

Frustrated Australian oligarchs push for Trump-style regime

Mike Head, SEP candidate for the seat of Oxley
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The May 3 Australian federal election takes place amid a global economic crisis, and wars in Europe and the Middle East that threaten to coalesce with the US trade war with China into a global conflagration.

Yet the global turmoil and dangers barely rate a mention in the election campaigns of the major parties—Labor, Liberal-National Coalition and the Greens—which have descended to new levels of banality, combining trivial promises to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis with facile sound bites.

An intense frustration in ruling circles finds a certain limited expression in the media with *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Peter Hartcher likening this situation to the sanitised, artificial bubble depicted in the movie, *The Truman Show*. He bemoans the fact that none of the parties is discussing the necessity for a vast boost in military spending and deep inroads into social spending.

The Socialist Equality Party has repeatedly warned that the ruling classes internationally have turned to far-right parties as the only way of imposing their agenda of war abroad and class war at home, epitomised by the fascistic Trump administration.

Trump is not simply a crazy individual but the product of decaying American capitalism. He speaks for a ruling class determined to maintain its wealth and global power by any means, including a catastrophic world war.

The rightward lurch internationally is certainly reflected in bipartisan political agenda of Labor and the Coalition of boosting military spending, witch-hunting refugees, cutting immigration, defending the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza and persecuting its opponents, cuts to education, health and welfare... and the list goes on.

Increasingly, significant sections of the ruling class dismiss this as too little too late, particularly amid a plunge in popular support for Labor and the Coalition that could see neither being able to form a majority government after May 3. This is reflected in the fact that several of the country's wealthiest oligarchs are actively and openly campaigning for a Trump-style regime by exploiting the worsening social crisis and widespread anger and distrust of the traditional

parties.

Trumpet of Patriots

Clive Palmer, a mining magnate worth about \$23 billion, has created a new political vehicle for his political ambitions after the failure of his previous election ventures under the banner of the United Australia Party. He has taken over and refashioned the previously obscure Trumpet of Patriots in an unabashed bid to trade on and emulate Trump.

Palmer is outspending both Labor and the Coalition, splurging an estimated \$50 million to barrage the population with Trump-style slogans via unsolicited phone texts, YouTube and other online platforms, television and billboards. The campaign has triggered widespread complaints by members of the public about being constantly bombarded by his far-right propaganda.

In his agitation, Palmer is trying to tap into the political discontent by depicting Labor and the Coalition as a “Uni-Party” exercising a duopoly of power supported by the Greens and environmental Teal independents. “Enough is enough!” his ads proclaim, echoing Trump. “We will drain the swamp!”

Palmer has hailed the destruction of tens of thousands of public sector workers' jobs and the shuttering of entire government agencies by Trump and Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). He has also aligned himself with Trump's mass deportations, and likewise accuses immigrants of “destroying our infrastructure, roads, schools and hospitals.”

In reality, as in the US, the social crisis is not caused by “foreigners.” It is rooted in the capitalist profit system itself, dominated by speculators, banks, retail giants and property developers.

Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest individual

Another outspoken billionaire in support of Trump is Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest individual, whose mining-based fortunes are estimated to exceed \$40 billion. She was a guest at Trump's Florida mansion post-election celebrations, along with another prominent Australian billionaire, cardboard packaging baron Anthony Pratt (worth \$17.4 billion). Rinehart took out full-page ads in US newspapers congratulating Trump on his victory, as did Pratt.

Rinehart has repeatedly called for a Musk-type DOGE to slash social spending and corporate taxes to "Make Australia Great Again." That means gutting social services, including public health, education and welfare programs, while boosting military spending. Rinehart has also backed Trump's mass deportations of immigrant workers, blaming immigrants for the housing, crime and hospital crises.

Interviewed by the right-wing *Australian* at Trump's January inauguration events in Washington, Rinehart insisted that Trump's proposals to cut corporate taxes to 15 percent—half the current Australian rate—had to be equalled to attract investment. She further proposed the abolition of fuel excise, payroll tax, licence fees and stamp duty, all to benefit corporate profit.

Speaking last week at an event to mark ANZAC Day, which glorifies militarism and war, Rinehart called for the lifting of military spending from 2 to 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), in line with Trump's demands of all US allies. On last year's GDP figures, that would mean a massive increase in the defence budget from \$56 billion to \$140 billion.

Rinehart at present has no political party with which to pursue her far-right agenda. Until recently, Rinehart poured her donations into the Coalition, but appears to have fallen out with right-wing Liberal Party leader Dutton. Not only did Dutton not go far enough in advocating a Trump-like agenda, but he cut across Rinehart's business interests by promising to force energy companies to sell gas into the domestic market at a capped price.

Other organisations and parties are seeking to create a political base for the far right. The advocacy group Advance Australia is funded by a number of billionaires and multi-millionaires. While it does not run candidates, it spends tens of millions of dollars on campaigns demanding an end to immigration, carbon emission reduction targets and renewable energy projects, and calling for full support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza. One of its slogans declares: "It's time to put Australians first again and STOP mass immigration once and for all."

Senator Pauline Hanson's far-right One Nation party is

also vying to push the political system further down the same road. While One Nation was largely sidelined after the Coalition and Labor effectively adopted its anti-immigrant and anti-refugee agenda, it undoubtedly hopes to capitalise on Trump winning office. Hanson's campaign to retain several Senate seats combines diatribes against immigrants, climate change concerns and welfare and indigenous programs, with demands for vastly increased military spending.

While the ruling class is shifting to the far right, the opinion polls signal a growing popular revulsion and opposition toward Trump and his policies, particularly in the aftermath of his global trade war announcement. One media poll found that more than 70 percent of the population believe Trump will make them worse off financially and another poll said two-thirds now have little or no "trust" in the United States.

SEP candidates have found rising concern among workers and young people about the Trump administration's anti-working class policies: deporting immigrants, firing hundreds of thousands of federal workers, destroying public health and social programs and dismantling public education.

However, the inchoate opposition to Trumpism lacks an understanding of what has led to the rise of the far right and therefore of the political means for waging a struggle against it. Above all, political responsibility rests with the Labor Party and the trade union apparatuses that have presided over the systematic destruction of living standards and ruthlessly suppressed the opposition of workers. Labor has opened the door for the anti-immigrant nostrums and false hopes purveyed by the far right to gain a limited hearing.

It is only possible to politically fight the far right by waging a struggle against the capitalist system, which is the source of the social crisis, and all its defenders, including the Labor Party. The SEP is the only party laying bare this truth and fighting for the necessary socialist alternative—to overturn capitalism and totally reorganise economic life on the basis of human need, not the insatiable profit appetites and repression of the super-rich. We urge you to join our campaign and our party.

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Level 1/457-459 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010, Australia.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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