

Elections are not the answer

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

1st July 2016

The Australian Federal election campaign grinds on, with most people being heartily sick of the whole thing. Neither the Liberals nor Labor are trusted by most voters and the major parties are horrified at the drift of voters to minor parties of all stripes. Anarchists have something to say about this, something deeper than just advising people about voting. We say if you're looking to fix the problems in society, Parliament is the wrong place.

Real power in a capitalist society doesn't reside in Parliament, but in the boardrooms of the major companies, in the editorial rooms of the mainstream media, in the officers' mess of the military, in the courts and in the offices of top public service mandarins. Even if a government reflecting the electorate's opinions came to office, it would be hamstrung by the power of society's real rulers. It would be unable to implement its program and the results of its legislation would be contrary to expectations. There is no Parliamentary road to a just society.

And what's on offer anyway? EXhibit One is the Liberal Party, the open mouthpiece of Big Business and advocate for capitalism itself. Its actions of the last few years speak for themselves – the Liberal politicians replaced Tony Abbott with Malcolm Turnbull purely because they needed a better salesperson.

EXhibit Two is the Labor Party. This cowardly bunch is far more committed to occupying the Treasury benches than standing up for their supporters. They want to govern capitalism far more than they want to change it. Over time, they have become the neo-liberals they once denounced, because capitalism demands a neo-liberal policy framework. If they have the misfortune to win office it will be their allotted task to kick Labor voters where it hurts, all the while arguing that the Libs would kick harder. Don't say you weren't warned.

EXhibit Three is The Greens. If this mob ever offered a real alternative to the major parties, they gave that up the day they decided to tackle global warming by putting a price on carbon. Their intention to tackle climate change is not in doubt, but they ignore the way carbon pricing would make working class people pay – and how this would drive workers into the arms of climate deniers and the coal mining bosses. Their carbon price flows from their belief that a just and sustainable capitalism is possible. Greens members are not advised to go shopping for used cars on their own.

Let's leave aside the assorted Right Wing Nut Jobs (pausing only to note that they range from religious bigots to bona fide Fascists) and the plethora of middle-of-the-road to mildly progressive single issue groups – listing them would send readers to sleep. Their grievances and causes, to the

eXtent to which they are legitimate, will bog down in direct proportion to their significance to the operations of capitalism. If it would stop the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, it would have Buckley's chance of being implemented. Finally, the Nick Xenophon Team presents a moderate image even while they peddle protectionism and uphold Australia's imperialist military build-up.

What about the various Socialist parties running in selected electorates and some Senate races? No, there's still no Parliamentary road for them. While it's no crime to enter Parliament in order to oppose every capitalist government consistently, refusing them confidence and blocking attacks on the working class, the campaign necessary to get there is a massive waste of time and effort. Any opponent of capitalism would get a better reward for their efforts by building a working class movement in workplaces and communities, rather than entering a forum where the rules are rigged against us.

Whoever wins this election will find a global economy which is stagnating and threatening to spin completely out of control, while international events are both breaking up the European Union and building towards a conflict between the United States and China. Parliament, necessarily focused on the national arena, cannot solve these questions. Under pressure from uncontrollable global events, it will inevitably attack the working class to solve the problems of capitalism in Australia. Removing the capitalists from power is necessary, but Lucy Parsons was right when she said:

“Never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth”

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