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Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group
Don’t mention the emergency
May 17, 2019

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On 18 May, enrolled voters in Australia will decide which members of the capitalist class will represent us in Parliament and crush us in government for the neXt three years. This election occurs at a time when the world has been informed that it has, at most, until 2030 to take effective action to stop and begin reversing climate change, or risk crossing tipping points into runaway temperature rises that would kill billions and endanger industrial civilisation. So you’d think the major players would be presenting plans to fiX it. But no, this is Australian capitalist democracy and we get something different.

The incumbent government is a coalition of the Liberal Party, the open representatives of Big Business, and the National Party, which pretends to represent farmers but actually represents mining companies. The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, two years ago infamously thought it would be a jolly jape to bring a lump of coal into Parliament and taunt his political opponents with it. He is only PM because climate change deniers in his own party nobbled some ineffective attempts to do something about the issue and eventually brought down Malcolm Turnbull, the Liberal Prime Minister they detested for being too liberal.

What are they offering? Firstly, they have promised a vast number of mostly small infrastructure and spending projects in seats they need to hold and a handful they hope to take. It is a grab bag with no coherent vision. Second, they promise a substantial taX cut in five years for people on upper middle incomes. Apart from that, they offer nothing. Nothing but a relentless scare campaign against the Labor Party and its leader, Bill Shorten.

And what of the Labor Party? This party fundamentally represents the desire of the union bureaucracy to reach a compromise with capital about permissible reforms that might better the lot of working people while preserving eXisting capitalist relations. Its leader, Bill Shorten, comes from the Australian Workers Union, which has a deserved reputation of decades of undemocratic sell-outs of its members. Naturally, the capitalists don't criticise him for that, since it's the one thing they are in favour of union officials doing.

Surprisingly, Labor is presenting its strongest contrast with the Liberals for a generation. This is because Shorten and other senior Labor figures have seen the death spiral into which most European social democratic parties have entered and declined to join them. They're not departing from neo-liberalism, but they're having a serious go at a range of costly taX loopholes used by the richest 10%. They're also promising to do something effective about climate change, though their concrete proposals are only about half of what is needed.

Who else is running? Firstly, we'll take the Right. There's One Nation, as nasty a bunch of racists and bigots as you're ever likely to find, and then there's a collection of Right wing nut jobs (mostly running only for the Senate) who for reasons known only to themselves aren't in One Nation. Clive Palmer, a mining magnate, is trying to buy his way into Parliament with a Trump-esque slogan and a policy free zone onto which people can project their wishes. And a dishonourable mention has to go to Fraser Anning's Conser-

vative National Party, who are actual capital-F Fascists, but have an accidental Senator to give them publicity.

On the Left, we have the Greens. As a capitalist party, they shame Labor by campaigning to their Left, proposing a range of supportable reforms and some climate change policies that start to approach what is necessary. They are fundamentally handicapped, though, by their delusion that a just and sustainable capitalism is possible. Whatever the virtues of their individual policies, the working class would end up bearing the cost.

The final party worth mentioning are the Victorian Socialists, who are running in three lower house seats in Victoria. The MACG oppose running for elections because, although it's possible to enter a capitalist Parliament on a principled basis, we think it's a waste of time and effort to do so. The energy required for the election campaign can be far more usefully directed towards building grassroots struggles. Nevertheless, the question arises of how to respond if a State Socialist group decides to waste its resources that way.

Because the Victorian Socialists have no chance of being elected, they only have to pass two very simple tests. They have to be standing clearly for Socialism and against capitalism. Secondly, the party mustn't have disgraced itself in front of the whole working class like the British SWP has with its rape apologism (put "Comrade Delta" into your favourite search engine). They pass both these. We make no detailed demands of their policy, because we understand that no Parliamentary program, however "correct", can get us to Socialism. And the Victorian Socialists' program is indeed quite weak. For more details, you can consult your friendly local Spartacist, who will be only too happy to brief you on their shortcomings.

On this basis, we believe it is possible for Anarchists to lodge a principled vote for the Victorian Socialists. We must emphasise, though, the very limited meaning of such a vote. It is simply to say "I'm against capitalism and for Socialism" and it is only be-

cause the Vic Socialists have no chance of winning. If they stood a chance, no matter how remote, we would have to judge them on a much stricter test. A crucial element would be whether a Victorian Socialists MP would eXplain to the working class that Socialism is only possible through the revolutionary actions of the workers themselves and not through Parliament. This is a test they would not pass.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that the Victorian Socialists have already demonstrated our thesis that Leftists should put their energies into grassroots struggles rather than election campaigns. On 4 May, the Fascist party Yellow Vests Australia held a small demonstration in Melbourne. Normally, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism would have mobilised in opposition. Most of its members, however, are in Socialist Alternative, the main force behind the Victorian Socialists, and the SAlties were out busy doorknocking for the Vic Socialists instead. Other groups, being smaller, didn't want to risk mobilising on their own. So the Fascists went unopposed. Fail.

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