



For an Anti-Albanese Yes Campaign!

Australian society is polarised to fever pitch over Labor's referendum on the Voice, a powerless parliamentary advisory body composed of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The Yes camp is led by the repressive, warmongering Albanese government backed by big business, the churches and liberal politicians. But it also has the support of a large part of the population, overwhelmingly younger people, who genuinely want to improve the conditions of Aboriginal people. However, the truth is that this cause cannot take a single step forward while it is hitched to the Albanese government, the direct overseer of Aboriginal and working-class oppression.

The No camp is led by the Coalition and a posse of reactionaries who blame Indigenous people for their own oppression and howl against this population—brutally oppressed for centuries—getting even the hint of recognition. However, the No camp also includes many working and Aboriginal people who justly hate the hypocritical tokenism and reactionary policies of the ALP government. The division of the society into these two camps is a disaster for the Aboriginal struggle and for the population as a whole. The way forward for workers, leftists and Indigenous people is to build an independent, communist Yes campaign to defeat the reactionaries and to fight the Labor government.

Carried out in defence of the whole oppressive social order, the No campaign is not just an offensive against Aboriginal people but targets everybody on the bottom rungs of society. Its victory would institutionalise the reactionary view that Aboriginal people should be kept on the fringes, out of sight and out of mind. This would mark a significant rightward shift in the political terrain and set back not just the struggles of Aboriginal people but also those of the proletariat and all the oppressed.

Support for the No vote has risen in the polls as the result of a backlash against the Albanese government. For the ALP, the whole point of the referendum is to score cheap points on the Aboriginal question while they grind us all down with rocketing cost-of-living increases, an unrelenting housing crisis and a collapsing health system. Workers and Indigenous people resent Albanese's liberal,

hypocritical moralising while Labor keeps the boot firmly on their necks. As for the union leadership, they also contribute to this backlash: while not lifting a finger to defend their members, they gush with servile praise for the empty liberal do-goodism of the Albanese government and Australia's most exploitative bosses.

The referendum takes place in the context of the Australian imperialists being squeezed as the post-Soviet world order unravels. Australia's big brother protector the U.S. sees no way out but to confront Russia and China while putting the clamps on its allies. Today, the Australian imperialist rulers are faced with forfeiting their lucrative trade with China while being compelled to contribute hundreds of billions to the AUKUS military pact as part of the U.S.-led drive to war. To pay for this they are tightening the screws on the population at home.

Under these conditions of imperialist decay, it is not possible to substantially improve the conditions of life for the oppressed. The profit-gouging bosses are not about to just hand over decent healthcare, education and housing, things we all desperately need. These things will need to be taken, requiring a sharp confrontation with the capitalist rulers and their government. Without seizing control of the economy from the capitalists and running things in our own interests, workers and the oppressed will be left to squabble over the ever-diminishing crumbs that fall from the capitalists' table.

The polarisation over the referendum pits two forces with common interests against each other and prevents a unified struggle against the capitalist government, which is grinding both down. For either the Aboriginal struggle or the cause of the working class to advance, it is necessary to break through these reactionary divisions and unite the progressive elements of both camps. Those in the Yes campaign who want to win real gains for Aboriginal people must be mobilised on a program that can actually do this, by fighting against the ALP government and the bosses they serve. The loathing for the Albanese regime fuelling the reactionary No campaign must be given a progressive direction that benefits both working people and the Aboriginal struggle.

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The Spartacist League and Bolshevik-Leninist have an answer: ***build a Yes campaign that fights the Albanese government!***

Of course, Aboriginal people should have a voice! The real question is what that voice should say. We say: use the Voice to expose Albanese's attacks on Indigenous people and on the working class, from the cop/military occupation of NT Aboriginal communities to turning Australia into a base for anti-China operations by U.S. military forces! By using the Voice against the Albanese government to demand what the Aboriginal population and the proletariat need, we can build a fighting alliance to advance both causes against the parasitic capitalists who run this country for their own profits. Let's make Albo regret ever trying to give his government a facelift by turning the Voice against him!

To that end, we offer the following program:

1. The ALP and other Reconciliation liberals claim that a huge part of the Yes campaign is truth telling and addressing the wrongs of the past. OK, Albanese and gang, release the police records! Enough with whitewash Royal Commissions! Let us see the crimes committed during the ongoing reign of capitalist brutality: from the Stolen Generations to lockdowns to deaths in custody! Stop covering up the cops' naked brutalisation of Aboriginal people, striking workers and the oppressed. How can Aboriginal people have a voice if they can't even know the truth!?

2. From Western Sydney to Kiwirrkurra, infrastructure is falling apart—if it ever existed in the first place. For massive public works projects under union control! End the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the working class through union-run training and hiring programs! Electricity, housing and water now!

3. For free, quality healthcare and education! The most basic needs of Aboriginal people and the working class have been slashed. Train hundreds of new doctors, nurses and medical technicians to staff new hospitals! For new schools and literacy classes in Aboriginal languages! For the immediate translation of all books in the curriculum into Kriol! Make them freely available online!

4. Expropriate without compensation the banks, agri-businesses, mining magnates and cattle barons! The workers should control the companies and Aboriginal people should have a say in how the land is used. When the capitalist class is liquidated, it will be easy to ensure mutual agreement on these questions that benefits all the oppressed. Use the property taken from the ruling class to meet our needs!

While many groups claim to represent the interests of Aboriginal people and pose as alternatives to Labor, they have no way to cut through the reactionary divisions over the Voice or advance the struggle against the Albanese government. One of these is Socialist Alternative (SAIt) who are campaigning for a critical Yes in the referendum. SAIt correctly recognise the importance of defeating the reactionary No campaign. However, they reject building a Yes campaign opposed to the Albanese government and its liberal moralising, which is necessary in order to break through the reactionary polarisation in the referendum and undercut the reactionaries. Instead, SAIt just line up behind the ALP's Yes campaign as a lesser evil. Their criticisms simply amount to advising Labor on how to run a more effective campaign.

Then there are those who stand aside and watch the

political waves of Australia pass them by, such as the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). The RCO denounce the Voice as a setback for Aboriginal people, characterising it as bolstering the “ideological state apparatus.” Filled with slick maximalist verbiage calling for the “abolition of the settler-colonial Commonwealth of Capital,” their Resolution doesn't offer any way to advance the struggle for Aboriginal liberation in the here and now.

Instead of the Voice, they offer the vague call for “a renewed struggle for self-determination and a socialist republic.” But they don't breathe a word about how to renew this struggle. In fact, they don't even offer a recommendation on how to vote in the referendum! This is typical of the RCO, a group that constantly draws sectarian organisational lines as a substitute for putting forward any strategy of what to do next.

As for the Blak Sovereign Movement (BSM), they oppose the liberal Yes campaign, countering it with a Progressive No. Instead of the Voice, they call for a treaty that recognises the sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples, but they have no strategy to achieve this. Instead of struggling against the ruling class and capitalism, which are the source of Aboriginal oppression, their approach targets all non-Indigenous people, who they describe as “settlers” who must “pay the rent” or presumably leave the country where their families have lived sometimes for generations. This utopian reactionary fantasy turns Aboriginal people's strongest potential ally, the working class, into an enemy and thus cripples the struggles for even the smallest gains for Aboriginal people.

BSM and other black nationalists cannot liberate Aboriginal people because they have no program to defeat the ruling class. This is encapsulated in BSM's Progressive No campaign. They recognise that the Voice and the bleeding-heart liberals offer no way forward, but their campaign only helps swing the vote to the rightists who will push through even worse measures against Aboriginal people. If the No wins, the result will be a more reactionary climate where openly anti-Aboriginal forces dominate, and it will be harder to advance any gains, including a treaty. It's better to have a microscopic step forward than a gigantic leap backwards.

The decay of the imperialist system has only accentuated the oppression of Aboriginal people. The bosses have long benefited from Aboriginal oppression and dispossession, not least by driving Aboriginal people off the best lands so they can make fabulous profits while Aboriginal people are kept powerless and in miserable conditions often under state terror. In cities they are pushed into homelessness and a fringe existence. But it doesn't have to be this way.

In fighting for a communist Yes campaign, we are fighting for genuine freedom of development for Aboriginal people, entailing a social, cultural and linguistic renaissance. We are fighting for economic development and reversing Aboriginal marginalisation, bringing Indigenous people into the working class while delivering the fullest political autonomy so they can finally have a voice over their own lives and livelihoods! In order to secure these gains, the alliance between the Indigenous population and the proletariat must culminate in a workers government with complete political autonomy and freedom of development for Aboriginal people from the cities to the bush!