Solidarity

Issue No. 213 / November 2026 $3/$5



REVOLT IN FRANCE

THE POWER THAT CAN FIGHT THE RIGHT

ONE NATION

Racism and the Victorian election

UKRAINE

Why Shoebridge is right to oppose sending arms

US ELECTIONS

Mamdani and the rise of Democratic Socialism

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.

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Things they say

The pressure on people's cost of living–the cost pressure of the inflation that's in the global economy–is manifesting not just in prices but also in social and economic instability
Foreign Minister Penny Wong fretting about protests like those in France and across Europe breaking out here

I like people that like me. I just like it, and I can't help it. It's a character flaw. I mean, I've had a couple of people, really horrible human beings, horrible, horrible, terrible people, but I heard through the grapevine they really liked me a lot. So, I like them too.
Donald Trump likes horrible human beings

I am a capitalist, and I'm also a democratic socialist... I think democratic socialism is a big tent
Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) member and candidate for LA mayor Nithya Raman

We will absorb the cost … and we're not concerned about it whatsoever.
NSW police minister Yasmin Catley is happy to spend more money on cops, including arming the new Armed Response Command with assault rifles

To do the work they need to do in a changing world.
Finance Minister and ACT Senator Katy Gallagher explains the need for a new $1 billion National Security Office Precinct for security agencies

We just realized that the three of us belong to different religions. I am Sikh, Papri is Hindu, and Rosy is Muslim. This is exactly what the government fears—people becoming united to fight its tyranny
Kaur, a participant in the Cockroach movement protests in India

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INSIDE THE YTEM

Trumpian antisemitism report smears the left

ANTISEMITISM ENVOY Jillian Segal has released a new report that smears leftwing and progressive activists as antisemitic and updates the envoy's "priorities" for an authoritarian crackdown on the right to protest and free speech to silence opposition to Israel.

The pro-Palestine Jewish Council of Australia said the report's claims "verge on conspiratorial" as it "suggests that the language of international human rights law, including allegations of apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide, has been appropriated to demonise Israel, dismissing serious findings and allegations made by international human rights organisations and United Nations bodies."

The report labels leftwing opposition to Israel as "the most pervasive manifestation of antisemitism" in Australia today, targeting the argument that Israel is "a colonial project that is inherently racist" in particular. It smears opposition to Zionism, Israel's existence as an ethnically exclusive Jewish state founded on the dispossession and genocide of the Palestinians, as antisemitic.

But for Segal, any support for Palestine is suspect as it can be a "gateway" to anti-Zionism.

The report comes in the lead up to the Royal Commission into Antisemitism's recommendations, set to be released on 18 December.



Antisemitism envoy Jillia Segal Photo: Australian Parliament

The report demands more anti-protest laws, including "time, place and manner" restrictions, move-on powers for police and bans on face coverings at demonstrations. It also calls for a review and re-education program for prosecutors and judges.

It calls for more ruthless efforts to deny visas to people where there is a "risk of holding antisemitic views".

Segal continues to demand an external oversight body to monitor the ABC and SBS, complaining that there has been too much coverage of Gaza, as if the media should have censored coverage of Israel's crimes and the historic and appalling genocide since October 2023. It also includes calls for a further crackdown at universities and in the health and arts sectors.

As the Jewish Council's Bart Shteinman put it, the report is driven by "a rightwing ideology that will go to incredible lengths to silence those drawing attention to Israel's genocide in Gaza". Its measures must be resisted.

945 days in wrongful detention

AN AUSTRALIAN citizen was unlawfully held in immigration detention for 945 days until their release last year, the Home Affairs Department has admitted.

The department threw him in detention in 2022 after his release from jail, planning to deport him to New Zealand, despite his claims to be an Australian citizen. It reviewed his case three times before receiving confirmation from the New Zealand government he wasn't their citizen.

His was one of 30 cases of people unlawfully detained by immigration officials in the 2024-25 year, an ombud's report has revealed. Commonwealth ombud Iain Anderson says the department still has a culture of "act first, check later" and fails to give "sufficient weight" to the risk of unlawful detention.

The illegal detention of Australian citizens is a regular feature of the government's brutal and racist detention system. In 2001 Vivian Solon was wrongly deported to the Philippines while Cornelia Rau was illegally detained for ten months in 2004 and 2005 in the Baxter desert detention centre during a mental health breakdown.

Mass sackings at NAB while profits grow

NATIONAL AUSTRALIA Bank is sacking 2500 workers, with 1500 to be gone by Christmas. This comes after its profits for the last nine months climbed to $4.6 billion. CEO Andrew Irvine pocketed $7.6 million last year.

Shamefully, workers were given notice of the cuts only via email. One reason is the bank's efforts to use AI to replace workers, with the industry moving quickly to use the technology. The bank tried to avoid mentioning AI in explaining the job cuts, referring instead to the impact of "rapid technological change".

It follows ANZ's sacking of 3500 workers and 1000 contractors last year. The Finance Sector Union says the Commonwealth has also sacked 1000 workers this year.

WA gas plant's climate pollution exposed

CHEVRON'S GORGON gas project off the WA coast has been releasing massive plumes of methane gas, a potent source of global heating, triggering a warning from the UN Environmental Programmme.

The plumes were detected by the Tanager-1 satellite five times in a row since November last year.

The WA government's Department of Water and Environmental Regulation was not even sure whether it had responsibility for the issue, despite the problem going on for the past year. It only began to investigate once the story was exposed in the media.

In late August, the most recent check, the satellite recorded an average release of 7.8 tonnes of methane an hour. That is equivalent to burning 110,000 kilograms of coal an hour. Methane is about 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, the other main cause of global heating, over a 20-year period.

Gas emissions from mining operations may be massively under-estimating the release of methane and their impact on the climate. International Energy Agency reports, also based on satellite images, have estimated the coal and gas sector could be under-reporting their emissions by 60 per cent.

Indigenous mother shackled in hospital

AN INDIGENOUS woman was shackled to a hospital bed and separated from her newborn baby in Townsville after giving birth on 10 October. Debbie Kilroy from Sisters Inside said she had been "shackled on and off since she came into the hospital".

The woman was brought from prison to give birth by caesarean section and shackled after the birth when her baby was taken to the neonatal intensive care unit. In the same week Indigenous Senator Lidia Thorpe tried to pass a bill to ban shackling. "The Albanese government had the opportunity to take a stand against this barbaric practice," she said. "Instead, they voted to allow it to continue."

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union's Fridae King said, "The use of restraints during labour and birth is traumatising and may compromise care."

EDITORIAL

Global revolt shows what's needed to fight wage cuts and One Nation

ANGER AT Anthony Albanese is growing. The cost of living keeps getting worse and all the government can offer is more cuts.

Inflation has jumped to 4.3 per cent. Interest rates are now at an 18-year high after the Reserve Bank hiked borrowing costs for the fifth time this year.

And there is no end in sight to Donald Trump's disastrous war on Iran, which is pushing up petrol and food prices. He is expected to escalate the war further now the US midterm elections are done.

Instead of any further efforts to protect workers' living standards Albanese is giving in to the ruling class demands for budget cuts. Finance Minister Katy Gallagher says there is "enormous effort being placed ... on the savings side" as the government prepares the mid-year budget update.

But it's not government spending that is driving inflation. Forcing through cuts will do nothing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or push down oil prices. All it will mean is more pain for workers.

Albanese's failures are boosting One Nation and their racist demands to cut immigration.

Victorian election

The outcome of the Victorian election on 28 November, a test for both One Nation and the major parties, will be felt around the country.

Here a Labor government even more unpopular than Albanese is facing electoral wipeout. Like federal Labor, Victorian Labor Premier Ben Carroll has sought to respond to his government's falling popularity by moving to the right.

Carroll has attacked public sector workers, trying to hold down wages in a cost-of-living crisis.

He has promised to be more pro-business and launched a royal commission into the CFMEU that will lead to more anti-union measures.

Victoria faces a very right-wing government under Liberal leader Jess Wilson. One Nation is polling around 20 per cent. The Liberals may be forced into coalition with One Nation if it wins lower house seats.

Even if the Liberals win government in their own right, One Nation is almost certain to take the balance of power in the upper house—meaning the Liberals will need their support for any legislation. One Nation will demand even more racist and reactionary policies.



Above: Rally in Napoli in Italy as part of strike action on 30 October Photo: Si Cobas Napoli

The Liberals have promised to cut the state's debt as well as reduce taxes. This is likely to lead to cuts well beyond the attack on public sector jobs they have already announced.

They will axe support for the Treaty with First Nations people and impose even more draconian bail and sentencing laws that will throw more Indigenous and African youth into prison.

The Liberals also want to attack the right to protest through a permit system for demonstrations and police move-on powers to disperse protesters. This is targeted at support for Palestine in particular, alongside plans to ban the slogan "Globalise the Intifada".

In Victoria, whether you vote Greens, Labor or socialist at the election to stop the right—preferencing Labor above the Liberals and putting One Nation last—what's more important is organising to resist the Liberals and One Nation afterwards.

The Unite against Racism protests against One Nation and the far right have made an important start in bringing together activists from across unions and the left.

The public sector union strikes in the lead up to the election by teachers and school staff, council workers, doctors and allied health workers show the possibility of working class resistance to falling real wages and the Liberals' plans.

The student protests in France have become a lightning rod for a much broader fightback

Global revolt

The revolt spreading across Europe shows what's needed to fight cuts and falling living standards, as well as push back the far right. The high school student protests in France, which blockaded and shut down the school system, have transformed the political situation.

Instead of the far right setting the agenda students and workers have shown that it's possible to resist the cuts to education and public services and fight to improve living standards.

The student protests have become a lightning rod for a much broader fightback, with enormous demonstrations weekend after weekend. There is serious pressure on the union leaders to call action, with a general strike being held on 5 November as we go to press.

In Portugal and Spain there have been mass protests over the cost of housing. In Albania, Italy and Germany as well as in India young people and workers have taken to the streets.

One Nation and the far right feed off despair about housing prices and the cost of living, diverting anger onto migrants and refugees. The revolt in Europe has polarised society on class lines, pointing the finger at the billionaires and CEOs who are responsible for destroying our lives and our future. The strikes are a glimpse of the working class power that can shut down capitalism.

We need to bring this spirit of global rebellion here.

Unions rage at Victorian Labor's penny-pinching on pay

By Tom Orsag

PUBLIC SECTOR workers have had to fight Victoria's Labor government throughout 2026 over pay.

Labor has sought to hold down wages in an bid to pay off debt and promise business tax breaks.

Workers at the Arts Centre, members of the CPSU and MEAA, held two 24-hour strikes in September, shutting down a number of shows. They have won pay rises of 13 per cent over three years including 5 per cent in the first year.

Teachers, who also finalised a pay deal in September, have seen Premier Ben Carroll then delay reaching the state's school funding target until 2031 and impose immediate cuts to funding for students with disabilities.

ASU members across eight councils have been fighting for a multi-employer agreement for over a year.

The council workers were offered a pathetic pay rise of 2.75 per cent starting on 1 January 2027, effectively a pay cut with inflation at 4.3 per cent. It includes no back-pay, despite their old agreement expiring in July last year, beyond a one-off payment of $1200.

The offer would lock in wage rises at around the same level until 2030. Workers want a 22 per cent pay rise over four years, after below-inflation pay increases since 2021.

One waste depot in Merri-bek Council staged a 48-hour strike in early October, as other workers struck for 24 hours.

Direct Federal and State Government funding to councils has declined since 2014.

Doctors in public hospitals narrowly accepted a one-year deal in October, delaying further industrial action until March.

More than 3500 allied health professionals rejected a similar one-year deal with a 92 per cent vote against. It would have prevented further strike action until October 2027.

The last agreement in 2022 delivered paltry 2 per cent a year pay rises. They have held strikes since June, which are set to continue even as the election nears.

Members of HACSU have been fighting private disability providers to the NDIS. Workers at 35 Scope homes took strike action in September. This comes after the end of extra state government funding for group houses it runs.



Above: Council workers on strike in Melbourne Photo: ASU Vic/Tas

The ASU has said it won't door-knock for Labor and is running anti-Labor ads after the government failed to lift the cap on council rates.

The firefighters' union is calling on its members to put Labor last and the electrical union is cutting back on funding for Labor's campaign.

Workers' anger at Labor is likely to help push it out of government at November's election—and Labor only has itself to blame.

Debt scare no excuse for more cuts

A CAMPAIGN spreading fear about Victorian government debt is being used to soften opposition to cuts following the November state election.

TV and social media ads funded by a group called Fix Victoria that showed the state flooded in debt began airing in August.

Amplify, a lobby group set up by multi-millionaire businessman Paul Bassat, sponsored an open letter backed by 100 CEOs and AFL figures demanding a "credible plan" to reduce debt.

The mainstream media has echoed the claims, pointing to debt levels higher than other states that currently total $160 billion.

The state built up debt during the COVID pandemic, due to the cost of sustaining lockdowns that lasted longer than anywhere in the world. But most of the debt is the result of infrastructure spending on roads, rail projects and level crossing removals.

David Hayward of RMIT University has written that, "The overwhelming proportion of Victoria's debt has been used to accumulate assets. In 2025-26, Victoria's assets were worth $465 billion compared to $268 billion of total liabilities."

Much has been made of projections that the cost of repaying debt will grow to 9.4 per cent in four years' time compared to around 7 per cent now. But this is due to higher global interest rates, not surging debt levels. In the last financial year Victoria actually ran a budget surplus of $2.4 billion.

The state is hardly facing bankruptcy. Yet higher interest payments do reduce what the government can spend on schools, hospitals and services. The answer is to tax business and the wealthy to fund spending that working class people rely on.

But debt will be used as an excuse for cuts to the public service and other programs—especially if the Liberals win the election after 12 years of Labor government. So far the Liberals have promised to reduce taxes but have avoided specific proposals for major cuts. There is already pressure from big business and the ruling class to go further.The real problem in Victoria is not debt levels but the failure to tax the rich.

Crime panic and Labor's shift right fuel One Nation's racism

By Casey Forsyth

ONE NATION'S Victorian campaign launch opened not with promises to address the cost-of-living crisis, but with an AI-generated video depicting a Sudanese man with a machete, a Middle Eastern man with a bomb strapped to him and an Aboriginal person describing how they are paid on the basis of identity rather than merit.

Racism is at the centre of One Nation's rise and in Victoria hysteria about crime is fuelling it.

Victorian Labor is in crisis. Anger over the cost of living has seen it plunge in the polls. New Premier Ben Carroll has done everything possible to distance himself from his hated predecessors, driving around Victoria in a big red truck emblazoned with "new premier, new direction".

But this "new" direction is the same one Labor was already heading in: to the right. Carroll has called a royal commission into the CFMEU and promised to slash government spending, responding to a ruling-class campaign blaming the decline of public services and the cost-of-living crisis on overspending and debt.

Labor shifting working-class anger to the right has relied on a racist media onslaught about crime, particularly targeting Sudanese youth.

Under Jacinta Allan, Labor responded by ripping up its own 2023 bail law reforms to look "tough", introducing new laws that remove the requirement to consider remand as a last resort for children.

This has made racism a central political issue. A recent poll found that 33 per cent of respondents nominated the state's economy and finances as their highest voting priority, while 24 per cent picked crime and policing.

Carroll's attempts to further tighten bail laws and expand police powers have not convinced anyone that Labor has the answers on crime. Instead, they have fed the racism of the Liberals and One Nation, who are positioning themselves as the answer to Sudanese youth, Indigenous people and Palestine supporters.

Meanwhile, Labor is emboldening the Liberals' racist plan to scrap Treaty by destroying Djab Wurrung sacred trees and defying the Treaty body's intervention against Labor's bill denying prisoners their legal entitlement to at least one hour in the open air each day.



Above: Unite against racism rally in Melbourne Photo: Unite against racism

Labor shifting working-class anger to the right has relied on a racist media onslaught about crime

Unions and anti-racism

Sections of the union movement, including Victorian Trades Hall, have campaigned against One Nation's anti-worker credentials but avoided confronting their racism.

Combined with an unwillingness to organise strikes against Labor to win better wages and conditions, this has given One Nation space to grow.

The firefighters are a stark example. They are furious at Labor over ageing, faulty firetrucks, a six-year wage freeze and attacks on safety. The United Firefighters Union is campaigning to "put Labor last".

While it has not formally endorsed One Nation, it has indicated support, claiming that "[One Nation's Victorian leader] Warren Pickering has made some significant statements about firefighter safety—and we support those who support us." Among members, racism and support for One Nation are at fever pitch.

But anger at Labor does not have to go to the right. Anti-racist campaigning and workplace organising can shift it to the left.

Anger at the growing crisis in schools enabled Fight the Crisis, a rank-and-file teachers and school staff group, to push their union into strikes against Labor over pay and conditions this year. The group has also demanded that the school funding shortfall be addressed by abandoning the $1.6 billion committed to locking children up under Labor's bail laws.

Teachers are legally required to remain politically neutral at work. But Fight the Crisis has used Department policy opposing racism to organise a week of action teaching against racism.

This campaigning has been reinforced by Unite Against Racism, a new coalition that organised two rallies in October: against One Nation on 24 October, and against the racist Australia Marches on 1 November.

The rally against One Nation mobilised up to 350 people and received endorsements from the state branches of the AEU, NTEU, MUA, AMWU and ASU, as well as Bendigo Trades Hall Council.

Building on the AEU's endorsement, Fight the Crisis mobilised four school sub-branch banners, alongside flags from the AMWU and ASU.

The following week, 250 people counter-protested against Australia Marches, a racist group calling to "end mass immigration".

These marches help build the confidence to oppose racism directly, at a time when many accept the idea that how-to-vote cards and conversations on the cost of living are the only way to turn workers away from One Nation.

Taking the momentum of anti-racist campaigning into unions and building stronger fightbacks against whichever party is in power after November remains key to stopping the far right's growth.

Plans for more action after second strike shuts Sydney Uni

By Jacob Starling

ON 22 October, University of Sydney staff walked out on a 24-hour strike, their second this semester. Staff in the NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union) are fighting for a wage increase in line with inflation, greater job security, freedom of political expression, and guard-rails on the use of AI.

Hundreds of staff members attended pickets from 7am to 1pm, shutting the campus down, before gathering outside the quadrangle building for a rally.

"In September, over 500 of us came out to the picket lines with hundreds more supporting remotely", NTEU member Caitlin Erbacher told the crowd at the closing rally. "And today, we have delivered another successful strike. We've shut down this campus, stopped delivery vehicles from entering."

Incoming NTEU Branch President John Buchanan noted the depth of support for the campaign across campus. "In the last month alone, 100 people have signed up to the union."

This growth is inseparable from the industrial action taken by the union over the past two months. Since the 2 September strike, USyd management has been forced to offer concessions to staff, especially around provisions for gender affirmation, disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. There has also been some small progress on academic workloads, de-casualisation and reduction of fixed term employment. However, negotiations around wages, AI, and freedom of speech are at a standstill.

"We need to show management that we won't be rushed into accepting a subpar agreement or any erosion of our rights", said Erbacher. "If necessary, we might need to carry this campaign into next year."

More industrial action will be necessary to force concessions from management. At a 600-strong stop-work meeting held in the week before the strike in October, the Branch President bypassed the Branch Committee to move a last-minute motion to try to call off the strike.

He argued that industrial action was a "finite resource", and that the strike should be postponed indefinitely until we were stronger. In practice, this would have meant either postponing further strike action until the new year, or winding down the campaign and accepting whatever deal the university offers over the summer break.

Cancelling the strike would have sent a message to management that the branch was ready to fold. Thankfully, the majority of union members voted down the motion and the strike went ahead. It will take a much more fighting approach to rebuild momentum and take the further strike action needed to win fair pay and conditions for staff members.



Above: Staff gather for a rally during the strike at Sydney Uni on 22 October Photo: Solidarity

Much more still to fight for at Melb Uni

AS WE went to press NTEU members at the University of Melbourne were set to vote on an EBA deal proposed by university management, and to which the union has given in-principle agreement. But a motion from the floor of the meeting is calling for members to vote No.

The branch committee says the deal is acceptable; but it falls short on all three claims the branch focussed on for this campaign—workloads, sick leave for casuals, and a consultative major change clause. There is no sick leave for casuals and only weak versions of the other two.

Staff are right to be sceptical about the offer of 17 per cent superannuation for casuals that is being highlighted as a major victory. The university has a stated commitment to de-casualisation, and the increased super would not come into effect until 2029. With inflation currently above 4 per cent, the pay rise of 3.5 per cent a year over four years is also a cut in real wages.

The sub-par outcome is a direct result of the branch's committee's campaign strategy so far which has prioritised negotiations divorced from any effective industrial strategy.

A half-day strike was held in week five of semester, and a further one-day strike in week 11 to launch a week-long teaching ban (from which any classes involving in-class assessment were exempt). In the six weeks between them there was no action.

What has been missing are consistent actions aimed at bringing more workers into the struggle and generating support for further strike action across the campaign. The lopsided strategy meant the union had little leverage over management at the bargaining table.

Organising efforts, driven by the rank-and-file, point to what's needed to win a better deal. The branch committee initially opposed organising pickets for the week 11 strike! But there were successful pickets, with over 100 people across three locations after a members' meeting carried an amendment against the branch committee. New members joined the union and open strike committee meetings saw staff members from a wider range of work areas drawn into organising for the first time.

The potential of the branch has not been tapped. With more preparation time to plan effective industrial actions, we could see a very different outcome. Many members can see that the deal is unacceptable. The lessons from this year can place us in good stead to keep fighting for the deal that we deserve.

George Woods

Opposition to AI data centres grows—unite to stop the roll-out

By Paddy Gibson and Caitlin Boyce

IN AUGUST, residents of Sanderson Street in Yarraville in Melbourne used parked cars and wheelie bins to obstruct workers trying to install 15 metre power polls.

This work was part of an upgrade to the electricity supply for AI data centre developer NextDC.

The company operates a 60MW facility in nearby Footscray and has applied to increase its capacity to 225MW. This would see the data centre use the same amount of power as 428,000 households.

Locals fronted state and federal inquiries this year detailing the huge disruption of living next to the data centre—including a constant hum and irregular power supply.

The blockade produced delays to the company's expansion plans. When NextDC announced this, its shares plummeted 41.7 per cent, wiping more than $3 billion from its market value.

Also in October, Australian data centre developer Firmus abandoned plans to float on the stock market. The company is backed by the giant US chip manufacturer NVIDIA, the most valuable company on Wall Street.

Firmus was expecting the float to raise $44 billion, which would been the second largest in Australian history after Telstra in 1997, despite annual revenue of only $50 million.

These episodes illustrate the huge resources going towards the data centre roll-out across Australia, but also the growing resistance to it.

Moratorium

In late September, the Goodman Group withdrew plans for a proposed $1.2 billion data centre at Lane Cove on Sydney's north shore after a concerted community campaign.

Goodman also faces opposition in Guildford in Sydney's west, where its "Project Pluto" data centre, approved in July, led to a protest meeting of over 200 people on 26 October. Residents spilled out of a Cumberland Council meeting later that week that resolved to campaign against the centre.

Data centres in NSW are considered State Significant Developments, transferring planning powers from councils to the NSW Government's Independent Planning Commission (IPC).

With 19 data centres in the IPC pipeline and an additional 20 in early assessment stages, the Minns government has promised developers it can turn around approvals in just 75 days. Councils have also been cut out of decision making in Victoria and their peak body has called for a moratorium on all new data centre developments.



Above: Protest against a data centre at Tungkillo in South Australia
Photo: Robert Simms MLC

At Arncliffe in southern Sydney, Stop the Cooks River AI Project (SCRAP) has held protests against plans by developer Stockland to build a data centre.

This is part of an industrial park development that would destroy some of the last remaining green space on the much-loved local river.

SCRAP rallies have been addressed by representatives from the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), concerned about the impact of AI on education and workers' rights.

The NTEU resolved at its National Council in October to support the call for a moratorium on new data centres, citing "the fundamental unsustainability of AI systems reliant on energy intensive data centres that are already driving a boom in fossil fuel use in a time of climate crisis".

The Goodman Group withdrew plans for a proposed $1.2 billion data centre at Lane Cove on Sydney's north shore

Out of sight

Albanese has announced that new regulations, to be tabled in parliament before the end of the year, will prohibit data centres in suburban areas.

In Victoria, however, similar commitments only led to a 150 metre buffer zone between housing and data centres.

The biggest data centres planned are already being proposed in industrial parks in working-class areas like Western Sydney, or in regional and remote areas the government hopes will be out of sight and out of mind.

NSW's biggest proposal is in rural Wagga Wagga—an eye watering $15 billion, 1.4 GW project.

Zerra DC recently announced a 2.4GW project for Dalby in Queensland. Zerra has a partnership with Anthropic, who wants to make Australia its "second home", and utilise these mega facilities to train its AI models.

Despite initially promising to mandate data centres use renewable energy, Albanese has already conceded that projects in Queensland will be able to draw power from coal-fired power stations.And at rural locations including Moss Vale in NSW, Weddell in the NT and the Kimberley in WA, developers are planning to power data centres with new gas-fired power stations.

Albanese is committed to the mass data centre roll-out, seen as an opportunity for Australian companies to profit and to tmore closely integrate Australia into the US military alliance.

Locating data centres in Australia to power major US AI models is only possible due to AUKUS and other security partnerships with the US, ensuring access to advanced chips and models denied to China and other rivals.

But the industry offers no benefits to ordinary people—and the growing anger about its rush to profit at our expense shows data centre developments can be stopped.

Harris farm targeted over West Bank settlement dates

SUPERMARKET CHAIN Harris Farm is stocking dates from Israel's settlements in the occupied West Bank. Stop the War on Palestine in Sydney is organising a day of action to target its stores on 28 November, demanding the company stop selling them and that the Albanese government join sanctions on goods from the settlements.

This follows a protest of 40 people outside its Marrickville store in October. Harris Farm is already feeling the pressure. After displaying the dates prominently on its shelves in Marrickville in the weeks before the protest, the company removed ahead of the rally.

Harris Farm has 33 stores nationally, mostly in Sydney and NSW as well as three stores in Queensland and one in Canberra.

The dates are sold under the King Solomon brand and produced by Hadiklaim, Israel's largest date growers cooperative and a global exporter of Medjool dates. Hadiklaim is listed in the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights database of companies linked to the illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Selling the dates delivers profits to Israel's illegal settlements that help entrench its brutal military occupation of Palestinian land.

Palestine activist groups have called on Harris Farm to stop stocking the dates in the past. But in the face of escalating settler and military violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, and the growing momentum for sanctions, it now has added urgency.

Israel's West Bank occupation and settlements are illegal under international law, as confirmed by an International Court of Justice ruling in 2024 that called on it to dismantle them "as rapidly as possible".

In September 12 countries including the UK, Canada and France announced sanctions on all trade with the Israeli settlements, citing "unprecedented levels of settler violence and settlement expansion". Since 2022 the Israeli government has approved 103 new settlements, in addition to 127 in the whole period since 1967.

The Albanese government has refused to join the sanctions.

Rather than simply a consumer boycott, the campaign aims to stop the products being sold altogether, build the wider understanding about Israel's crimes and settler colonial project in the West Bank as well as the pressure for the government to act.



Above: Rally outside the Harris Farm store in Marrickville, Sydney
Photo: Solidarity

The dates deliver profits to Israel's settlements that help entrench its military occupation of Palestinian land

Queensland government to restrict right to strike

IN 2024, when the Liberal National Party (LNP) was elected in Queensland, leader David Crisafulli was very concerned to distance himself from the memory of the previous LNP government of very right-wing Campbell Newman, who had sacked 14,000 public servants and went on a privatisation binge.

But with the recent introduction of draconian anti-union legislation by Jarrod Bleiji, the LNP deputy leader and Industrial Relations Minister, comparisons of Crisafulli with Newman are becoming more obvious.

Crisafulli is trashing Victoria Park to build an Olympic stadium and his was the first government to ban the pro-Palestine slogans, "From the River to the Sea" and "Globalise the Intifada".

In July, Crisafulli initiated a Royal Commission into the CFMEU to back up his anti-union agenda and to stifle any construction union militancy linked with the 2032 Olympics building boom, with a new enterprise bargaining round opening in 2027.

Now, legislation amending the Industrial Relations Act gives sweeping powers to the Industrial Relations Minister to terminate industrial action—even to ban it before it actually starts. The legislation will cover all state government (teachers, nurses, paramedics, public servants) and local government workers.

The new laws will also allow bosses to deduct a whole day's pay for implementing work bans. The restrictions on the right to strike are like those that shackle workers under the federal Fair Work Act.

Associated with the restrictions on the right to strike are amendments to health and safety laws that will make it significantly harder for workers to access workers' compensation claims for psychological injuries.

In July, Bleiji also removed nurse and teachers' representatives from the WorkCover and Work Health and Safety Boards, appointing instead Frank McGuire secretary of the fake Teachers Professional Association of Australia.

On 21 October, the Queensland Council of Unions held a lunchtime protest of mostly officials and union staff outside Crisafulli's speech to the Queensland Media Club, promising a two-year campaign—in other words a campaign focused on voting Labor in 2028.

But Queensland workers haven't got two years to wait. The cost-of-living crisis is growing while Crisafulli is running a hard-line, low wage, anti-union government. The answer is not at the ballot box. It's the industrial power of construction workers, teachers and nurses that can break the laws and stop the rot.
Ian Rintoul

Bosses and the Reserve Bank waging war on workers

By James Supple

WAGES ARE going backward as the cost of living keeps rising. Australia's economy is also faltering. But all the answers being pushed by business and the mainstream media will mean workers are hit even harder.

Inflation rose to 4.3 per cent in September, delivering wage cuts in real terms for most workers.

Real wages have dropped by 7 per cent since March 2021 and the Reserve Bank estimates it will take another decade to reverse the losses. That means workers face 15 years with no real pay rise.

One third of households experienced food insecurity in the last year, an increase of 100,000 from the previous year to 3.6 million households, according to Foodbank.

Another survey found 12 per cent of the population are skipping meals to save money, while half are searching harder for discounts or cheaper meals.

The Reserve Bank's answer to this is to force up interest rates and demand cuts in government spending.

But Trump and Albanese's war on Iran is the main reason prices are rising. Higher interest rates do nothing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, as many have noted. Petrol prices jump 9.4 per cent in the month from August to September.

So the Reserve Bank's sledgehammer aimed at the economy is simply reckless. It means more workers lose their jobs as higher interest rates deliberately slow the economy.

Unemployment is up to 4.7 per cent and would have risen to 5 per cent in September if people had not given up looking for work altogether.

It also squeezes anyone paying off a home loan. The repayments on a median-sized home are at levels not seen since interest rates were at 15 per cent in the late 1980s, as a share of household budgets.

There are even fears it could drive the economy into outright recession.

The Reserve Bank claims there are "supply constraints", meaning that too much demand for goods and not enough supply is driving up inflation. But increasing unemployment and weak economic growth point in the opposite direction.



Council workers in Melbourne on strike for a pay rise after years of wages falling behind inflation Photo: ASU Vic/Tas

The Reserve Bank's answer is to force up interest rates and demand cuts in government spending

Business groups are also blaming the economic slowdown on low productivity growth. They want more attacks on workers' rights under industrial relations laws and even less restrictions on, for instance, the spread of AI data centres.

Stop Labor's cuts

There is growing ruling class pressure on Labor to impose budget cuts, with claims that government spending is driving inflation.

The Business Council of Australia's Bran Black called for cuts to public sector jobs and business regulations while the Liberals have demanded an end to climate and renewable energy programs.

But most government spending goes into vital services such as healthcare, aged care and schools. Cutting it makes life harder for workers—either forcing people to pay more to access services themselves or to go without. (One exception is surging military spending.)

Federal government spending has been rising as a percentage of the economy, to 26.9 per cent of GDP from 25.1 per cent in 2023. This comes even as Labor imposes major cuts to the NDIS and pushes below-inflation wage rises in the public service.

Former Reserve Bank Governor Philip Lowe has even said the government should be running a "sizeable" budget surplus instead of the current deficit, which would mean well over $30 billion in cuts.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers may be pushing back against the pressure to slash the budget by defending Labor's spending. But he has also promised to deliver more cuts in the budget update in December.

Tax the rich

The real solution is to tax the rich. Australia is a low tax country even by international standards.

If the tax take grew to the average among the OECD club of developed nations government revenue would jump by $100 billion.

That is double the amount the government currently spending on the NDIS, schools and JobSeeker payments combined.

The money is there. A 2 per cent wealth tax on anyone with more than $5 million could raise $41 billion a year, reintroducing inheritance tax, $10 billion, and completely scrapping the capital gains tax discount, $19 billion a year, according to the Australia Institute.

A 25 per cent gas export tax, backed by The Greens, David Pocock and the ACTU, would raise $17 billion a year.

Reversing privatisation to bring more services back under government control would also bring down costs for workers and reduce inflation.

Childcare fees for instance have surged due to the free market model that's opened it up to private profiteering. Yet government subsides make up most of childcare operators' income. They should be nationalised.

Labor's willingness to give in to the demands for cuts and appease the demands of big business must be resisted.

We need to fight for higher wages and measures to make sure workers don't pay for the crisis.

Greens leader right to oppose arming Ukraine

By Maeve Larkins

NEW GREENS leader David Shoebridge has opposed Australia sending weapons to Ukraine.

His position has been attacked widely. Labor and some within the Greens have condemned it, while Ukraine's Ambassador to Australia accused The Greens of seeking an outcome where "our entire nation is swallowed up by Russia".

But Shoebridge is right to oppose further weapons shipments. The Ukraine war is a horrifying proxy war involving the world's major imperialist powers. The US and Europe have backed and armed Ukraine in an effort to inflict a defeat on Russia and deliver a blow against Russia's key ally, China.

This is why the US has funnelled in more than $270 billion in weapons, military advisors and training, sacrificing Ukrainian lives to bolster US global domination. Trump has reduced US direct assistance but the US's European allies are making up the gap by paying the US and providing $200 billion in support across 2025 and 2026.

While Russia began the invasion, the US and the EU equally have blood on their hands, both for pushing Ukraine into the conflict and for massively escalating it once it started.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO has steadily advanced eastwards, ignoring Russia's warnings that further NATO expansion into Ukraine would be crossing a "red line". Alongside this the US and EU have sought to grab markets, resources and profits in Russia's former empire. Trump has looted Ukraine by taking control of its rare earth metals and natural resources.

Between 2014 and the Russian invasion, the US spent over $2.5 billion arming Ukraine and training its troops.

Ukraine was upgraded by NATO to an "Enhanced Opportunity Partner" as part of a pathway into full NATO membership. Putin responded to NATO's military advance by annexing Crimea and supporting pro-Russian militias in Ukraine's Donbas region.

After Russia's invasion, NATO threw itself into massively escalating the conflict, hoping that a rapid counter-offensive could massively weaken Russia.

In 2022, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Kyiv and, according to a member of Zelensky's negotiating team, discouraged a possible peace deal and said "let's just fight".



Above: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky meeting with Mark Rutte, head of NATO
Photo: President of Ukraine

The US and Europe have armed Ukraine in an effort to inflict a defeat on Russia and a blow against its key ally, China

But the war is now dragging on beyond what the US wants. Trump has been trying to wind the war up, pressuring both Zelensky and Putin to make concessions and negotiate a peace. Zelensky wants NATO to give a security guarantee to prevent Russia re-starting the war while Putin wants Ukraine to cede territory Russia has not been able to capture and repudiate its bid to join NATO.

Stalemate

After four years of fighting, the war is locked in a bloody, grinding stalemate.

Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed and up to 600,000 troops have been slaughtered. Thousands of remote-controlled attack drones litter the skies above a "kill zone" stretching several kilometres either side of the front. The drones hunt soldiers dug in across trenches whose walls are lined with half-buried corpses.

Ukraine is running out of soldiers. Military trucks roam urban streets looking for eligible men, who are forced into their likely death at the front. Support in Ukraine for continuing the war has collapsed, with a recent Gallup poll reporting that around 70 per cent want a negotiated peace and just 24 per cent support extending the war.

Shipping more weapons into the meat-grinder is only going to mean more butchery.

The European powers are using Ukraine and the war against Russia to justify a huge wave of militarisation in Europe.

Since the start of the Ukraine war, military spending across the EU has doubled from $340 billion in 2021 to $700 billion in 2026. Albanese in Australia is using similar arguments to justify spending $368 billion on nuclear submarines to prepare Australia for war against China. This money could be used for desperately needed housing and healthcare.

The US and its NATO allies hypocritically frame the conflict as a fight between authoritarianism and democracy while they continue to arm Israel's genocide in Gaza, violently repress protest movements in their own countries and do nothing to oppose US attacks on Venezuela and Cuba.

Shoebridge is right to oppose weapons shipments to Ukraine, following The Greens' longstanding pacifist opposition to weapons exports to any country. And the left should support him. But his position is not consistently anti-imperialist. In other ways Shoebridge and the Greens willingly support NATO and the war; they support financial aid to Ukraine and support sanctions (economic war) against Russia.

To consistently oppose the war in Ukraine, opposition to weapons exports must be linked with opposition to every element of Australia's militarism and its alliance with US imperialism.

Rage against the system as mass revolt rocks France

By Maya MacNamara



Above: High school students blockade the Louis-le-Grand high school in Paris
Photo: Wyslijp16/ Wikimedia Commons

SINCE THE beginning of October, a huge wave of struggle has erupted across France. Protests that began as a revolt against the terrible conditions in France's public school system have become a broader movement, demanding more social spending, standing for Palestine and immigrants' rights and against both police violence and the far right.

Similar mass protests and strikes have broken out across Europe, in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Albania.

The students have every right to be angry. School buildings have been severely neglected, with classroom temperatures as low as 5 degrees in winter and 40 degrees in summer, a lack of tables for students and cockroaches crawling from classroom walls.

The government has proven incapable of dealing with this situation. Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu announced his intent to address government debt through $86 billion in cuts to pensions, education and other social spending while leaving military spending untouched.

Things came to a head on 28 September. Public sector workers resolved to strike against the budget cuts. Students joined them, blockading hundreds of schools to protest learning conditions. Student blockades spread to more than half of all French high schools and 90 per cent of universities. They were joined by groups of striking health, railway and education workers.

The students were met with incredible violence from the police, urged on by the government. One 14-year-old had his jaw blown off by a tear gas grenade and hundreds were arrested. Anger spread through the French working class because of this police brutality.

The largest marches on Saturday 17 October saw over 800,000 people join 1000 protests across France. Huge demonstrations have continued every weekend.

The movement has linked together the struggle for Palestine and opposition to the fascist RN with the fight against cuts and austerity. It has united workers and students.

Crucially, it has shown the power of a mass movement on the streets to shift politics. The protests are a break with the mainstream parties and the idea that elections are the only way to win change. They have boosted Jean-Luc Melenchon, leader of the radical left LFI in the polls. What's more, the government has been forced to offer concessions—although they do not go far enough.

Le Pen and the fascists have also been exposed as siding with the authorities against the mass of the population on the streets, backing the police and calling for more law-and-order measures.

The movement has linked together the struggle for Palestine and opposition to the fascist RN with the fight against cuts

Police violence

The protests have also exposed the role of the police. Police have employed brutal violence to try to break the protests, using tear gas, "non-lethal" ordinance which has killed and maimed protesters, and water cannons. Cops have openly sided with fascists who have come through to wreck rallies on the streets.

The French state and media have attempted to undermine the movement by blaming rioting and property damage on a supposed radical faction of protesters ("breakers"), hell-bent on destroying buildings and businesses. But the smashed shop windows and looted stores are an outpouring of frustration against a system which denies basic needs and a future to young people.

And violence was the result of the disgusting conduct of police. At the 17 October march in Paris, police tried to prevent people accessing the protest meeting point through relentless use of tear gas before the protest had even begun.

The protests did not come from nowhere. In recent years, France has seen several waves of struggle, from the Gilets Jaunes (yellow vests) in 2018, to mass strikes over pensions in 2023. These movements won some concessions and showed how mass protests can weaken the government. However, these waves of revolt ended prematurely because the leaderships of the union federations failed to escalate the strikes and wound down the struggle.

The general strike set to be held on 5 November as we go to press is very encouraging. The possibilities of the current wave of struggle across France are immense—but the stakes are also high.

Marine Le Pen's fascist National Rally (RN) continues to lead polls for the presidential election next April and racists have been emboldened by the government's condemnation of the riots.

For the movement to go further it needs to trigger more serious and widespread workers' action: including longer and more frequent strikes as well as workplace occupations.

To avoid a repeat of the past, workers must organise themselves from below, rather than allowing union leaders to direct the struggle.

As a member of the CGT union in Fos-Sur-Mer said, "Our rights are the fruit of our struggles. We must keep defending them collectively. That very much includes the general strike on 5 November. And afterwards? Let's see, let's see …"

HOW KENNETT'S CUTS TRIGGERED MASS RESISTANCE

David Glanz explains how the onslaught of cuts from the newly elected Liberal government in Victoria in 1992 provoked mass strike action in response

WORKERS ANGRY about falling living standards, cuts to social spending, rising state debt and unemployment, a largely unknown Liberal Opposition leader, a stopgap Labor Premier leading an unpopular state ALP government facing a wipe-out.

It sounds very much like Victoria today as voters prepare to go to the polls on 28 November. But this was the situation in Victoria in October 1992.

The Liberals won in a landslide in the election on 3 October. Labor lost 19 seats, with the Coalition led by Jeff Kennett establishing a commanding majority of 61 to 27.

On the face of it, Victorian workers had lurched to the right, giving Kennett a clear mandate. But just a month later, 800,000 workers joined a political strike against the Liberals.

Many workers who had voted Liberal had intended it to be a protest vote, not expecting the Liberals to win. Other workers voted Liberal out of their anger with Labor, thinking things couldn't get worse.

Within weeks, Kennett had launched massive attacks on the education system and workers' rights. Things *were* getting worse. He immediately faced blowback.

It's an important lesson as Labor faces armaggedon on 28 November, this time at the hands of not just the Liberals but possibly One Nation.

Workers who are conned at the ballot box can be part of the fightback. What happens after an election, in the workplaces and on the streets, can prove decisive.

Blizzard of attacks

On 10 November 1992, the Victorian working class struck and came out on to the streets in numbers that shocked everyone, including union leaders, the media, the ruling class and workers themselves.

Perhaps 150,000 workers clogged central Melbourne. Tens of thousands also took to the streets across regional Victoria. Statewide, there were 800,000 on strike.

The demonstration was the biggest in decades, mobilising far beyond traditionally militant unions in manufacturing, the waterfront and construction. Members of the shop assistants' union, the SDA, marched in considerable numbers. Journalists at Murdoch's *Herald Sun* struck, as did federal and state public servants.

The mass strike, called by a Trades Hall mass meeting of 4000 delegates and shop stewards, was a response to a blizzard of attacks launched by Kennett. According to the *Herald Sun*, Kennett's government passed 34 bills in 12 sitting days:

- Dozens of government schools were closed immediately, with the final toll reaching more than 350, with the loss of 7000 teaching jobs
- New employment contracts were brought in which outlawed penalty rates, leave loading and picket lines
- Tens of thousands of public servants were sacked
- Water, electricity and gas were privatised
- Public transport came under attack, with tram conductors scrapped
- The government imposed a $100 tax on households.

Conventional wisdom

According to conventional wisdom, Kennett's victory indicated a shift to the right in Victorian politics and a popular acceptance that something had to be done to curtail the state's debt in the midst of the recession of the early 1990s.

In practice, his win was a result of a working class revolt at the ballot box against the austerity measures implemented by the previous Labor Premiers John Cain and Joan Kirner, which led to the axing of 31,000 jobs in three years and the sale of the State Bank of Victoria.

Perhaps 150,000 workers clogged central Melbourne. Statewide, there were 800,000 on strike

As the recession bit, Kirner put 2200 state government properties up for sale and contracted out services. Her government cut funding for community groups like the Public Tenants Union and the Aboriginal Advancement League. $105 million was cut from education in 1990 and $125 million the following year.

Kennett benefited from workers' outrage with Kirner over her cutbacks. But as soon as he gained office he launched a blitzkrieg against the working class.

Rather than achieving a quick knockout, his attacks provoked the return of the mass strike for the first time in two decades. Many in the ruling class panicked.

The nervousness was reflected in *The Age* the next day. "Yesterday's strike and rally has energised and empowered his real opposition [the unions] … Mr Kennett should back off and keep his eye on the substance of change rather than the form."

Kennett and his Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, were class warriors in the mould of Britain's Margaret Thatcher. Within days they had harangued *The Age* into a backflip. On 17 November it editorialised, "If it comes to the crunch … then the Government must prevail."

For most workers, 10 November was the beginning of the fightback. People began to organise—occupying schools in Richmond, Northland and Fitzroy that were slated to close in December, protesting the planned closure of the Upfield and Williamstown rail lines.

The argument to many workers seemed straightforward: widen the strike action (including shutting down the power stations in the Latrobe Val-

ley, which were exempted from the 10 November strike), and cripple the new government.

Union strategy

The union leadership saw it differently. Trades Hall was led by John Halfpenny, a former Communist Party metalworker, by then on the left of the ALP. He understood the need to make fiery speeches to put himself at the head of the movement. But he also began reminding workers that it would be "a long fight"—code for waiting for the next election.

The immediate outcome was to undermine the ACTU's national day of action against Kennett on 30 November. Workers in many parts of the country walked out on strike—in Brisbane, 5000 attended a mass meeting, with thousands more gathering in Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville.

But in Melbourne, there was no central rally. Strikers, including construction workers, metalworkers and public servants, marched separately, in some cases just city blocks apart. The unity and sense of power that workers had experienced on 10 November was beginning to be squandered.

The struggles drifted apart. Victorian public transport workers, wharfies, health workers, nurses, teachers and state public servants all took strike action. But the sense of one big fight was lacking. Trades Hall called off a strike in the power industry on 9 December and declared a "Christmas truce".

Numbers at a mass delegates meeting in Melbourne in February dipped to 2000. As *The Socialist*, a forerunner of *Solidarity*, reported at the time, "The willingness to fight was still there. Not one delegate spoke against action … But the mood was sober."

In a major warning sign, the tram workers' union held a mass meeting on the same day and accepted a shoddy deal, trading away conductors' jobs for minor concessions.

The mass delegates meeting did endorse a mass stoppage on 1 March and 80,000 marched. By "normal" standards, it was a magnificent turnout. But in the context of the previous November it represented a clear decline and everyone knew it.

There were no more mass rallies and, with Kennett looking powerful, even the sectional battles wound down. It was left to the occupiers of the three schools to carry the banner of struggle.

The legacy

Looking back, Kennett told the *Herald Sun* that his government won by attacking on several fronts at once. "The beauty of that strategy was that after the initial flurry of protests from those who were most affected, everyone started protecting their own area of interest. So we split the opponents."



Above: Workers on strike against Jeff Kennett's Liberal government in 1992

But this outcome was far from inevitable. The key problem was the politics of the union leadership and the layer of worker activists who looked to them. As *The Socialist* put it in February 1993, "Why is the union leadership so half-hearted? … Part of the answer lies in the nature of the trade union bureaucracy …

"Their central concern is to retain their position as negotiators. As Halfpenny said at the delegates meeting, the fault with the Tramways Union was not talking to the Liberals but failing to consult Trades Hall about the deal.

"The other part of the answer lies in the officials' belief that political change comes only through ALP governments. Behind the fighting rhetoric, the message from senior Victorian officials is that will take four years to beat Kennett—in other words, until the next state election. The union officials hold back the struggle because they think it cannot win."

In addition, the union officials and the left of the ALP did not know how to respond to the fear whipped up about the state's debt. Instead of arguing that workers shouldn't pay for the bosses' financial crisis, they quietly accepted that sacrifices had to be made, legitimising Kennett's cutback agenda.

Kennett survived until 1999, doing enormous damage to working class living standards and services.

The strikes of 1992 and 1993 did not stop him but they did have a lasting impact in two respects. One was a sharp shift to the left among union officialdom. Reform tickets won in unions including those covering electricians, textile workers, firefighters, food workers and metalworkers.

The other was to resurrect the practice of mass mobilisations and political strikes, particularly in Melbourne. The spontaneous walk-offs in support of East Timor in 1999, the S11 anti-capitalist protests of 2000, the massive march against war in Iraq in 2003 and the succession of huge rallies against the Workplace Relations Act and then WorkChoices owed a debt of gratitude to 10 November 1992.

Today, in the face of a coming Liberal win in Victoria we can draw three key lessons from 1992.

The first is the need to unite the separate struggles when they break out. When industrial resistance becomes general, it creates a political crisis for our rulers.

The second is to take on the political arguments that the Liberals and the media are already raising about rising state debt justifying the need for sackings and cuts.

And the third is to build a fighting socialist party that can provide an alternative political leadership within the workers' movement when union officials fail to do the right thing. The fightback against Kennett had the power to stop the government's attacks. Struggle is the way to stop the Liberals and One Nation this time as well.

ZOHRAN MAMDANI AND THE LIMITS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS IN THE US

James Supple looks at what socialist mayor of New York Zohran Mamdani has achieved in his first year in office and what it shows about the problems with socialist electoralism

THE MID-TERM elections are expected to deliver a wave of Democratic Party victories as voters punish Donald Trump for the cost-of-living surge due to his war on Iran.

The result, flipping control of the House of Representatives and possibly the Senate, will turn him into a lame duck President, unable to get anything through Congress.

Another surge of Democratic socialists and left-wingers winning election though the party is also likely.

This began when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and a series of other radical left figures entered Congress in 2018. It followed Bernie Sanders' first Presidential primary campaign promising a "political revolution" against the power of the billionaires.

Zohran Mamdani's election as Mayor of New York City last year created another shockwave. Mamdani not only identifies as a socialist but is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which now claims over 100,000 members.

The DSA backed Mamdani's campaign and has helped draw thousands of activists into electoral campaigns across the US, based on the hope that serious change can be won through putting insurgent left-wing figures into the Democratic Party.

Mamdani's win is also a serious test for this socialist electoral strategy, since he now has real power over a city budget of $170 billion and 300,000 staff.

However, after almost a year in office, Mamdani's efforts reveal the limits of his brand of socialism and the possibilities of change through capitalist parliamentary institutions.

Mamdani swept to office through promising to tax the rich and deliver action on the cost-of-living crisis for the city's working class through funding free buses, universal free childcare, rent freezes and affordable housing.

But this faces a series of major obstacles. The most obvious is the power of capitalists and the major corporations. New York has more billionaires than any city in the world and is home to Wall Street, the symbolic heart of US capitalism.

Although the rich failed to stop Mamdani's election, after spending $40 million on the campaign, they have many other means to tame or destroy governments.

Early on, there were hints that businesses and millionaire residents could exit the city, threatening the jobs of thousands of New Yorkers and depriving it of tax revenue.

More directly, corporate-backed politicians in the mainstream Democratic Party still have significant power over Mamdani—including the Governor of New York state, Democrat Kathy Hochul, and the state congress the party controls.

The Democratic Party is one of the central political institutions of US capitalism, with the backing of numerous billionaire donors.

Mamdani campaigned that he would pay for his agenda by raising $10 billion by taxing the rich. Any tax increases in New York City require approval from the state legislature and governor. So taxing the rich to fund Mamdani's program requires piling political pressure on the state Democratic Party—and fighting the capitalist interests behind them.

Instead Mamandi has sought to reassure capitalists and CEOs about his willingness to listen to them and compromise—organising a meeting with over 100 big business CEOs as soon as it looked like he would win the election.

Once in office he set up a Business Advisory Council that includes prominent banking and real estate figures including four billionaires, saying that, "The doors of City Hall are always open to New York's business leaders, and I look forward to welcoming their experience and strategic guidance."

Although the rich failed to stop Mamdani's election they have many other means to tame or destroy governments

Working within the system

Rather than confront the rich, Mamdani has relied on negotiations and deal-making inside the Democratic Party to try to gain concessions within the constraints of the status quo.

His first annual budget in May did deliver $2 billion in funding to expand free childcare and kindergarten programs, assisting parents unable to afford private childcare services. But this is still far from the universal free childcare that he promised. And there was no funding to deliver free buses or affordable housing.

Mamdani had to plug a $12 billion deficit for existing programs. He managed to extract an extra $2 billion in funding from Governor Hochul. But the only effort to tax the rich she agreed to was a charge on luxury second homes in the city, estimated to raise just $500 million.

This followed Mamdani's endorsement of Hochul in her re-election campaign this year, undercutting a challenge from the left by Antonio Delgado.

He balanced the budget through cuts across city agencies and postponing payments into city pension funds to future budgets.

The governor has already indicated that further budget help is unlikely to be forthcoming, saying that in next year's budget Mamdani should look at making more cuts and that, "They manage their budget now."

Instead of leading an insurgent movement to challenge capitalism and the Democratic Party bosses, Mamdani has resorted to public relations spin designed to present himself as a competent manager.

He has talked up faster buses instead of the free buses he promised, declaring he had sped up 175 routes

by “up to six minutes” a trip. In September he personally helped patch what he said was the city’s 200,000th pothole for the year, declaring, “It’s the little things that say a lot about whether government is delivering for New Yorkers.”

It was hardly a historic socialist achievement. Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg repaired 400,000 in a single year, he claimed.

Capitalist state

Another obstacle for anyone elected that wants to deliver radical change is the state bureaucracy. Whether at national, state or city-wide level, the state departments that run governments and deliver services do not simply follow the wishes of democratically elected leaders. They are run by public service bosses who see their role as working to support corporations and the status quo.

This is particularly true of the repressive arms of the state, including the police, courts and the army.

Instead of seeking to challenge them, Mamdani has capitulated to conservative resistance to change. This is most glaring in his approach to the New York Police Department.

One of the first demands on him from corporate interests was to retain Jessica Tisch as head of the NYPD. Tisch, a billionaire heiress and friend of Ivanka Trump, was appointed by previous mayor Eric Adams to implement plans to flood the city with extra cops and ramp up arrests to “crack down on crime”. She also describes herself as a “proud Zionist”.

Mamdani kept her in place and has done little to challenge the notoriously brutal NYPD.

When he ran for state assembly in 2020 following the Black Lives Matter movement, Mamdani backed defunding the police. While campaigning for mayor he backflipped and apologised for calling the NYPD racist.

During his campaign he promised to disband the police Strategic Reponse Group that is used against protests—something he has so far failed to deliver.

Instead it continues to violently attack protesters. During a demonstration against Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to New York for the UN in September, the NYPD arrested over 100 people, including DSA members who are elected city councillors and congressional candidate Avila Chevalier.

Mamdani had pledged to arrest Netanyahu for war crimes if he set foot in the city. Once elected he backed down, claiming the city lacked the legal authority to do so. He then let the NYPD give Netanyahu a police escort and attack the protest against him, even claiming, “To New Yorkers, I have never encouraged them to protest.”



Above: Zohran Mamdani at a media appearance promoting faster bus routes—not the free buses promised
Photo: Zohran Mamdani/Facebook

Then, when ICE officers shot 28-year-old Oscar Belgal, who was driving with his five-year-old son in the car, NYPD officers arrested and assaulted anti-ICE protesters who mobilised in response. DSA responded by calling on Mamdani to sack Tisch, saying the NYPD had failed to help “drive ICE out of New York City”.

Mamdani, however, replied that he had “no plans” to remove her and instead praised Tisch for “uprooting corruption” and “lowering crime across our city”.

Mamdani’s strong support for Palestine was another major feature of his campaign for mayor, as he steadfastly called Israel’s actions in Gaza “genocide” and supported the BDS campaign. But he began to moderate his position, disowning the chant “Globalise the Intifada”.

This year on 7 October, he chose to attend a vigil organised by the group Israeli Voices for Peace. The group opposes Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza but supports Israel’s existence as a Zionist state. Other Palestinian activists condemned this as assisting the normalisation of Israel.

Mamdani’s compromises and backflips are a result of his reformist political strategy—trying to bring change through winning control of the existing parliamentary and state institutions.

As his experience already shows, this results in junking promises of sweeping change to accept whatever small gains are possible within the existing capitalist framework. It means collaborating with the corporations and the rich who the political system is designed to serve.

The real power to deliver change lies in building mass movements to fight for change outside parliament. The movement that got Mamdani elected could have been the basis for beginning to mobilise this kind of power on the streets and in the workplaces. His campaign organised 104,000 volunteers to door-knock and get the vote out.

New York City also has the strongest DSA presence in the country, with over 15,000 members.

But Mamdani has made no effort to call protests or to mobilise his supporters to fight the system. When the DSA started to organise campaign events earlier this year to tax the rich, “the mayor made it clear that he himself would not be taking part”, Mel Bienenfeld wrote in *Tempest*.

As the revolt in France shows, mass protests, and most importantly workers’ strike action, has the power to shut down business as usual and put serious change on the agenda. Socialists need to put building struggle at the centre of our strategy for change, not look to the dead end of electoralism and parliamentary politics.

WHY ZIONISM MEANS RACISM AND APARTHEID

Mark Gillespie argues that the UK Green party is right to say that Zionism is racism, and that the ideology behind the state of Israel has led to apartheid and ethnic cleansing

THE UK Greens are facing a backlash from the mainstream media and the political establishment after passing a motion declaring a basic truth—that Zionism is racism.

The motion, carried at their bi-annual conference in October by 1022 votes to 813, also rejects the so-called two-state solution. Instead, it calls for "the establishment of a single democratic, Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine" with "equal rights for all".

It also affirmed the "right of the Palestinian people to resistance".

This is a tremendous victory for the movement for Palestine in the UK. The political and media elite have worked tirelessly trying to marginalise pro-Palestinian voices, criminalising activism and labelling legitimate criticism of Israel as antisemitic.

The Greens have five MPs in the Westminster parliament, over 1300 local government councillors and more than 200,000 members.

The vote shows that the understanding of Israel as a racist apartheid state has spread far beyond Palestinians and the radical left to much wider circles.

The reaction was immediate. Prime Minister Andy Burnham condemned the motion as "wrong" and "antisemitic" and ruled out any coalition with the Greens.

Israel's Foreign Ministry accused the party of adopting "Hamas ideology" and barred its Jewish leader, Zack Polanski, from entering Israel.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council labelled the Greens a "racist party" while right-wing newspapers portrayed them as taken over by extremists.

Polanski did not vote on the motion, having left the conference to campaign in the Holborn and St Pancras by-election, where he was a candidate.

So far he has stood firm, saying the motion will stand for the next two years until another conference, though he says he'd like to see amendments.

Meanwhile, four of the party's five MPs have publicly criticised the motion. Former Green leader Adrian Ramsay has called for "a ballot of all party members" to overturn it.

Zionism and colonialism

But the motion is absolutely right. Zionism is a racist settler colonial project built on the dispossession and genocide of the Palestinian people.

Zionism emerged in the late 19th century as a political movement within Europe's persecuted Jewish minority. In the very early days, the Zionists considered not just Palestine by Uganda and Argentina as possible sites for a future state. But establishing a Jewish state on other people's land was never a solution to the oppression Jewish people faced.

Establishing a Jewish state would have been impossible without the backing of a powerful imperialist state, so the early Zionist movement actively courted them.

Theodor Herzl, considered "spiritual father of the Jewish state" by Israel, approached numerous European powers seeking support. His vision was explicitly framed in terms of European imperialist interests, arguing the state would be a "rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism".

Accordingly, Zionism shared the racism towards Arabs and other non-Europeans that typified European colonialism.

British Zionist Chaim Weizmann later convinced Britain that a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine would serve its imperialist interests by being "a very effective guard for the Suez Canal".

So when Britain took control of Palestine during the First World War it began encouraging Zionist settlers to migrate there.

Zionism's relationship with imperialism did not end with the departure of the British from Palestine. The US

Zionism is a racist settler colonial project built on the dispossession and genocide of the Palestinian people.

was convinced of the usefulness of Israel as a strategic ally following the 1967 and 1973 wars after the Israeli military humiliated Gamal Nasser, the Arab nationalist leader and President of Egypt, together with other Arab armies.

Arab nationalism was a rising movement at the time that challenged US interests throughout the region. US military aid to Israel increased eight-fold during the 1973 war and today it still receives "special" status.

Ethnic cleansing and genocide

Today people are shocked by Israel's genocidal violence in Gaza and the continuing ethnic cleansing in the West Bank. But this brutality is the logical outcome of a movement that always knew establishing a "Jewish state" meant expelling the local inhabitants through ethnic cleansing.

"We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border," wrote Herzl. "With compulsory transfer we [would] have a vast area [for settlement]," said David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister.

The Zionist project founded on the displacement of Palestinians cannot be separated from the violence and racism required to establish and maintain it.

When Israel was established in 1948, around 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled in what Palestinians call the Nakba (catastrophe). Hundreds of villages were destroyed and the descendants of those who fled remain refugees, denied the right to return.

The dispossession has never stopped. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the expansion of settlements, the siege of Gaza and repeated military assaults are all part of an ongoing system of domination.

Israel today is a racist apartheid state no better than the old South Africa or the segregationist states in the US south during the era of Jim Crow.

This basic fact is accepted by practically every major human rights

organisation, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Not only is there a very high level of anti-Arab racism among Israel's population, Israel is thoroughly racist institutionally.

The Palestinian population of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem have lived under military occupation since 1967. They have no citizenship or legal rights and are being driven from their land to allow the expansion of Israeli settlements.

Palestinians inside Israel's 1948 borders who are citizens (the 20 per cent of the population who were not ethnically cleansed out of Israel in 1948) also face systematic racist discrimination.

Israel's Basic Law, "Israel is the Nation-State of the Jewish People", explicitly enshrines a hierarchy, consigning non-Jewish citizens to second-class status.

Israel's 1950 Law of Return allows any Jewish person in the world to immigrate and automatically receive citizenship while Palestinian refugees are barred from entry.

Furthermore, Israel's Jewish National Fund controls 93 per cent of the land inside Israel and legally restricts its use for Jewish settlement, systematically barring Arab citizens from leasing or buying homes.

The Greens are right to reject the two-state solution, which has been the official position of Western governments for decades.

Not only is it a complete utopia given Israel's continuous settlement expansion on land meant for a future Palestinian state, it is wrong in principle.

A Palestinian state alongside Israel would not mean justice. It would not address historic crimes and the millions of descendants of the 1948 ethnic cleansing would still be denied entry.

It would also reward aggression and colonisation. Israel would control at least 78 per cent of the land even though the Jewish population was only about 7 per cent when the British took control.

The two-state solution would also leave in place a racist, colonial state armed to the teeth by US imperialism dominating a much weaker neighbour.

Western governments continue to invoke the two-state solution because it allows them to appear concerned about Palestinian rights while at the same time ensuring the highly armed racist Israeli state continues to serve their interests in this oil-rich part of the world.



Above: The ruins of Rafah after Israel razed the city in 2025 Photo: Ashraf Amra/UNRWA

No retreat

The pressure on UK Greens leader Zack Polanski is considerable. Like Jeremy Corbyn, the former British Labour leader who faced years of attacks over his support for Palestinian rights, he is being pressed to distance himself from a position adopted by party members.

Polanski needs to learn from Corbyn's experience and not buckle. Corbyn tried to placate the smears against him by making concessions but this only demoralised his support base and emboldened the right.

The Greens' party membership has grown sensationally in the last year, surging from 68,000 in September 2025 to over 213,000 today.

Deep disillusionment with the previous right-wing Labour government led by Keir Starmer fuelled this growth.

Under Polanski, who took over the leadership in September 2025, the Greens have shifted from a purely environmental focus to stridently attack Labour from the left.

The Greens have become more vocal in their criticism of Labour's record on Gaza, refugees and the cost-of-living crisis. They have also advocated wealth taxes, rent controls and public ownership of essential services.

That shift has helped the Greens attract people looking for a radical alternative to the established parties.

Serious inroads into Labour's support base were made. More than 50 Labour councillors defected to the Greens and, for a brief moment before the removal of Starmer, the Greens were outpolling Labour by 21 per cent to 16 per cent.

If Polanski, for the sake of party unity, were to follow Labour and start placating the right, it would be a tragic strategic blunder.

Building the movement

The Greens would not have adopted this position without the movement for Palestine that has grown internationally because of the Gaza genocide and which has refused to be intimidated by smears or state repression.

The movement has rightly called for a free Palestine "from the river to the sea", which means equal rights, freedom and justice for everyone living in historic Palestine.

It means rejecting a future built on permanent inequality and recognising the right of Palestinian refugees to return.

The UK Greens' vote shows that these arguments can reach well beyond established activist circles. The challenge now is to keep building that movement, resist the pressure to retreat and build wider support for Palestinian liberation in Australia and internationally.

ELECTION EXPOSES ROTTEN HEART OF APARTHEID ISRAEL

By Adam Adelpour

ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS have shown there will be no progressive change from within the apartheid state, and that racism and support for genocide are thoroughly entrenched.

In the lead up much of the Western media fawned over opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot and painted him as a candidate for change. Polls predicted defeat for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Among complicit Western politicians there was a belief that Eisenkot, the former general and head of the Israeli Defense Forces, could provide a PR reset after three years of genocide and help rehabilitate support for Israel.

The *New York Times* ran a headline saying "Gadi Eisenkot Couldn't Be More Unlike Netanyahu."

As the election results came in Foreign Minister Penny Wong was questioned in parliament about why Australia hadn't joined the UK in adopting sanctions on trade with illegal settlements.

She seized on exit polls that showed Netanyahu's coalition losing its majority to place Israel's crimes in the past tense and avoid calls for action, saying "We disagree with and oppose the former Netanyahu government's policy."

But the final election result has left both coalitions short of the majority of 61 seats in the Israeli parliament necessary to form government. Netanyahu's coalition holds 53, Eisenkot's opposition bloc 48 and Palestinian parties 19.

Negotiations over forming a government could drag on for months, or Israel may be forced to another election.

Eisenkot was never fundamentally different from Netanyahu. He is a different face of the same genocide, occupation and ethnic cleansing.

Eisenkot was head of Israel's Northern Command in 2008 where he developed what is now known as the "Dahiya Doctrine".

This involves the deliberate targeting of civilians in an effort to counter military resistance through, in his words, applying "disproportionate force" causing "great damage and destruction".



Above: Palestinian boys facing heavily armed IDF soldiers in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron Photo: Jose Hernandez / Shutterstock.com

Eisenkot is a different face of the same genocide, occupation and ethnic cleansing

Dahiya is the name of the southern Beirut suburb devastated under this barbaric doctrine. Its logical conclusion is seen in Gaza.

Eisenkot joined Netanyahu's war cabinet after 7 October, helping carry out the genocide.

He opposes a Palestinian state and supports the expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

In 2018 when Palestinians marched peacefully during the Great March of Return, Eisenkot boasted of deploying 100 snipers around Gaza. They mercilessly targeted children and killed over 200 Palestinians.

Palestinian parties

The election also saw a historic voter turn-out of around 80 per cent by Palestinian citizens of Israel.

These are the descendants of the population that Israel failed to ethically cleanse during the 1948 Nakba, when 700,000 Palestinians were expelled to pave the way for Israel's founding.

Today they number about 2.1 million and are 20 per cent of Israel's population.

The two Palestinian election groupings the Joint List and Ra'am together gained a record 19 seats, enough to deliver government to either of the major party blocs.

But one of Eisenkot's election pledges was that he would not form a government with Palestinians. In the wake of the election both Netanyahu and Eisenkot declared they would seek to form a "Zionist government" without Palestinian representatives.

This shows the racist sham of Israeli democracy, where Palestinian citizens are treated as so suspect they cannot be allowed any role in government.

The millions of Palestinians occupied and besieged by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank of course cannot vote at all, further giving the lie to the claim that Israel is a democracy.

Change won't come from within

The election result is another clear indicator that overwhelmingly Israeli society backs genocide, occupation and ethnic cleansing and has been radicalised further to the right by the genocide carried out in Gaza.

This reality is making itself felt in the West Bank where thousands of IDF and settler attacks on Palestinians have taken place this year.

Following an attack on soldiers at an Israeli checkpoint, Israel has now begun demolishing homes in Hebron and placed the whole West Bank under lock-down.

The change needed will not come from within Israeli society. It must come from an international campaign to isolate Israel and revolt across the Arab world connecting up with the Palestinian struggle.

The people of the region have a common enemy. US imperialism and its allies like Australia help prop up Israel as well as dictators in Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states.

The Palestine solidarity movement of the last three years, and the global port strikes on 30 October against war and genocide in particular, are a glimpse of the kind of struggle needed.