capital cities, will be an opportunity to connect with Indigenous demands for land, expose



Labor's complicity with genocide in Gaza and demand an end to ties with US imperialism.

One Nation win: A warning

One Nation's win in the Farrer by-election, its first win in the House of Representatives, is a warning that rage at the cost of living can be pulled to right and feed racism.

As in the South Australian election, One Nation's surge in Farrer came at the expense of the Liberals, with their vote collapsing to just 12.4 per cent. Election analyst Antony Green says "there are another two dozen seats" that One Nation can win in rural and regional areas.

Labor is trying to present itself as a defence against the far-right politics of One Nation and the Coalition. But Albanese has no answers to the housing or the cost of living crisis and is actively fuelling the racism.

Both Albanese and Liberal leader Angus Taylor have parroted the lies that immigration is to blame for the housing crisis. Albanese boasts that he has cut immigration by 40 per cent.

The Liberals are openly echoing One Nation, with Taylor demanding migrants who "reject our core values" and people from "bad countries" are kept out.

Taylor has denounced the 1300 Palestinian refugees from Gaza that made it to Australia as "a clear risk to our country".

Albanese has fed the demonisa-

Above: Pauline Hanson alongside One Nation's new MP for Farrer David Farley and Barnaby Joyce Photo: David Farley

tion of Muslims with his bluster against the returning former ISIS brides and their children. Labor's Trump-like deportation and visa-ban laws further fuel the anti-refugee and anti-migrant racism.

Far from being any defence against One Nation, this racism from the top is legitimising Pauline Hanson's bigotry.

To effectively fight One Nation, we need to take on Labor's racist arguments. The movement for Palestine has an important role to play in standing up to the racism that presents Muslims and Arabs as some kind of threat.

We also need to say loud and clear that it is the bosses and the rich who are responsible for the cost of living crisis, not migrants

That means building struggles for higher wages, to fund services and oppose cutbacks.

In March, 40,000 striking teachers in Victoria rallied to demand an end to overwork and for higher pay. Workers at eight councils in Melbourne held a one-day strike in early May, demanding an initial 10 per cent pay rise this year.

Queensland rail workers have imposed industrial bans that have forced the cancellation of hundreds of train services. University staff at UTS and University of Tasmania have recently taken strike action for real wage increases.

To fan the flames of resistance, we more socialists in every struggle, to link the struggles for wages and against Labor's cuts to the struggle against the whole capitalist system of racism and war.

.....
Both Albanese and Angus Taylor have parroted the lies that immigration is to blame for the housing crisis

Court victory halts Minns' offensive against Palestine movement—now turn the tide

By Adam Adelpour

THE COURT decision striking down NSW Premier Chris Minns' anti-protest laws in April was a victory for the Palestine movement and all those who stood up and defied them.

Following the outrage about the brutal police violence during the Isaac Herzog protest, it was the second time in six months that Minns' anti-protest laws were struck down as unconstitutional.

The decision is a further setback for Minns and Albanese's efforts to crack down on the Palestine movement in the aftermath of the Bondi attack.

Now all the protest charges over the Herzog rally must be dropped. At least 27 protesters face charges.

The fight against repression is not over either. We still face the threat of the NSW slogan ban and repression in universities and workplaces.

Globalise the Intifada ban

The Queensland government has banned Palestine protest slogans "From the River to the Sea" and "Globalise the Intifada". Twenty protesters were arrested in April for defying the ban as part of a weekend of action.

Minns also wants to ban the phrase "Globalise the Intifada". But this has stalled due to resistance in Queensland and NSW.

There will be a constitutional challenge to the Queensland slogan ban in the High Court. Minns says if the laws are struck down in Queensland "it means we can't pursue them in NSW".

But we can't just rely on the courts. Minns fears resistance. He says that if the ban is introduced and then overturned "we're in a worse position than where we were" because opposition to the ban would popularise the slogan.

This is all the more reason to continue to use the chant and refuse to accept that support for intifada is hate speech or a call to violence.

Intifada is the Arabic word for "uprising" and refers to courageous episodes of Palestinian resistance to occupation. The call to Globalise the Intifada is a call for a global movement of solidarity with Palestine. This means strikes, protests and boycotts directed against our own government's



Above: Chris Minns has retreated on plans to ban the slogan "Globalise the Intifada" for now
Photo: Solidarity

complicity, with the spirit of defiance shown by the Palestinians.

Some groups—like the Palestine Action Group in Sydney and Free Palestine Melbourne—have been reluctant to defend the slogan because they say it has not been widely used. But the chant has indeed been raised—and other chants celebrating "intifada" are common at rallies.

Even without the laws in place the movement still faces repression and needs to meet it with resistance.

The Murdoch media led a hysterical campaign against a Stop the War on Palestine forum titled "Why it's right to say Globalise the Intifada" throughout April and May.

Shamefully, City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore caved and cancelled the venue booking the night before the event was scheduled.

But the forum went ahead in a park in defiance. The 140 people in attendance far exceeded the capacity of the original venue. NSW Greens MP Jenny Leong addressed the crowd saying, "They want to ban Globalise the Intifada because they are genuinely terrified if we get together and mobilise and organise they will lose their power."

"We know with bad laws, there's only one thing to do with them and that is to break them."

Royal Commission

The antisemitism Royal Commission hearings that have now begun will be used to justify more repression.

Jillian Segal, arch Zionist and the government's special envoy to combat antisemitism, gave evidence at the hearings, saying antisemitism had become "almost fashionable". But it is the Zionist pretense that all Jews support the Israeli terror state that feeds antisemitism.

The broader ruling class offensive on Palestine continues. In May, Sydney Uni issued disciplinary letters to two students. They claimed it was "potentially antisemitic" to condemn apartheid, to call for the boycott of Israeli universities, and to display the "Handala" cartoon—a drawing of 10-year-old Palestinian refugee.

Building resistance is urgent. The genocide in Gaza continues, with Israel still restricting food and medical deliveries and killing at least 850 Palestinians since the "ceasefire" started.

According to the UN the first four months of 2026 have seen the most violent start to a year since monitoring of settler violence and harassment in the West Bank began.

This is why we need to Globalise the Intifada. Australia is complicit in the genocide and is directly involved in Trump and Israel's war on Iran.

It will require real rebellion to stop the shipments of F-35 parts to Israel, Bisalloy armoured steel going to IDF vehicles, the Pine Gap intelligence sharing with Israel and to cut all the ties to Israel.

The fight for sanctions on Israel requires fighting for free speech and the right to protest as well.

.....
The antisemitism Royal Commission hearings will be used to justify more repression

Labor's austerity budget won't fix housing crisis

By James Supple

LABOR'S BUDGET delivers massive cuts to the NDIS and does next to nothing to help workers facing a new cost of living crisis and higher unemployment.

Instead Labor has again sided with gas companies and big business, avoiding pressure to make them pay more tax.

The cuts to the NDIS total an enormous \$37.8 billion over four years. In the budget's final year they cut 10 per cent of NDIS spending, kicking 160,000 people off the scheme. This is a brutal measure that will destroy people's lives.

Workers are under pressure as inflation surges due to Donald Trump's war on Iran.

But the only new direct cost of living relief is a \$250 tax credit—and no one will see it until the middle of 2028.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers says the government has to be "responsible" and avoid more spending because this would only increase inflation.

Yet Labor is boasting of the "biggest peacetime increase" ever in military spending, up to 3 per cent of GDP within seven years, in line with the surge in arms spending taking place in Europe to appease Trump.

Over the next four years military spending will rise by \$14 billion, with \$53 billion more budgeted over the next decade. That's on top of massive increases announced two years ago, bringing the total surge to \$117 billion over ten years.

All up military spending will be \$63.4 billion in the next year alone.

The obscene cost of the nuclear submarines is just one element of the money being wasted on weapons. They will drain almost \$100 billion from the budget over the next decade.

Another \$20 billion is going on new warships, \$12 billion on drones, and \$36 billion on missiles.

Offshore detention on Nauru also cost \$1 billion last year, to torture just over 100 people dumped there.

This is all money that could be going into services or tackling the cost of living. The cuts to the NDIS equate to two-thirds of the cost of a single submarine.

JobSeeker payments are still leaving people deep in poverty, at just 42



Above: Council workers in Melbourne fighting for wage rises—but there's no real help in the budget for the cost of living Photo: Solidarity

per cent of the minimum wage. The increase in military spending alone could almost cover the cost of lifting JobSeeker to 90 per cent of the pension rate, as recommended by welfare groups.

And the budget's "spending restraint" includes keeping in place the Morrison government's "Job Ready Graduates" system of high student fees and lower university funding, and continued pressure on the public service.

Housing

House prices have exploded at rates far beyond wage rises as a result of changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax introduced by John Howard's Liberal government in the 1990s.

Labor has finally acted on this—but its changes won't fix the housing crisis. Chalmers has admitted "prices will continue to grow" just "more slowly" by about 2 per cent less over several years.

Instead of getting rid of negative gearing for existing properties completely, it is allowing anyone who already has an investment property to keep using it.

This means the full impact of the change will take years.

The cost to the government of these handouts to property investors has been around \$16 billion a year. But the changes will raise just \$1 billion in their first year.

If Labor had gone for serious

change it could have spent the billions of dollars raised on building new homes. Instead the only new housing spending is \$110 million for British and US troops here under the AUKUS deal, alongside \$500 million a year for suburban infrastructure.

Increasing taxes on discretionary trusts, a way for rich families to avoid tax, is a positive step but won't start for another two years. It will eventually recoup \$4.5 billion a year.

Labor could have gone far further in taxing the rich. Australian billionaires increased their wealth by \$10.5 billion in the last year, according to Oxfam. They can afford to pay up.

It has once again failed to fix the Petroleum Resource Rent Tax on gas companies. It will collect less than \$2 billion next year and even less after that despite their massive profits.

Gas companies stand to make windfall profits of between an \$28 billion and \$57 billion this year due to the price surge following the war in Iran, the Green Institute estimates. That's on top of the billions they normally rake in.

A 25 per cent tax on gas exports could raise \$17 billion a year in revenue, according to the Australia Institute.

This is more than enough to restore all the cuts to the NDIS on its own.

Corporations and the rich have nothing to worry about from Labor. The only way to reverse the pressures on working class people is to fight.

.....
Labor is boasting of the "biggest peacetime increase" ever in military spending

Disability services we need won't come from market profiteers

By an ASU member

THE NDIS was introduced in 2013 with bipartisan political support.

Behind the talk about human rights, choice and control was the prediction by the Productivity Commission that without change, the old system would have ended up costing more. This turned out to be wrong, but it secured the backing of big business, which believed that introducing market competition would constrain costs and drive innovation in a new disability system.

The Productivity Commission seriously underestimated the scale of unmet need and the NDIS has grown to support many people who have never received support before.

This improved access and funding is something our rulers cannot tolerate. They would prefer that disabled people are shut in their homes and rely on unpaid carers than spend the money necessary to support them.

Instead of containing costs, unleashing private providers into disability care has led to about \$3.7 billion a year of waste through fraud and “inadvertent non-compliance”, according to the NDIA.

Even if outright fraud is reduced, the market model is inherently wasteful. Overcharging and over-servicing are rife in the fee-for-service NDIS market.

Plan managers, whose sole purpose is to pay providers from NDIS participants’ budgets, cost the government about \$650 million a year.

Most people on the NDIS have cognitive impairments or difficulties with executive function, and their carers often can’t cope. This makes them vulnerable to predatory providers.

The peak body for providers, National Disability Services (NDS), has urged its members to embrace the government’s NDIS reforms. No doubt NDS is supporting cuts in exchange for more funding certainty and reduced competition from unregistered providers, especially in supported independent living (SIL), where services will be commissioned by government instead of a “free-for-all market” as Butler put it.

Disaster for workers

As the big providers line up behind the Albanese government, they are also turning the screws on their workers.

The NDIS has been a disaster for



workers’ rights. Disability workers often work without pay when the individual budgets of the people they care for run out, rather than leaving them without support.

The NDIS Review noted that, “Three out of four NDIS workers are employed either part-time or casually.” Staff turnover was 24 per cent in 2024, according to the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU). This means that NDIS participants struggle to find and keep good support.

Workers and the disabled people they support share a common interest in fighting for better services. Disability activists need to build stronger alliances with trade unions, which have the collective power to stop these cuts.

Shamefully, the Health Services Union has come out in support of the government’s reforms. But union members are passing motions in their workplaces and demanding that union leaders campaign against the cuts. The changes mean pay and conditions of workers in the disability sector will come under even more pressure.

The NDIS market has failed to deliver consistent, quality care and support.

We need to demand that the government takes over and runs services instead of just letting them collapse.

The closure of the 11 AEIOU daycare centres for children with Autism in March was a disgraceful abandonment of children, parents and workers. The market is undermining choice and control by driving services out of business.

Above: Opposing the cuts to the NDIS at the national day of action on 9 May in Sydney Photo: Solidarity

In Victoria HACSU is campaigning against the closure of hundreds of group homes and pay cuts for workers. On 31 December a state government subsidy that covered the gap between NDIA funding and the cost of these higher quality services ended. Over 90 homes have already closed, throwing the lives of workers, residents and their families into turmoil.

Aruma, one of the providers that took over these privatised group homes, has applied to the Fair Work Commission to terminate its enterprise agreement with its workers, threatening massive pay cuts.

Many disability advocates see these group homes as outmoded. But disability housing in the rest of the NDIS market is woefully inadequate.

HACSU workers in the former state government-run homes have won decent pay and quality support for the people they care for, including house supervisors and mandatory training for workers—something that is shamefully lacking in the rest of the disability sector. They need our solidarity.

Demanding government ownership and provision of services doesn’t have to threaten choice and control. Well funded public services can provide a diversity of choices, and also deliver quality services and quality jobs. But it will take a mass movement to win it. Unions have the power to hurt the system that hurts disabled people. Workers, alongside disabled people and their carers, can force the government to put serious resources into the services we need.

Workers and the disabled people they support share a common interest in fighting for better services

Huge NDIS cuts will end support to 160,000 people

By an NDIS participant

LESS THAN a week after announcing that Australia's defence budget will increase by \$53 billion over the next decade, the Albanese government announced \$37.8 billion of cuts to the NDIS over the next four years.

These cuts are going to put some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people at risk.

At least 160,000 people will be taken off the scheme within the next four years and ultimately 300,000 people forecast to be on the scheme by 2030 will be removed. Autistic people, including children, will be particularly targeted.

The government claims there will be other support available but many people fear that they will be cut from the NDIS before there is an adequate alternative.

Cost-cutting measures will see major changes to the scheme that have caused deep concern for disability advocacy groups.

From October, everyone on the scheme will lose \$7000 in social and community participation funding. This makes out that support needs such as participation in the community are an unaffordable luxury rather than essential to a person's wellbeing.

Health Minister Mark Butler claims the federal government will establish an "Inclusive Communities Fund" to replace this but has allocated it only \$200 million.

Labor has proposed a new eligibility test to determine whether someone is able to access the NDIS. Every person on the NDIS will be reassessed. The aim of this is to kick people off who supposedly have "low and moderate support needs".

From April next year, NDIS plans that determine how much and what type of funding people get will be decided based on an interview with a government assessor, who will put results into a computer program that sets a person's funding levels. This could result in automated "robo-planning" instead of properly accounting for a person's needs.

It will also become harder to appeal decisions on funding. More than 7000 applications for reviews of NDIS decisions were lodged in 2024-25 and the government spent over \$60 million on private law firms fighting them. Many of these participants were asking for reasonable requests such as basic



Above: Protesting Labor's billions for war while cutting the NDIS Photo: Solidarity

supports they need in day-to-day life.

Market model

The NDIS is currently the main source of essential support to about 760,000 participants. It has provided a massive increase in disability funding that has been life-changing for many people. It's estimated about half of those on the scheme had never received support before.

But there are also serious problems with it.

Participants represent only a fraction of the estimated 5.5 million Australians with disability.

The case to cut money from the NDIS has been fuelled by claims that the scheme is full of fraud and rorters. The government and media routinely allege fraud to justify drastic cuts in disability related benefits and services.

The main reason for fraud is that the NDIS was set up as an unregulated free market. Most cases involve providers taking advantage of disabled people.

A *Four Corners* investigation last year exposed how NDIS clients had been effectively imprisoned in at least ten private homes so that businessman Khawaja Haroon could rip off their NDIS funding.

The NDIS is a marketised system where participants can choose to hire private companies or individuals to provide disability support. Its introduction in 2013 was used to privatise disability services and force them to compete with each other for clients' money.

This is promoted as bringing choice, control and empowerment but undermines the quality of services. Some private operators cherry-pick clients whose needs are cheapest and easiest to meet.

The disability workforce is now highly casualised and insecure. There are Uber-style internet-based businesses that link participants with support workers.

We need a fully public and properly resourced disability support system. Governments need to properly fund public housing, universal healthcare, liveable welfare payments and education.

Disabled people can be and have been agents of their own change and liberation. In October last year, 40 protesters gathered in front of Parliament House in response to the NDIS cuts in essential allied health funding, travel subsidies and support coordination.

Hundreds of people with disabilities and supporters joined a national day of protest against the cuts on Saturday 9 May with rallies in most capital cities.

The money to properly fund the NDIS is there. Just two-thirds of the cost of one of the nuclear submarines the government is buying could reverse all the cuts.

We should fight hard against the cuts and to demand reforms to the NDIS. But we should be very clear that to win real equality for people with disabilities, we need to fight for a world that values human need not profits.

From October, everyone on the scheme will lose \$7000 in social and community participation funding

NSW nurses rage as legal case fails to deliver pay rise needed—now start planning for serious strikes

THERE HAS been an outpouring of anger by nurses and midwives in New South Wales following the long-awaited Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) decision on NSW public system nurses and midwives' pay.

Media reports and Labor MPs proclaimed that nurses and midwives would receive “an historic 28 per cent pay rise”. However, this 28 per cent was only granted to Assistants in Nursing, who make up only 3 per cent of the nursing and midwifery workforce.

The IRC granted the bulk of the workforce, Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives, a “one off, historical reset” pay rise consisting of 6.8 per cent backdated to July 2025, and 3 per cent in July 2026 and 2027.

On top of an interim pay rise of 3 per cent in July 2025, this totals a 16 per cent pay rise over three years.

The result is well below what the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) was aiming for in its “Special Case”—the term used by the union for this case for a much higher wage rise in the IRC.

This “historical” case was supposed to catch up after the NSW government’s brutal regime of wage suppression, which has meant that nurses and midwives have got less than 2.5 per cent per year on average every year from 2011 to 2025, despite the massive surge of post-COVID inflation.

Yet the “reset” will not catch up to CPI and still leaves us poorer than in 2020 in real terms.

Contributing to the widespread dismay amongst nurses and midwives is the fact that we agreed to a lower pay rise in the last negotiations to focus on ratios.

The Special Case was supposed to be our opportunity to catch up on pay.

Three years later, a watered-down version of nurse and midwife-patient ratios, called “safe staffing levels”, has trickled out into a handful of wards and units.

Nurses and midwives have been left with weak ratio provisions that include AINs in the numbers, who are not registered or sufficiently trained. And now the pay we were told to hold out for has not materialised.



Above: NSW nurses have received nowhere near the 15 per cent pay rise in one year they demanded in 2024
Photo: Solidarity

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Militant members need to organise support for sustained and disruptive industrial action

What drew the most ire was that the IRC’s commentary agreed that nurses and midwives have been chronically undervalued and underpaid but then refused to order a pay rise to remedy it.

Among the justifications was the sheer size of the nursing and midwifery workforce. The Government cannot afford to pay us because we are too numerous.

In reality though, the current staffing crisis calls for an increase in the numbers of Registered Nurses and Midwives, and therefore an increase in our pay.

Strategy to win

Along with anger towards the NSW Labor Government, nurses and midwives have directed frustration at the union leadership and the “Special Case” strategy.

Branch after branch endorsed the claims of the “Special Case”, for a 35 per cent pay rise, an increase in sick leave to 20 days, and increased night duty penalties.

But at the same time, branches voted to pursue these demands through a legalistic strategy of arbitration in the IRC.

Members were never asked to choose between a legalistic strategy which places our fate in the hands of the IRC or planned, effective, militant industrial action.

A key lesson of this pay campaign for militant members is the need to organise support amongst rank-and-file nurses and midwives in branches across NSW for sustained and disruptive industrial action.

A motion recognising the failure of the Special Case strategy and setting out a sustained and disruptive plan for industrial action was debated and voted on at the Committee of Delegates at the end of April.

While the motion didn’t pass, the number of votes for it reflected a significant level of dissent towards the strategy taken by the NSWNMA.

Industrial action was used in patchy and sporadic ways at best, and was wound down in favour of a legalistic strategy which took power out of nurses’ and midwives’ hands.

Better rank-and-file coordination could see such motions win in the future.

Nurses and midwives across NSW will be meeting to discuss the pay outcome in the coming months, and it is crucial we learn the right lessons from this failure.

The anger and disappointment is not going away, and there is significant appetite among members to turn this outcome into lessons and a strategy to win the pay rise that we deserve.

Eight councils strike for pay rise to catch up with cost of living

By Dani Amaya

ABOUT 2000 union members from across eight metropolitan Melbourne councils took part in a historic strike for fair wages and conditions on 5 May.

The workers, members of the Australian Services Union (ASU), took to the streets on Victoria’s budget day, marching from Trades Hall to Parliament and calling on Premier Jacinta Allan to deliver fair pay or additional funding to local government.

A Town Hall worker from Melbourne City Council told *Solidarity*, “I think we’re asking for a pretty fair pay rise over the course of four years, especially when we look at some of the salaries of the executive staff in our organisation.”

Workers on strike included city maintenance, waste collectors, library staff, office staff and home care workers.

During the speeches at Trades Hall, Gary, a home support worker with Merri-bek Council for 30 years and an ASU delegate for 15, said, “We give the elderly something that they miss. Most of them are lonely and, without our support, they just wouldn’t survive. We deserve a pay rise.”

Home care and support workers are some of the lowest paid workers across Victorian councils but, shamefully, home care workers with Merri-bek were threatened with pay-docking for striking or bans.

Merri-bek and Hume councils also brought in scab garbage collectors for the day.

Real wage decline

The eight councils that took part in the strike have been negotiating for over 12 months for a multi-employer bargaining (MEB) agreement, the first multi-agreement to cover local government workers across metro-Melbourne.

The MEB seeks to lock in existing employment conditions across all councils under the agreement, improve conditions such as parental leave, gender affirmation leave, dispute resolution and more; in addition to seeking a total pay rise of 22 per cent across four years.

The first-year increase of 10 per cent is seeking to “catch up” council workers’ pay due to inflation, following with 4 per cent for subsequent years.



Above: Council workers on strike on 5 May in Melbourne Photo: Solidarity

Dylan, a delegate from Melbourne City Council, told the rally at Parliament that since joining council, pay had gone backwards in real terms.

“Something that cost \$1 in 2018 now costs \$1.29 due to inflation, but our pay, we were paid \$1 in 2019, for each dollar we now earn \$1.12. That is a terrible real wage decline and one we will no longer tolerate.”

Speaking to workers from Darebin, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Merri-bek and Yarra, Dylan said that the 22 per cent would nearly make up the real wage decline.

Rate cap hammer

Rate capping, introduced in 2016 under the Dan Andrews government, was blamed for the lack of adequate pay rises for council workers.

Dylan said, “Now, anybody who’s been to the bargaining table, and you’ll all have heard it before, anytime we go to bargain in local government, we are told that rate capping is the thing that is constraining our wage growth.”

“Over the term of rate capping’s life, it has led to an 8 per cent real funding decline in councils.”

The state government’s rate cap mechanism restricts the maximum amount that local councils can raise rates and municipal charges. The rate cap for 2026-2027 is 2.75 per cent.

A union delegate from Merri-bek told *Solidarity*, “The rate cap is a hammer used to bludgeon workers

and to suppress our wages. The rate cap hasn’t capped CEO salaries, CEO salaries continue to grow well above inflation, well above the rate cap.

“We’ve gotta smash the rate cap or force the state government to cough up more direct funding to local government, so I guess that’s why we are taking a direct confrontation to the state government, they are the ones giving the CEOs the handy excuse. It’s a very convenient political excuse.”

Tash Wark, ASU branch secretary, said it wasn’t acceptable that workers in local government were caught in the middle of councils stating they have no money and state government hiding behind its rate-capping policy.

The rate cap is a weapon aimed at council workers but the focus on raising or breaking it is a mistake. The danger is that union success would lead to much higher rates for working class households already suffering from a cost-of-living crisis—pitting workers against workers.

Instead, unions should be organising further industrial action, demanding greater direct funding from the state government.

A parliamentary inquiry in 2024 acknowledged that councils were under-funded, recommending increases to funding and grant programs, the scrapping of the tax councils pay to deliver immunisation and a 50:50 funding split between the state and councils for libraries and school crossings.

Demands for a first-year increase of 10 per cent are seeking to “catch up” council workers’ pay due to inflation

Teachers in Victoria: vote to reject any bad deal, keep up the fight

By a Victorian AEU member

AFTER THE Victorian teachers' strike on 24 March where tens of thousands marched, the Australian Education Union (AEU) announced that action would escalate in Term 2.

But instead of another 24-hour strike, AEU branch council voted for local rolling stoppages with schools striking for half a day. Industrial bans were implemented.

Now the rolling stoppages have been suspended, handing the initiative to the Department of Education.

The March strike had a huge impact. The department made a desperate last-minute offer of 17 per cent over four years—proposing a lower pay rise for education support staff than teachers, a clear attempt to divide the workforce.

This was rightly rejected as it was less than half of our pay claim of 35 per cent over three years, with no movement at all on working conditions that are burning out school staff.

The Labor government then decided to play dirty. A leak said that teachers “were about to be offered” 28 per cent over four years. This was intended to make teachers look ungrateful for a generous offer.

The *Herald Sun* published the headlines the government wanted but left AEU members angry at the possibility the union would accept an offer much less than our claims.

The bans are ruffling the government—state Labor MPs are frustrated by the ban on visits to schools and loss of photo opportunities with kids in an election year.

Negotiations have been running seven days a week for the last two weeks as *Solidarity* went to press.

The AEU negotiating team are claiming good progress. On that basis, the AEU suspended the rolling strikes for two weeks. Members were bitterly disappointed.

Many voted for motions condemning the lifting of the rolling stoppages, calling for another 24-hour strike and rejecting a deal that does not meet our minimum demands on pay, caps on class sizes, reductions in face-to-face teaching, paid lunch breaks for support staff and the same pay offer for everyone.

At the time of writing, 17 workplaces and six regions have passed motions.

Fight The Crisis, an AEU rank-and-file group, will be campaigning outside the AEU branch council on 15 May, as



Above: Part of the 40,000-strong crowd on the Victorian teachers' strike in late March Photo: Solidarity

there is a good chance a deal will be presented there for endorsement.

It is critical that branch councillors feel empowered to reject a bad

deal, just as Victorian nurses did.

Members and delegates who want to fight should stay in touch with Fight the Crisis.

US workers strike back at Trump on May Day

MAY DAY in the US was a day of resistance to Trump's rotten agenda of mass deportations, imperialist wars abroad, and war on the working class at home.

May Day Strong recorded 5000 demonstrations across the US on Friday 1 May, with over a million people rallying to demand “no ICE [Immigration Customs Enforcement], no war, no billionaires”.

It saw the call for a day of “no work, no school, no shopping”, raised on the 23 January strike in Minneapolis against ICE, spread nationally.

This has put the working class and the idea of a general strike at the centre of resistance to Trump.

The May Day rallies were supported by the National Education Association and many local unions. The 50501 movement and Indivisible—groups behind the “No Kings” demonstrations—also promoted them.

In North Carolina 22 school districts cancelled classes because so many teachers took leave to protest. A “Kids Over Corporations” rally in its capital, Raleigh, was one of the largest labour actions ever in the state, demanding governments fund public schools. The state has the lowest public school funding in the US.

The Chicago Teachers Union organised for thousands of students to go on field trips to learn about civic

rights instead of going to class. This came after months of negotiations with the Public School authority, which resisted calls to make 1 May a professional development day where students would have the day off and teachers could join demonstrations.

Striking Nurses in Maine demanded Maine Health end its contract with Palantir—the notorious tech company whose software is used by ICE and the Israeli military.

New York saw the biggest May Day rally since the Occupy Wall Street demonstration in 2012, with several unions mobilising members.

United Auto Workers Union President Shawn Fain set out plans to “set our next contract expiration for May Day 2028” in an effort to circumvent anti-strike laws and hold a real general strike.

But resistance to Trump needs to step up well before then.

The Democrats are seeking to channel opposition into harvesting votes for the mid-term elections in November. But they opened the door to Trump's presidency by attacking living standards, supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza, and cutting migration.

What's needed is a working class movement independent of the Democrats. May Day shows that such a movement is building.

Luke Ottavi



AEU members and delegates in Victoria can contact and follow Fight the Crisis on Instagram at the QR code

Iran stares down a superpower as Trump faces defeat

By David Glanz

DONALD TRUMP has the mightiest military in the world at his command. But he's failed to defeat Iran, a regional power.

In a sign of his problems, Operation Freedom—which would have seen US forces escorting ships trapped in the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz—collapsed after two days.

On Wall Street, the acronym TACO (Trump always chickens out) has been joined by NACHO (not a chance Hormuz opens).

As *Solidarity* goes to press, Trump's bluster swings between declaring peace to be at hand and threatening further destruction.

The US is hoping its blockade of Iranian shipping will further weaken the Iranian economy and force concessions from Tehran. Meanwhile, Iran is banking on the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has caused economic disruption worldwide, to bring Trump to heel.

Iran is in economic pain but seems to have the stronger hand. A combination of repression and nationalism has ended internal revolt for now. US hopes that its blockade would damage the oil industry, given that it is complicated for oil wells to be turned off and there is limited storage, have so far come to nothing.

Iran is ramping up trade with Russia via the Caspian Sea on its northern border. The *New York Times* reports that four Iranian ports along the Caspian are working around the clock to bring in wheat, corn, animal feed, sunflower oil and other supplies, including Russian drone components.

And the economic damage to the global economy from the closure of the strait is only getting worse, with *The Economist* warning that oil prices are likely to rise further.

Disruption to fertiliser supplies is raising the spectre of higher food prices everywhere and mass hunger in the Global South.

Trump's woes

Trump is facing problems on three fronts. First, Gulf states targeted by Iranian strikes have proven squeamish about supporting the US. The *New York Times* revealed that Saudi Arabia denied access to Saudi airspace and American bases in the country, forcing Trump to abandon Operation



Above: Iran's blockade is preventing oil tankers transiting the Strait of Hormuz
Photo: Calistemon/
Wikimedia Commons

Freedom.

Saudi Arabia is a US ally, a major buyer of US weaponry and hosts 2700 US military personnel. But that alliance did not prevent it coming under attack by Iran.

An essay in the US ruling class magazine *Foreign Affairs* warns, "There are strategists in every Gulf state arguing to downgrade or cut ties with the United States, pointing out that American security commitments failed to deter Iranian attacks and entangled the region in a months-long war."

The Saudis are unlikely to break with the US but the regime is hedging its bets and shoring up its regional position by signing a defence pact with Pakistan, in turn a longstanding ally of China.

Trump's second challenge is the cratering of domestic support as petrol prices skyrocket. According to opinion polls, disapproval of his presidency is running at near 60 per cent, with similar numbers opposed to the war with Iran.

And third, he is juggling the relationship with China, heading to Beijing as *Solidarity* goes to press in a state visit already once postponed because of the war. Trump will want to focus on trade but his blockade in the Gulf is preventing Iranian oil exports to China, an extra source of tension.

Trump is desperate for a peace deal with Iran. But to get there, he may once again unleash the awesome

power of the US military.

The task of building an anti-imperialist, anti-war movement that weakens the US by breaking Australia's complicity with Trump's war aims remains urgent.

Wreaking havoc

Israel is abiding by the ceasefire with Iran for now but is continuing to wreak untold havoc on the people of Palestine and south Lebanon.

In Gaza, at least 837 Palestinians have been killed since the "ceasefire" last year. An Israeli air strike on 6 May killed the son of the head of Hamas's political bureau and the Palestinian group's top negotiator in indirect talks with Israel.

On the West Bank, Israeli settlers are rampaging through Palestinian villages with the complicity of the IDF.

The Israeli paper *Haaretz* reported on 10 May that settlers carried out more than 20 attacks across the West Bank over the previous two days, wounding several people, including a pregnant woman. Violence included home invasions, arson, stone-throwing and the uprooting of olive trees.

The same weekend, the IDF struck more than 20 targets in Lebanon.

Israel is systematically clearing the population from south Lebanon and razing villages, in scenes reminiscent of Gaza. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz says there are no plans to withdraw from what he calls a "security belt".

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The economic damage to the global economy from the closure of the strait is only getting worse

CAPITALISM AND THE NEW WAVE OF MISOGYNY: FIGHTING SEXISM TODAY

Liz Grosshans looks at what's responsible for the wave of online misogyny and rising sexism, and how we can fight it

LAST YEAR *Glamour* magazine declared that the “biggest trend of 2025” was misogyny, citing the behaviour of men like Donald Trump and growing online sexism.

Louis Theroux’s new *Inside the Manosphere* documentary gives a glimpse of this world—the online space where male influencers like Andrew Tate push a reactionary and extreme sexism.

This misogyny is manifesting in the real world in dangerous ways.

We are seeing women school teachers quit their jobs over uncontrollable misogyny from young boys in their classrooms.

A recent global survey showed that Gen Z men (born between 1997 and 2012) were twice as likely as baby boomers to have sexist views, with 24 per cent of Gen Z men thinking women should not appear too independent or self-sufficient compared to 12 per cent of boomers. Some 33 per cent of Gen Z men said a husband should have the final word on important decisions.

Violence against women remains high. In 2025 there were 28 women killed due to intimate partner violence and 12 deaths in the first three months of 2026. In the past five years 41 per cent of women reported experiencing workplace sexual harassment.

Where does sexism come from?

Some blame the internet and social media or focus on better education to change boys’ behaviour. Others say that sexism is just deeply ingrained into men’s biology.

But none of this actually explains where sexism comes from or what can be done to end it.

As socialists we see sexism as a result of class society—and sexism today as the product of capitalism, a system that requires women’s oppression for its survival.

Socialists see the nuclear family—the monogamous heterosexual family structure made up of mum, dad and kids—as the heart of women’s oppression.

Capitalism is a system motivated by profit—and it is only possible to create profit if there are workers available. So capitalists are interested in guaranteeing that there will be future generations of workers at their disposal.

The family is the place where children are raised, housed, clothed, fed and supposedly nurtured into functioning members of society.

The nuclear family also shoulders the economic burden of raising children. It plays a major economic role for capitalism because without it there would be extra costs the system would have to bear.

The family has taken different forms in different societies through history. But the development of capitalism and the move from agricultural society to factory work in cities reshaped it.

The industrial revolution brought whole families into the workforce, with widespread child labour.

Parents worked such long hours they didn’t have the time to properly care for their children and as a result many died young. The working class began to call for better conditions. This eventually became a concern for capitalists too, who worried about having future generations of workers to exploit.

So something called the “family wage” was introduced: men were paid enough to support the whole family, allowing women to stay at home to care for children and manage domestic work.

Because this served the interests of the ruling class, they worked hard to ensure it would be the norm across society.

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Even when women work full-time, they do double shifts—their paid work plus housework and child-rearing

When people first moved to the cities, there was a brief period where relationships and sexuality were a little freer. But sex work and homosexuality were eventually criminalised and women were pushed out of many industries, entrenching their dependence on their husbands.

Today most women again have to work to help support their families. Thanks to the women’s liberation movement women have won greater freedoms.

But the family model where women do the majority of domestic labour, and continue to reproduce the workforce for free, remains.

Couples today may try to share domestic labour and childcare as equally as possible. But since the man is likely to earn more, this often means women are the ones to sacrifice paid work to handle domestic chores and childcare.

And even when women work full-time, they do double shifts—their paid work plus housework and child-rearing. In Australia women still complete 50 per cent more unpaid domestic labour than men.

Gender roles

To justify this the ruling class promoted a sexist ideology that tells us that men and women are naturally predisposed to particular gender roles.

Sexism says that women are more inclined to child rearing because of their natural motherly and nurturing instinct, that they are good at multi-tasking so they can manage child rearing and cooking and cleaning.

But at the same time women are weak, small minded and overly emotional so some jobs and making big decisions are far too difficult!

Meanwhile, men are tough and practical, made for the big “important” jobs in society.

The ideal of the nuclear family is shoved down our throats from a

young age: from our own families, from films, from school and the online world.

Women are sold a vision of dependence on a man, of our perfect wedding, and are encouraged to ponder how many children we want. This helps to paint a picture of this as the “natural” way to structure our lives and relationships.

While men are not oppressed on the basis of their gender, the roles that are ascribed to them are also restrictive.

Men are told that vulnerability is a sign of weakness and that they should be capable of pushing through any adversity. They are also told that their worth is dependent on their ability to be a “provider”—in a world where it is becoming harder to make ends meet.

One ABC podcast featured a young man who had escaped the manosphere, who talked about being attracted to it because of the gap between what he was told being a man should be and what is actually possible. He described loneliness and feeling like a failure to meet those expectations.

The Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai, who wrote on women and the family, describes how under capitalism, “We still live and think under the heavy hand of an unavoidable loneliness of spirit. Man [people] experiences this ‘loneliness’ even in towns full of shouting, noise and people, even in a crowd of close friends and work-mates.”

This shows why some men might be attracted to the ideas put forward in the manosphere, which provides a community claiming that if they just go to the gym and focus on “boosting” their masculinity then they will be able to overcome that “loneliness of spirit”.

The family is held up as the place to satisfy our emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing. And the romantic relationship within the family is expected to provide all the love, security, sexual pleasure and validation that we crave.

Karl Marx called the family both a haven and a hell, because while romantic and family relationships can be deeply satisfying they are still unable to make up for the deep loneliness that is the product of the lack of control over our lives and alienated social relationships.

We are supposed to rely on the family to meet our emotional needs. But the people who support you



Above: Rallying against sexism
Photo: Charlotte Cooper/Flickr

and love you can easily become the people you blame when they are unable to meet these needs.

As Kollontai put it, “Because of their loneliness, men are apt to cling in a predatory and unhealthy way to illusions about finding a ‘soul mate’ from among the members of the opposite sex.”

The result of this is that, “Property rights are extended into the emotional and spiritual world of the other person, creating an intense pressure to control and possess.”

This helps explain why romantic relationships feel so high-stakes.

It also explains why violence against women is so often concentrated in the home. When the family fails to meet their needs, the frustration and sense of failure men feel can result in violence.

A new wave of misogyny?

Capitalism has relied on sexism from the beginning. But in times of economic crisis, the pressures on the nuclear family and the intensity of sexist ideas and behavior also increase.

In a scramble to save money the system will try and push more of the burden onto the family. Another product of this is the rise of the far right and its promotion of traditional family values.

Donald Trump’s National Security Strategy released last year even claimed that restoring US manufacturing industries “cannot be accomplished without growing numbers of strong, traditional families that raise healthy children”.

We need to take every oppor-

tunity to fight for reforms that will relieve pressure on the family, such as increased single parent benefits, free childcare, community centres, wage rises to end the gender pay gap, gender affirmation leave for trans people and equal parental leave for men and women.

These reforms could go a long way to improving the lives of working families. However, the logic of capitalism means it will always look to reverse them.

Ending women’s oppression once and for all requires a revolution to smash capitalism and the nuclear family along with it.

We need to replace capitalism with a system that is driven by need not profit, where domestic and childcare responsibilities are taken on by the whole of society.

The Russian revolution of 1917 gave us a glimpse of what that could look like. The revolution brought full equality for women, marriage was separated from the church and divorce was made simple. Women gained control over their fertility and were freed from the burden of domestic work through communal kitchens, childcare centres and laundries.

The attitudes of millions were shifted and women were drawn into public life and active participation in building the new society.

Ending the reliance on the nuclear family would also throw out gendered expectations and the loneliness and alienation that comes with them. This vision for a world without women’s oppression could allow a flourishing of expression and a feeling of fulfillment that capitalism can never deliver.

NINE DAYS THAT SHOOK BRITAIN: THE 1926 GENERAL STRIKE

One hundred years on, **Jack Stubley** looks at the general strike that saw millions of workers paralyse Britain, only to be betrayed by their own union leaders

THE BRITISH General Strike of 1926 lasted nine days—a titanic battle between the bosses and a union movement that had grown in strength over the past two decades.

British workers joined the strike enthusiastically but were badly betrayed by the trade union leaders. Despite the growing influence of the Communist Party of Great Britain, its lack of political clarity about the role of the trade union bureaucracy undermined its ability to spread and deepen the struggle.

The lead up to the strike began in June 1925 when coal mine-owners demanded wage cuts and an increase in working hours. There were more than a million coal miners, the largest single section of the British working class. The British Trade Union Congress (TUC), the equivalent of the ACTU, called a complete coal embargo the day before a planned lockout.

The government stepped in to put the attacks on hold through a nine-month subsidy to the coal industry while a royal commission, the Samuel Commission, examined the situation. This victorious moment was dubbed Red Friday by the press.

Red Friday was a temporary ceasefire. The government immediately began preparing for a major confrontation, stockpiling coal, establishing volunteer groups called “Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies” (OMS) and dividing the country into ten districts to prepare the deployment of troops, logistics and scabs.

Meanwhile, trade union officials did almost nothing to prepare.

On 10 March 1926 the Samuel Commission unsurprisingly recommended immediate wage cuts alongside future “industrial reorganisation”.

Despite the TUC’s conciliatory tone and efforts to negotiate a compromise, mine-owners were looking for a fight and threatened a lockout if wage

cuts were not speedily accepted in full. The government and mine-owners were intransigent. The TUC had no option but to organise a mass defensive action in support of the miners.

However, even after calling a general strike the officials continued to seek negotiations to avoid going ahead with it. It took the government demanding nothing less than complete surrender for the TUC to begin the strike.

The Prime Minister had insisted, in response to print workers refusing to print a lead article in the Daily Mail, that union leaders had to repudiate all plans for strike action and accept the terms of the Samuel Commission report completely for negotiations to resume.

Even after being forced to fight, the TUC was reluctant to call all-out action. They spoke instead of a “national strike”, planning to gradually call out various waves of workers one section at a time in the hope that this would encourage the government to negotiate.

This both weakened the strike and confused matters, with the workers who were meant to be on strike in a given area or workplace often unclear on their role.

The government was far more prepared and far more determined. Public parks were used as supply dumps, OMS volunteers were made special constables and battalions of troops and two battalions were stationed in Liverpool.

Despite this, workers responded to the strike with enthusiasm, understanding that the miners’ defeat would result in an assault on their own pay and conditions.

Two million workers joined the strike in its first eight days, in addition to one million locked-out mine workers. Many local union branches created Councils of Action for col-

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Even after being forced to fight, the TUC was reluctant to call all-out action

laboration between different sections of the labour movement.

Actions repeatedly broke through official hesitancy at the local level, as mass meetings, local strike bulletins and picketing were organised. Workers Defence Corps were formed to fend off police attacks and prevent scabbing, eliminating the police presence in some areas.

The TUC’s leadership was abysmal. They discouraged physical confrontation with strike-breakers through picketing and encouraged friendly relations with the police. The TUC General Council’s strike organising committee, led by a “left” official, was primarily concerned with stopping local initiatives, including censoring bulletins from using overly radical language.

As the general strike continued more workers joined in. The day before the strike was called off hundreds of thousands of metalworkers and ship-building workers went out on strike for the first time.

On the strike’s fifth day union officials were again negotiating with mine-owners and the government for an agreement on the basis of the Samuel Commission. After nine days the strike was called off, leaving the miners to fight on for three months before accepting defeat.

Officials accepted wage cuts in the mines without any guarantees stopping retaliation against strikers, and without so much as a whimper of resistance from the left officials (except the miners’ union itself).

Their excuse was that the strike was faltering and faced collapse. Yet enthusiasm was still running high with another 100,000 workers coming out on strike a day after it was officially called off.

Important lessons

There are a number of important les-

sons from the strike. First, it showed the timidity of the union officials and their reluctance to organise the powerful strike action needed.

During the strike the senior union officials, grouped together in the TUC, desperately sought to appeal for negotiations with the bosses and the government, rather than organising the strike.

Union officials knew that the longer the strike continued, the more their leadership of the strike would be called into question as it clashed with initiatives from below. This made them anxious to hold back the strike and end it as quickly as possible.

This behaviour is a result of the position of union officials as a unique layer in society. They are professional negotiators between workers and capitalists. This makes them responsible for cultivating relationships and honouring agreements with bosses, which has a conservatising effect on them.

Their control of a bureaucratic apparatus of union staff and assets that they are anxious to protect means they often come to see strike action as something to be avoided. They are concerned with a mix of retaining their credibility, control of the union and see workers' strength primarily as a bargaining chip for negotiations.

Secondly, the strike showed that despite the existence of a sizeable militant left-wing inside the union movement, with the Communist Party wielding influence over a significant section of the working class, it lacked the political clarity necessary to challenge the union officials and carry the struggle forward.

The Communist Party had been founded only a few years earlier but it had the authority of the still recent Russian revolution of 1917 behind it. The party had about 6000 members, with 1000 of them organised into workplace branches.

In the lead up to the strike the Communist Party raised demands for grassroots organisations like factory committees, stronger Trades Councils and Councils of Action. Roughly a quarter of the Communist membership was arrested in this period for their political activity. The entirety of the top leadership was arrested and tried for sedition with sentences ranging between six to 12 months.

In 1924 the party had launched the National Minority Movement, an effort to bring together militants within the unions that aimed at "making the trade unions into real militant organs in the class struggle". It was launched



Above: Locked out miners during the 1926 general strike
Photo: Vintage_Space / Alamy Stock Photo

by delegates representing 200,000 union members and by early 1926 had affiliations from bodies claiming to represent 950,000 members, with supporters in senior positions in several unions.

But the Communist Party was severely hampered by its illusions in the TUC General Council and specifically the left officials' abilities and willingness to lead the fight.

Radical posturing

The union officials readily used radical rhetoric to conceal their lack of serious organisation. Even the most left-wing union leaders like the miners' union's AJ Cook were unwilling to criticise the TUC's shortcomings during the strike and appeal to rank-and-file unionists in other unions over the heads of their leaders, because they were too concerned with maintaining their relationship with the other union leaders.

The Communist Party relinquished leadership to the General Council of the TUC during the general strike and encouraged illusions that they were willing to lead a serious struggle, their main slogan being "All Power to the General Council". The Communists' paper, *Workers Weekly*, uncritically celebrated the radical talk of the union officials at the Trades Union Congress in September 1925.

Instead of a steady diet of unrelenting and plainly worded warnings and criticisms about the union officials' lacklustre preparations during the nine-month build-up, Communist papers fawned over their radical posturing.

This was largely due to the Communist Party's financial and ideological reliance on the Communist International, run by the Soviet Union now under control of Stalin. By 1924, Stalin was ditching the revolutionary principles of the 1917 revolution and was pursuing a policy of "socialism in one country".

Stalin was more interested in maintaining alliances with left-wing British union officials in the hope that they would defend Russian interests when needed.

According to Stalin, the Anglo-Russian Committee supported by British trade union leaders was engaged "in organising a wide working class movement against new imperialist wars in general, and against intervention into [Russia]".

This led to a confused perspective by the British Communists, seeing the key division within trade unions as being between left and right wing officials rather than between officials and the rank-and-file. It encouraged the illusion that the left-wing officials would break with the right-wing officials and lead serious struggles.

The only guarantee of unions' abilities to seriously wage struggles is the strength and confidence of the rank-and-file, organised independently of the union officials.

The Communist Party's confusion meant it was not ready or willing to mount a challenge to the union officials when they inevitably faltered and offer the working class an alternative leadership. This remains an important lesson for how socialists should organise in the trade unions today.

ALGERIA'S ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE AND THE RIGHT TO RESIST

Finnian Colwell looks at the armed struggle against colonial rule in Algeria and why elements of the French left were right to support the resistance

IN 1962, Algeria won independence from France after eight years of armed struggle led by the National Liberation Front.

Elements of the French left were willing to give material support to the Algerian resistance in opposition to their own government's imperialist war.

France took control of Algeria in 1830. One million European settlers controlled some 2.3 million hectares in Algeria by 1930, or around 40 per cent of the land. Native Algerians were forced onto less fertile land, into humiliating agricultural work on their former properties or into segregated urban ghettos.

Whereas in 1834 "nearly all the Arabs can read or write" according to a French general, by 1954 literacy rates had declined to 10 per cent.

The French also forced nomadic tribes in Algeria to adopt sedentary lives. Muslims in Algeria, practically the entire local population, were subject to punitive apartheid-style laws with fewer rights than French citizens.

During the First World War, the European powers including France mobilised the populations of their colonies to send into the slaughter. Algerian soldiers who survived were given the right to vote and encountered new ideas in France alongside middle-class Algerians studying there. These groups started to articulate their nation's demands for independence.

FLN

The "Young Algerians", led by Ferhat Abbas, thought France might allow reforms giving Algerians equal rights and placed hope in the Popular Front government of 1936 which brought together Communists and Socialists. But the Popular Front abandoned a proposal to extend the democratic franchise in Algeria.

It also outlawed the "North-African Star", a more radical group set

up by Messali Hadj which advocated national independence.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, Algerians in Sétif demonstrated for independence. When a number of settlers were killed the French army responded by massacring up to 40,000 Algerians.

The French also inaugurated elections to an Algerian Assembly in an attempt to dampen discontent. Both Messali and Abbas reconstituted parties to run but the French rigged the votes to ensure they gained only a handful of seats.

A new generation of activists, radicalised by the massacre at Sétif and seeing that elections would not bring independence, joined the OS (Special Organisation). Soon reconstituted as the FLN (National Liberation Front), these new militants launched an armed insurrection in November 1954, in which 70 targets, military and civilian, were attacked.

During the ensuing eight-year war, the FLN organised guerilla attacks on French troops and government buildings from the mountains. But as the war escalated, they also bombed targets in Algiers, including cafés and cinemas. These actions would be condemned as terrorism today.

The FLN's decision to launch an armed struggle was a response to brutal colonial violence. As French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre put it, "It is not their violence, but ours, turned back."

The FLN's struggle for independence gained mass support among Algerians. The famous film *The Battle of Algiers* depicts its call for a one-week general strike in 1957, which brought the ghettos of Algiers to a halt.

The French army imposed martial law in response and brutally destroyed the clandestine FLN networks until the organisation was relegated to the countryside. In 1958, when a new

The FLN's decision to launch an armed struggle was a response to brutal colonial violence

French prime minister took power who was in favour of negotiations with the FLN, there was a coup that saw European settlers seize control of Algeria to try to prevent independence.

General Charles de Gaulle was given control of the French government in June 1958 in an effort to resolve the crisis.

But opposition to continued French rule made it clear that it was impossible to keep control of Algeria. De Gaulle signalled from 1959 that he would negotiate with the FLN. In December 1960, there were mass demonstrations in Algerian cities against de Gaulle's visit. The FLN created a political crisis which contributed to the French granting Algeria independence in 1962.

The Left in France

Appallingly, most of the French left supported ongoing colonial rule in the years leading up to independence. In response, a radical, anti-colonial left formed in France, opposed to parliamentarism and the Stalinism of the French Communist Party.

In 1956, a left-wing coalition government came to power, led by the SFIO (the Socialist Party, the equivalent of the Australian Labor Party). It refused to allow independence and set out to crush the rebellion by giving the French military "special powers", allowing it to detain and interrogate suspected FLN members. The same year, France called up reservists to double its military presence in Algeria from 200,000 soldiers in January to 400,000 in July.

The PCF (French Communist Party) had hundreds of thousands of members at the time and control of a militant trade union federation. But to gain parliamentary influence it abandoned its anti-colonial principles and voted for special powers with the SFIO. The PCF's hypocrisy, given the

role it had played in organising armed resistance during the German occupation of France, angered many of its younger members.

By 1956, reports of the army torturing Algerians were reaching the French population and there was increased opposition to the war within France.

The “Young Resistance” was an illegal organisation of draft resisters and anti-war activists. They stopped trains transporting troops to Algeria and distributed leaflets at demonstrations encouraging desertion. They even assisted jail-breaks of FLN members.

Alain Krivine, a member of the Young Resistance, explained that its activity “was a matter of ‘practical’ internationalism, and not one of discourse”. The PCF, despite its talk of internationalism, was completely opposed to draft resistance and expelled members found to materially support the FLN.

Philosopher Francis Jeanson set up an illegal network of “suitcase carriers” transporting money raised among migrant Algerians in France to the FLN. White French supporters were less likely than Algerians to be stopped by police.

In September 1960, members of the Jeanson network were put on trial and eventually sent to prison. Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and other famous intellectuals and artists signed a “Manifesto of the 121”, defending the right to refuse conscription and to support Algerian resistance. The SFIO and PCF condemned the manifesto but 20,000 students demonstrated in support of the accused.

In October 1961, the FLN called on supporters to demonstrate in Paris after a racist curfew was imposed on the 150,000 Algerians living there. About 30,000 broke the curfew to demonstrate and more than 200 were killed by police. The office of the Communist Party newspaper *L’Humanité*, along the march route, kept its iron shutter down, refusing shelter for bleeding, wounded Algerians.

The “practical” internationalism of draft refusal and transporting NLF funds were connected to the dissemination of propaganda encouraging opposition to the war. This put pressure on the SFIO and the PCF.

In 1958 the left-wing of the SFIO split off and became part of the anti-colonial PSU (United Socialist Party).

Dissidents in the PCF student wing were expelled in 1965, forming a Trotskyist group that played a key role in the May 1968 student



Above: Algerian FLN fighters during the war of independence
Photo: Zdravko Pečar/
Wikimedia Commons

demonstrations.

Right to resist

Socialists support the right for nationalities oppressed by imperialism to demand self-determination through whatever means they choose.

The brutal colonial violence of the French occupation of Algeria, and France’s determination to hold onto its colonial possession, were responsible for the violent struggle that developed. The blame for all the violence lies with the occupying power.

Algerians found out through bitter experience that France would never give them equal rights or allow independence until they were forced to.

Israel today is a settler-colonial state backed by Western imperialism that was established through the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their lands, illegally occupying the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza and enforcing apartheid within its own borders.

It has shown no interest in serious negotiations or concessions towards the Palestinians. Israel expanded settlements and continued to dispossess Palestinians even while supposedly negotiating to create a Palestinian state during the Oslo Accords in the 1990s.

Israel has murdered non-violent Palestinian protesters, such as during the Great March of Return in 2018, and armed resistance fighters alike. The Palestinians have a right to national liberation—but this is impossible while Israel remains as a Zionist state that denies them equal rights and continues to dominate and dispossess them.

Those in France who aided the FLN recognised the Algerians’ right to resist French colonial occupation, including through the use of armed struggle. They resolutely opposed the imperialist policy of their own government.

Not recognising that all the blame for violence rests with the occupying colonial power led to racist explanations of violence, such as that Algerians are inherently backward and violent.

All oppressed nations under military occupation have the same right to choose the means by which they resist. This applies to the Palestinians just as it did to the Algerians.

But unconditional support for struggles against colonialism and occupation, and making it clear we side with them against imperialism, must not mean that support is uncritical.

While the FLN talked of socialism, once in power it imposed an authoritarian regime and repressed working class opposition while a new ruling class grew rich. This was a consequence of its mistaken focus on armed struggle led by a small elite, instead of a mass democratic movement.

Small organisations like the “Young Resistance” in France helped turn the French population against continued war in Algeria and played a key role in the new radical left that emerged through the 1960s.

Similarly, socialists in Australia need to defend the right of the Palestinians to resist and campaign to break Australia’s material support for Israel and US imperialism, playing our part in working to end the West’s support for the Israeli terror state.

ISRAEL IMPOSES SLOW DEATH IN GAZA AS GENOCIDE GOES ON

By Maeve Larkins

TRUMP'S SO-CALLED "ceasefire" in Gaza is now more than six months old. But Israel's genocide continues as it denies entry of aid and basic medical supplies to a devastated population.

The Global Sumud Flotilla has again exposed Israel's brutal efforts to maintain the blockade of Gaza and block the delivery of aid. As we went to press 57 boats were making another attempt to reach Gaza after Israel illegally seized 22 boats far from its own coastline near Greece.

After they arrested 211 activists, Israeli soldiers savagely beat people with rifle butts and batons. Australian activist Zack Schofield said, "I saw elderly men shot at point-blank range with rubber bullets. I saw a young woman, part of my crew, punched in the ribs about 10 or 11 times."

Under the ceasefire agreement Israel was meant to open the Rafah border crossing, allow 600 aid trucks per day into Gaza and stop the bombing. Israel hasn't done any of this.

It has continued near-daily attacks on Palestinians, killing at least 850 people during the "ceasefire". This adds to a total death toll of at least 72,000 since the genocide began.

It is still strangling aid deliveries. Just 37 per cent of the aid agreed was allowed entry in the first six months of the ceasefire. An average of 227 trucks a day are now entering Gaza compared to 400 daily before the genocide.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) says this is "translating into entirely preventable deaths". The genocide continues at a slower pace.

Life in the camps of Gaza is a living hell. More than 60 million tonnes of debris litter the strip. Amid the rubble people are living in makeshift tents often made of blankets, fabric scraps and nylon sheets, which rarely keep out the rain.

The inability to repair sanitation systems means disease and pests have become widespread, with infestations of rodents and insects. One family described to *Mondoweiss* how they woke at night, on a wet floor in total



Above: Hunger in Gaza continues due to lack of aid, forcing people to rely on community kitchens like this one in Khan Younis Photo: Tariq Mohammad/APA Images

darkness, to the screams of their one-year-old. He was being gnawed on by a large rat, "about the size of a rabbit".

Yet Israel imposes a near complete ban on entry of tents and caravans, items needed to repair power generators, water treatment products and even rat poison.

Most medical equipment like ultrasound machines are banned and there are severe shortages of basic medicines like insulin.

No end in sight

Even under the ceasefire Israel has continued to occupy huge areas of Gaza. The "yellow line" that marks its area of control has been continually expanded, with Israel now holding over 60 per cent of Gaza. Palestinians who approach too close to the line are shot.

Doctors Without Borders writes that, "The perimeter of the yellow line has become a kill zone, with gunfire, airstrikes and shelling from Israeli forces happening daily."

And there is no end in sight. Further ceasefire talks between Israel, Trump and Hamas have stalled.

Hamas are demanding that Israel upholds its current ceasefire obligations before any discussion of the next phase of the agreement.

Yet the US and Israel are demand-

ing that Hamas completely disarms first before any Israeli withdrawal, opening of border crossings or reconstruction. Hamas has every right to refuse to do so—with Israel continuing breaching ceasefire agreements and arming gangs inside Gaza to destabilise the area.

Israel says it may consider the ceasefire void if Hamas will not disarm. Israeli media has been reporting plans for a "return to war" in Gaza.

Meanwhile in the West Bank, Israel is aggressively expanding its illegal settlements. Last year Israel opened 54 new settlements across the West Bank, an annual record. Just last month, the Knesset approved 34 new settlements in a single sitting.

Every new settlement means even more horror for Palestinians, as Israeli settlers, supported by the IDF, forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes, tear up their crops, and push them into narrower pockets of Palestinian-controlled land.

Israel is pushing towards the complete ethnic cleansing of both Gaza and the West Bank.

Our Labor government continues to supply them with the arms, intelligence and political cover to do this.

We need to keep fighting for real sanctions on Israel to stop the horror.

.....
Israel imposes a near complete ban on entry of tents and items needed to repair power generators

Solidarity