

The limits of Australian democracy

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Democracy galore

- elections every 1-2 years in context of necessary civil rights
- freedom of association
- freedom of thought and expression
- political and legal equality

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Capitalist democracy: when

- unlike pre-capitalist class societies, in which extra-economic coercion is necessary to extract surplus
- Economic pressure makes workers work under capitalism
- There is a separation between politics and economics (on the surface)

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- So there can be formal political and legal equality
- So capitalism makes possible *political* democracy
- which conceals and is limited by unequal class power

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Repression is expensive

Costs of

- repressive apparatus
- fractious and discontented workforce
- limited debate over policy
- succession
- corruption

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So 'A democratic republic is [generally] the best possible political shell for capitalism.'

Lenin State and revolution chapter 1

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Capitalist democracy provides broader scope for organising struggles of all kinds hence

- workers' struggles for democracy
- capitalist efforts to restrict democracy
- workers'/socialist resistance

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Illusions of democracy

- Real power is in the hands of those who own or control major productive resources (in private and public sectors)
- whose behaviour is shaped by the logic of social relationships = the capitalist class

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Capitalist power

- logic of production for profit
- based on the appropriation of wealth created by workers
- ie capital accumulation
- workplaces are dictatorships

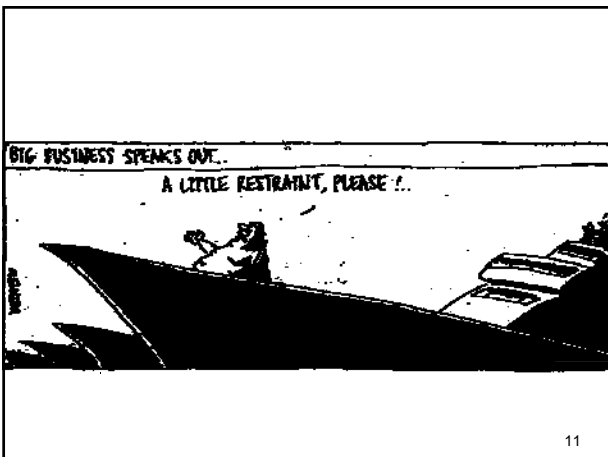
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State power 1

Shaped by

- direct influence on capital on politicians and bureaucrats
- the best democracy money can buy
- spectacular but superficial

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State power 2

Shaped by

- top state managers' fundamental common interests with corporate owners and managers, and

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State power 3

- state depends on economy, so
- it respects the foundations and logic of capitalist power

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Indices of class power

- distribution of resources, wealth and income
- scope of decisions

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Constraints on capitalist class power

- Logic of capitalist accumulation
- Legalities
- Competition and pressure from other capitalists
- Pressure from below

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Democracy

- imposes some additional constraints on how state power is exercised, but not on the logic of capitalist power
- these constraints are sometimes broken

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Fuller democracy

- Solidarity in resistance to
- racial, gender, etc oppression
 - exploitation
- may point the way to democratisation of production and hence the abolition of classes

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Follow-up?

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