

It can' t happen here

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Published: 2024-11-07

Dear friends,

It is happening here. The polarisation, the extremism, growing xenophobia and racism, anti-intellectualism, hatred, violence and climate-denialism. These are not “forthcoming” ideas in the Australian context, but rather actively festering features of contemporary society. Because of the way content is conglomerated under a singular social media corporation, lots of the proliferation of this kind of thinking is hidden. Algorithmic systems tailor content specifically for the viewer, and they deliberately cultivate extremist views -because extremist views garner more attention. In an “artificially intelligent system” trained on the KPIs of the CEO, it matters not if hate speech, right-wing extremism, and general villainy are promoted. All that matters is the cultivation of “attention” . As the yogi influencers like to put it: “Attention is currency” .

The republican party appealed to the American voting base on two key fronts: they told compelling lies about the significance of the economy and the role of the “others” in preventing its flourishing and they spoke the same hateful language that their supporters consume exclusively online and via fox news. The combination of hegemonic forces, here, manufacturing consent for fascism is a powerful combination. And this is the same combination that the Liberal-National coalition leverage every election in Australia. Look no further than the anti-abortion rhetoric of the LNP at the Queensland state election -and if you were kidding yourself into thinking that Australia is “more sophisticated” and “it couldn' t happen here” you are dead wrong. Australia' s particular cultural configuration around politics means that extremism festers far more quietly than it does in the states, but the increasing prevalence of vitriolic, hate filled, and vile bullshit from the LNP *will* attract mass voter support.

The problem is, and this is the big one, that the economy is fake. It is a deliberately abstract construct that distracts people from the reality of their exploitation. We discussed this in depth in the last post on mind reader [1]. The source of oppression of working people *is* capitalism, the capitalists, and their political subclass. The cultural institutions -the (social) media companies, schools and universities, and religious organisations play active yet ever “apolitical” roles in re-perpetuating exploitation and expropriation as natural and necessary. The masking of this -the exploitation of working people -as the “elite” is a cover for fearmongering or racist or nihilistic politicians latch onto to exploit. We know, as a global force of billions, that something is very wrong with our social order. It' s just that the system was designed from the start to prevent access to the knowledge of why the system is so broken. Those cultural institutions? They both inform and reinforce the views espoused by the ruling class. In the classical neoliberal system in the west, for middle-class white-ish able-bodied cisgender hetero kids, the journey goes something like this: born into relative comfort → educated through capitalist epistemology → university graduate → employment in culturally reinforcing institutions and businesses, with moderate if meagre reward affording housing security → the wife stays home looking after babies, and around the cycle goes. Of course, over time, the endless growth demanded by capitalism has eroded parts of that cycle, and with the inherent massive inequality, sexism, ableism and so on required to continue accumulation for the 1% division becomes a necessary tool to keep driving capitalism headlong towards the cliff.

Here, and you can guess where I' m going, the treacherous Australian Labor Party enters the scene. Simultaneously deeply involved in bringing neoliberalism to Australia, and allying with the unions to disempower any genuine revolutionary movement. As with the

Democrats in the US, the Labor party is supported by the elite as the veneer of social progress, while true transformation (read: fascism) is supported by the more extreme position of the LNP or Republicans. The ALP's role in this political theatre is critical to the perpetuation of the status quo. Noting that the status quo is ever more objectionable to anyone with a value system of compassion. While positioning themselves as the "progressive" option, they actively participate in the rightward march of Australian politics. Like the Republican/Democrat ratchet system, ours is similarly pernicious –and worse, because people still think that Labour represents the unions –but these unions only represent bourgeois leadership, not the worker. It doesn't take much to judge them on their actions – from supporting genocidal regimes abroad to implementing increasingly draconian domestic surveillance measures, from funding military expansion while driving hate for China through stripping workers of their rights while professing a "right to disconnect" (recognition stolen from the Greens) the ALP demonstrate their fundamental allegiance to capital over human wellbeing. The party's willingness to eject members who speak against genocide illustrates how thoroughly they have abandoned even the pretence of left-wing politics in favour of maintaining the status quo for their capitalist masters.

Ideological "flexibility" of supposedly left-wing parties is part of the theatrics that supports an appearance of democracy under contemporary capitalism. As the contradictions of capital become more apparent –through climate catastrophe, growing inequality, and social breakdown –the political apparatus works harder to maintain hegemonic control. Here, parties like the ALP and Democrats serve offer superficial reforms which fail to connect with working people because all they do is perpetuate the same violent, broken, and dispossessive system that brought us here in the first place. While "moderate" parties exist we will never see a challenge to capitalist relations emerge. And currently we have a moderate party led by a fascist, an extreme-right party led by a fascist, and then the Greens whose political messaging fails to align with the workers because they are routinely denied fair representation in the extreme-right wing media duopoly and social media algorithm. Between deliberate intensification of deployment of identity politics, stripped of any class analysis, and the march towards ever more property owning, shareholding, and other economics scum –the ALP, LNP, as with the Democrats and Republicans only aid fragmentation of working class solidarity leaving structural power relations untouched. It's just one party is much, much, worse in both instances for human rights –particularly at the margins.

Fundamentally, the media landscape, dominated by the extreme right-wing Murdoch empire in Australia, plays a crucial role in manufacturing consent for the ratchet. Ensuring that the LNP can move politics, issues, identity, and so on to the right, ever distracting from the crushing destruction of capitalism, and positioning any real opposition (read: the Greens) as bourgeois they move the goalposts time and again. Through careful curation of "acceptable" discourse, they –and their distant social media cousins –present fascism as a reasonable response to social problems created by capitalism itself. The algorithmic amplification of extremist content concomitantly accelerates these normalised, socialised, perspectives and the holistic process of creating filter bubbles of hatred and division for every single individual in the nation becomes par for the course. Yep, digital acceleration of fascist ideology builds on decades of traditional media conditioning –cheery.

What makes this situation particularly dangerous is how the appearance of choice, between Labor and Liberal, masks the fundamental unity of their commitment to capital behind supposedly differing social reforms. While they may differ on social issues or, perhaps more accurately, the speed at which they wish to implement reactionary policies, both major parties are fully committed to maintaining the extractive, exploitative system that is destroying human and ecological wellbeing. Here, political theatre replacing religion as the opium of the masses, as individualised AI generated slop directs the micro-political battles of fake social media forums flooded with Russian State actors under the guise of "parliamentary democracy". Don't get me wrong, the ALP is a better option than the

LNP, just as the Democrats are better than the Republicans, but to suggest either party offers any genuine solutions to the 99% is a farce. Reductionist commentators on “both sides” of *belonging* politics seek only to legitimate this false choice, preventing more radical alternatives from emerging, and maintaining capitalist hegemony –and in cases such as the US, and increasingly in Australia, the rapid installation of fascism over democracy as *modus operandi* for maintaining the status quo.

As climate collapse accelerates and inequality reaches unprecedented levels, we can expect this drift toward fascism to intensify. People are being told the reason they can’t afford to feed or home themselves is Albanese’s failures in “the economy” –at the same time, their social media feeds show them how migrants and queer people are personally responsible for that situation. The hate, anger and intentional division of the human population of this planet driving Meta’s share-prices ever higher –and “attention is currency” paralleling “line must go up” as the drivers of global destruction, heat death, and the end of any semblance of care for one another. A social contract? Nah, social media, mate. As the ruling class abandon liberal democratic pretences in favour of more direct forms of control and violence, fearing an anti-capitalist awakening amongst a slightly better educated populous, the ALP’s active participation in stripping education, driving hate and division, and attacking worker’s rights only enable the cycle to continue and amplify. Moreover, through expanded surveillance powers, anti-protest laws, and the criminalisation of dissent, we have seen the extremist groundwork laid for overtly authoritarian governance from the LNP at our next federal elections. Unless the working class can develop genuine solidarity and class consciousness to resist this trajectory, Australia’s inevitable march toward fascism will only accelerate. With Albo’s commitment to the United States of Australia, sorry, “working with trump” [2] in a paramilitary alliance we can genuinely see the failings of Australian democracy. Joy.

With a sense of foresight and uncertainty,

Aidan.

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1. <https://mndrdr.org/2024/for-the-economic-policies-the-reason-you-may-no-longer-have-any-rights>
 2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/australias-ambassador-washington-deletes-trump-comments-after-election-win-2024-11-07/>