



PEOPLE'S BUDGET: PUTTING PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST

There is an alternative to the Coalition's pro-business, gas- and oil-fuelled budget. Instead of maximising profits for the government's big business mates, a People's Budget puts the interests of people and the planet first.

Under such a budget, the anarchy of market forces is replaced by planned economic development and measures to protect the environment. It would be based on a public sector-led recovery and increasing the income of working people, retirees, the unemployed, and social security recipients.

Here are some examples of what a Communist Party of Australia People's Budget would contain:

PUBLIC SECTOR-LED RECOVERY

Health, education, transport, utilities, and other vital services are gradually being privatised. Once privatised, the driving motive becomes profit, not people's needs. Services are cut, quality and access decline, and the cost to the public increases.

A public sector-led recovery would involve the expansion of health, education, transport, and other public services. Key infrastructure would be nationalised, including former state-owned banks and insurance companies.

HEALTH

Universal access to health care is fundamental to building a healthy society. The CPA is committed to:

- A nationalised health system with high quality care, provided according to need rather than ability to pay
- Accessible, quality medical and dental treatment for all Australians, bulk-billed under Medicare and centrally funded
- Team-based care focused on early preventative medical services, early intervention, and provision of care in the community and in the home
- An expanded Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) with free PBS scripts for all unemployed, pensioners and other cardholders, and the cost for others reduced
- Public control of pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and medical supplies along with the employment of salaried staff specialists



- The development of a publicly owned pharmaceutical manufacturing industry
- The urgent expansion of mental health services
- Better access to health care for those in remote and regional areas.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Universities took another hit in the Coalition's 2021-22 budget. TAFE is being gutted with campus closures, casualisation and loss of staff. University and TAFE fees deny many working-class people the opportunity to undertake higher education or retraining later in life.

Education should be a right, not a privilege for those who can afford it. Australia has the wealth to be able to provide a quality education at all levels and lifelong access to education. The CPA would:

- Increase funding for teaching and non-teaching staff, for the building and maintenance of classrooms and other

school facilities, and the purchase of resources

- Begin phasing out state aid to non-government schools and subsidies to private institutions
- Abolish preschool, school, TAFE, and university fees
- Increase student allowances to a living wage.

PUBLIC AGED CARE

The Royal Commission into aged care revealed appalling levels of neglect and abuse, dangerously low levels of staffing, low wages, and lack of qualified staff in aged care facilities. Elderly people are dying as they wait for a home care package or being forced into nursing homes. The CPA would provide the services to enable elderly people to live meaningful lives and maintain independence. It would include these in a new Aged Care Act. In particular, it would provide:

- Improved residential care and home care
- Mandated staffing ratios in nursing homes
- Nationalise the private, for-profit nursing homes
- Provide quality health services, including mental health, for the aged
- Legislation for a registered nurse always being on duty
- More respite services, more assistive technology, and options for care at home
- Immediate funding for training more carers
- More specific aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including a Commissioner to address specific needs, and more opportunities for First Nations people to train as aged care workers.

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Have we become the 51st state?

Guardian

Issue 1962

24th May, 2021

TELSTRA FINED FOR UNSAVOURY PRACTICES

Stunningly, but not surprisingly, Australia has found more ways to exploit Indigenous people. Two weeks ago, the Federal Court ordered Telstra to pay a penalty of \$50mil plus costs “for its treatment of Indigenous customers in rural and remote parts of Australia” (ABC). The court heard how Telstra had acted “unconscionably” towards 108 customers by selling them phone plans they could not afford or did not understand their terms.

The court found that sales staff at the five stores in South Australia, Western Australia, and in the Northern Territory engaged in “exploitative” practices between January 2016 and August 2018. Telstra employees would upsell Indigenous people who had come in to purchase a cheap phone or have their existing one repaired.

The fine is the second-largest penalty ever imposed on a company for breaking Australian Consumer law.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chair Rod Sims said Telstra’s behaviour was “truly beyond conscience,” noting the fine was appropriate.

In fact, the evidence was so damning that Telstra itself has admitted to behaving “unconscionably.” After the ruling, Telstra chief executive Andy Penn stated that he was “deeply and personally disappointed” and that the company “should have picked this up earlier.”

It is a fitting penalty given how many lives Telstra has affected through its actions. Caitlyn Roe, a young mother of two, was one of the 108 customers that Telstra mistreated. Roe was convinced at a Telstra store to exchange her pre-paid phone for a plan. Within months, her plan transformed into a \$2,200 bill and when she attempted to negotiate a payment plan with Telstra, she was unsuccessful.

“They wanted that full amount – right or wrong, they wanted it,” Roe told the ABC.

As a result of the large bill, Roe had trouble paying for food and other bills.

It is important to reflect on the seriousness of this ruling. Unconscionability is a technical legal term. When a court finds that something was “unconscionable”, this isn’t just an empty, moral judgment. It is a legal term that goes beyond simple unfairness – it is conduct against the conscience or norms of our society. Finding that conduct is unconscionable allows courts to award damages. For this reason, it is a very high bar and hard to prove.

Whether or not the penalty could have been harsher can be debated ad nauseam. The reality is we need better regulations and rules to prevent these kinds of practices by these major corporations from happening. We must remember Telstra being caught out is the exception, not the rule. However, if there is little infrastructure in place (e.g. a more extensive, nationalised telecommunications network allowing for better coverage), people in remote communities will continue to be exploited. We must fight for rural and remote communities not only to have better access to telecommunications but healthcare, education, and jobs. Providing these communities with services on an equitable basis to those in our cities will help end the systemic and intergenerational poverty.

PRESS FUND

The Coalition government has constantly undermined public education, turning education into a commodity and privilege for those who can afford to pay. Private schools and universities have made huge windfalls while public schools and universities have taken a hit. The Guardian values education as a right, as benefiting both the individuals who receive it and society at large. Join us in campaigning for quality, free, and universal public education.

Thank you to the following who generously contributed to the Press Fund:

S Bond \$100, J Hale \$70, B Brown \$20, D Mudie \$10, Digireb \$25, Eddie Seymour \$25.

This week’s total: \$250.00 Cumulative Total: \$1,585.



Protest demanding the end of the criminal blockade on Cuba outside the US consulate in Perth WA.

CORRECTION

In last week’s *Guardian*, the article on the budget stated that the third stage of personal income tax cuts had not passed the Senate. This is incorrect. They did pass and the government is still planning to implement them in 2023-24. Those on high incomes are the main beneficiaries of the \$17 billion in tax cuts. The government failed to pass a reduction in company income tax for businesses with a turnover of more than \$50 million. The income tax on companies below the threshold is being reduced from thirty to twenty-five cents in the dollar.

Special Appeal Reds go Green

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising \$10,000 for solar panels. The panels will not only make substantial savings in electricity bills but also put into practice our commitment to a sustainable future.

They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important. It is not enough to preach “green.” We must act “green”!

We are looking to *Guardian* readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project.

Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large. Send your contribution today.

All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*.

Name

Amount \$

You may /may not publish my name

Send your contribution to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, email info@cpa.org.au or pay by PayPal on cpa.org.au

SPECIAL SOLAR APPEAL

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising \$10,000 for solar panels on the roof. They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important. It is not enough to preach “green.” We must act “green”! We are looking to *Guardian* readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project. Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large. Send your contribution today. Our warm thanks to the following for their generous contributions:

K Price \$20, J Ayres \$100 K Manski \$40, B & J Brown \$500, D Mudie \$10, G Moore \$20, D White \$55, J Hodgson \$50.

This week’s Total: \$795.00

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PUBLIC HOUSING

Public housing has been restricted to welfare housing and renamed "social housing" with narrowed criteria for eligibility. Successive governments have cut funding for "social housing," and gradually sold off stock to developers. Housing affordability has fallen to its lowest level ever, yet more than \$3bil was taken out of public housing over the past decade. Waiting times are up to ten years.

The Communist Party of Australia would begin to implement a national, government-funded and owned public housing program with affordable rents based on income. The CPA would:

- Reverse the present trend where governments spend six times more on subsidising private housing than on public housing
- Commence a planned construction of public housing in rural and regional areas as well as cities according to social needs
- Begin construction of public housing to be carried out by the public sector, with a preference for Australian-made building materials and equipment
- Integrate public housing with other housing to avoid creating pockets of public housing for the disadvantaged
- Public housing to have rent set as a percentage of income
- Rental controls on private housing and measures to protect tenants during periods of financial stress
- Provide housing and support services for homeless youth.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Almost all the infrastructure spending announced in the Coalition's budget related to roads. There was relatively little for public transport or rail freight services. Provision of adequate public transport to service to all communities is a social and environmental imperative. Private road transport is a major contributor to carbon pollution, while lack of access to public transport places a huge burden on poorer communities.

As the commuting public is well aware, in those states where public transport has been privatised, services that do not turn a substantial profit are cut, maintenance declines, corners are cut, and fares increase. The CPA would provide funding to:

- Upgrade railway stations, light rail, bus stops, ferry wharves, and interchanges to provide adequate seating, shelter, bicycle storage, and disabled facilities
- Nationalise all privatised public transport and rail freight
- Reopen rural rail lines and upgrade the interstate and country rail network
- Ensure new urban development is provided with adequate public transport
- Phase-out fossil fuel vehicles and provide incentives for electric vehicles.

PUBLIC SERVICE

The public service has been hit by ongoing cuts in employment, ongoing casualisation, outsourcing of responsibilities of public service. Privatisation of employment services, for example, has resulted in a lack of accountability, poor quality services, and higher costs due to built-in layers of private profits.

There are 25,000 labour-hire workers employed in public service fields, at huge cost to the taxpayer. The budget could have cut out the expensive private sector with its layers of profits and used the additional funds to hire more staff.

The CPA would bring job security to the public service and increase the number of employees so that services are adequately staffed. Public servants would receive a real wage rise and permanent employment.

WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The move toward enterprise-based agreements and individual working arrangements has served to strengthen the hand of employers and undermine the concept of centralised wage-fixing. Workers suffered serious setbacks under enterprise bargaining and individual contracts. A series of reactionary anti-trade union pieces of legislation by both Labor and Coalition governments has made the situation for trade unions extremely precarious.

Workers have an inviolable right to a living wage and dignified and safe conditions. The CPA would:

- Increase the minimum wage by forty per cent, and support guaranteed mandatory pay rises
- Provide job security, abolishing contract and body-hire labour, and reverse the trend of casualisation
- Introduce a 35-hour working week without loss of pay, and a minimum of five weeks annual leave
- Provide labour protections in law for contract and casual labour
- Repeal all anti-union legislation, and enshrine the right to strike in law
- Replace enterprise agreements and individual contracts with trade union-negotiated collective industry agreements
- Establish a national, public superannuation fund that invests in public infrastructure
- Establish a system of generous workers' compensation for all injured workers and their families.

INDUSTRY

Our previously strong manufacturing sector has been hit hard with off-shoring of jobs and manufacturing processes moving to lower-wage areas.

The CPA sees it as vital that our manufacturing industry is developed and protected from the neoliberal race to the bottom. The private sector has failed to deliver for Australian workers. They have taken government hand-outs, exploited Australian workers, and gone offshore.

The CPA would abandon the failed neoliberal policies and replace them with pro-people policies built on a strong manufacturing sector.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The government's gas-fired recovery will not only accelerate climate change, but not even generate more than a handful of jobs. The industry is one of the least labour-intensive in Australia.

The climate crisis is real in Australia – soil salinisation, air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, drought, floods, bushfires, and record high temperatures. This is the consequence of unregulated capitalist exploitation.

To alleviate some of the worst features of the environmental crisis, the CPA advocates:

- Developing a national energy plan, with legislated targets, for transition to an ecologically sustainable energy system under public ownership
- Massively investing in research and development of alternative renewable

energy sources and climate change mitigation

- Making energy efficiency and conservation key determinants of urban planning
- Restoration of Australia's water systems and provision of adequate safe drinking water for communities through coordinated national planning
- Phase out unsustainable water-hungry industries such as cotton
- Closing all uranium mines in Australia and opposing the establishment of nuclear waste dumps in Australia.

WAR PREPARATIONS

Militarism is part of the US drive for world domination. Australia has signed away its independence to US imperialism. High military spending steals resources from education, hospitals, social security, and environmental protection, and undermines sustainable development. The CPA would:

- Immediately cut military spending by at least ten per cent
- Convert military-related industries to socially useful and environmentally sustainable production
- End the Australian military alliance with the US
- End the hosting of US military bases on Australian soil
- Purchase dual-use equipment such as helicopters for use in bushfires and floods.

WOMEN

Industries comprised of predominately women workers often pay workers more poorly than male-dominated industries. While women today are entering the workforce in record numbers, they commonly encounter problems when they have children. Many are forced to abandon the workforce because they do not qualify for leave or cannot afford childcare. The CPA would:

- Enforce equal pay for work of equal value
- End social security payments based on relationship status, so that women have access to an independent income
- Enforce anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation to assist Indigenous, migrant, and disabled women to become economically independent
- Provide publicly funded before-school, after-school and long day childcare facilities for all who need them and for good quality, free early childhood education and care
- Pay parental leave for at least twenty-six weeks.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

The CPA is committed to the following policies:

- Recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original occupiers and owners of Australian territory and their right to own and control their land and resources on the basis of communal and inalienable title
- Better provision of services to Indigenous communities
- Immediate repeal of the Intervention and the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory
- The restoration of the Community Development and Employment Program for all Indigenous communities that request it

- The establishment as soon as possible of a genuinely representative national Aboriginal advisory body
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Bringing them Home Report.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The carers', student, and youth allowances are well below the poverty line, and were neglected in the recent budget. The age pension and JobSeeker are long overdue for real increase to enable recipients to live in dignity.

The government failed to adequately fund the NDIS and then attempted to cut costs by introducing confronting "independent" assessments. There is currently a moratorium on these assessments. The CPA would:

- Increase social security payments to one third of average weekly earnings
- Fully fund the NDIS to meet the needs of people with disability, and abolish the "independent" assessments
- End "work for the dole" schemes
- End fake traineeships.

JOB CREATION

Full employment is CPA policy. Job creation must be based on an overall economic and social program. All the above policies would create thousands of additional jobs in health, education, aged care, community, construction, the public sector, housing, and public transport.

Development of the manufacturing sector, public production of pharmaceuticals, and research would be key areas of government investment. Renewable energy, research and development, and environmental protection would see the creation of many more jobs than are lost by shutting down the fossil fuel sector. The creation of these jobs would be central to a just transition.

FUNDING

All these measures cost money. But there is no shortage of money; it is a question of distribution. At present billions of dollars are being paid in subsidies to the big end of town. This would cease and the funds redirected to benefit the people. The CPA would:

- Undertake substantial reform of the tax system, with a strongly progressive income tax
- Increase the corporate tax rate
- Cancel the billions in corporate handouts and fossil fuel subsidies
- Cut military spending by at least \$10bil
- Phase out the \$6bil subsidy to private hospitals
- End the billions of dollars rorted by the rich manipulating superannuation funds
- Tax the big monopolies who divert profits offshore to tax havens.

FUTURE

Not all the above reforms could be completed within one budget, or within capitalism. They run contrary to the Coalition's anti-people and environmentally destructive budget. The ALP, too, is wedded to neoliberalism with a few soft touches around the edges. Achieving all these changes requires a government of a new type.

The CPA cannot single-handedly achieve the policies outlined above. It would take the support of the trade union movement and other progressive forces who are prepared to fight for the interests of the working class. ☪

A public sector-led recovery would involve the expansion of health, education, transport, and other public services. Key infrastructure would be nationalised, including former state-owned banks and insurance companies.

TASMANIANS GATHER FOR NAKBA VIGIL

Ryan Burley

On the 15th of May, around 100 people gathered at Parliament House in Nipaluna/Hobart for a sombre and respectful vigil to commemorate Nakba Day. The vigil was organised by the Friends of Palestine Tasmania (TasFOP).

Speakers included President of TasFOP Peta Fitzgibbon and Adel Yousif, member of TasFOP and senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania.

"The violence experienced is always disproportionately endured by Palestinians,"

said Fitzgibbon in her opening address with reference to the current situation in Gaza.

"Today's commemoration and the violence experienced then and now, is a reminder that the Nakba of 1948 continues," Fitzgibbon said. "Millions of Palestinians have remained refugees ever since that time, many of them stateless."

Although not being able to attend the vigil, both Ella Haddad of the Tasmanian Labor Party and Independent federal MP Andrew Wilkie extended messages of solidarity.

"It is heartbreaking in the extreme," said Haddad in a statement read at the vigil, "to

see the continuing violence and the continuing loss of innocent civilian life." Haddad's own grandparents were forced out of Palestine in 1948.

Dr Adel Yousif – a third-generation member of the Palestinian diaspora – delivered a passionate address calling on all those present at the vigil to continue their support for the Palestinian cause.

"We cannot accept the state of Israel in its present state," Yousif said. "Either it is a democratic state or it is an apartheid state. Presently, it's an apartheid state."

In a report published in April 2021, Human Rights Watch concluded "that the

Israeli government has demonstrated an intent to maintain the domination of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians across Israel and the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territory). In the OPT, including East Jerusalem and the OPT, that intent has been coupled with systematic oppression of Palestinians and inhumane acts committed against them. When these three elements occur together, they amount to the crime of apartheid."

"We can only change this apartheid – this colonising situation – with your help," Yousif said to those gathered for the vigil. ✪

PALESTINE SUPPORTERS COMMEMORATE AL NAKBA

E Lennon

Thousands showed up at Sydney Town Hall to a demonstration marking 73 years since the 1948 Palestinian Exodus.

"The significance of today is commemorating the Nakba," said CPA member Ryan Dodd, who had attended the rally. "There's a long history of oppression by the Israelis and the Zionists of the Palestinians. It's obviously still going on; you see it on the news, and this oppression is disgusting. They need to stop it."

Nakba Day each year marks the remembrance of the country's destruction during

the Palestinian war from 1947 to 1949 and the Israeli Declaration of Independence. It remembers the many Palestinians who fled or died in this period and has also come to represent the ongoing destruction to the country and its people.

The rally came after Israel's latest airstrike, the bombing of the al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as arrests in Sheikh Jarrah; Palestinians make up most of the residents in this East Jerusalem neighbourhood.

"Israeli imperialism has been supported a lot by the US and other settler colonies," said Dodd. "Australia is complicit in it. We don't want to reflect on our own settler past and reflect on reparations for indigenous

people. Of course, our government is going to be complicit in it."

"As communists, we need to stand up against this imperialism and support the calls to return the land to the Palestinians."

Speakers called for solidarity with Indigenous Australians, having many shared experiences with the Palestinians.

"The story of First Nations people is the same as the Palestinian people," said Palestinian refugee Fouad, who spoke on the day. "To Indigenous Australians, I say you are the Palestinians of Australia. And Palestinians are the Indigenous Australians of Palestine."

"I still remember the screams of the women. Those whose husbands and sons

had died. Those who were raped. I stand here today as an 8-year-old boy. A lost boy who never understood why he had to leave his home."

The protestors marched throughout the city, with chants pointing out the crimes of Israel and its complicit partners, including the United States and Australia. One chant demanded justice for Palestinian children killed: "Israel. USA. How many kids have you killed today?"

Palestine Action Group Sydney, who organised the rally, are pushing for further action to raise awareness and build momentum after the success of the protest at Town Hall. ✪



“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”: BACKLASH AGAINST NDIS INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS

Valentin Cartillier

As part of the latest Federal Budget on Tuesday the 11th of May, the Morrison government announced it would be increasing the annual budget of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from \$17.62 billion to \$30+ billion over the next four years. While this increase in funding for the NDIS is welcome and well overdue, it comes with a structural reform that is nearly unanimously opposed by disabled people and workers in the sector. The government has now made it mandatory for anyone undergoing a review of their plan or assessment for a new plan with the NDIS to get an “Independent Assessment” (IA) which further bureaucratises a key element of the scheme.

WHAT IS AN IA?

An IA is a free, but mandatory, one-to-four-hour assessment (report writing time included) by a government-approved health professional, selected from one of eight organisations, which determines what level of help and support a person needs and will receive from the NDIS. This goes against the original purpose of the NDIS, for disabled people to be able to choose to be assessed by trusted doctors and specialists they have long-term and ongoing relationships with. The introduction of IAs forces existing recipients to re-qualify for help they’re already receiving from doctors who are unfamiliar with their needs.

The Federal Government has attempted to justify this intrusion on the grounds that it will streamline the process, but disabled people and advocacy groups have long criticised this as an attempt to cut costs by standardising care for what can be extremely complex needs. Advocates say that this push to standardise NDIS assessments will only result in people receiving worse care.

It is easy to see why this would be the case. There are already approximately 450,000+ people on the scheme, with the number expected to increase to 530,000+ over the next few years. Still, this number represents only ten percent of the number of disabled people living in Australia. Only children under seven will be exempt from the mandatory IA, resulting in a lot of paperwork for a measure designed to “streamline” the process.

CRITICISMS

The IAs have already undergone two trial periods and the feedback has been far from glowing. Peta Lambert, one of the participants of the first round of IA trials, alongside her mother, has this to say:

“I think it is a rotten idea [...] The NDIA [National Disabilities Insurance Agency] should bugger off and leave people with disability with enough money to be able to live an ordinary life like everyone else in Australia.”

The NDIA is the government agency responsible for implementing the NDIS. She explained that the interview process was highly reductive, often reducing complex topics to simple “yes” or “no” responses that would be recorded by the assessor. There are numerous other statements to this effect, leading to serious concerns surrounding the competency of the assessors employed to conduct IAs.

Fairer NDIS for All, a grassroots group led by disabled people and workers in the sector, has made a Submission to the Inquiry on Independent Assessments that comprehensively details the criticisms that



disability groups have been making against IAs since they were announced as a reform. They stated:

“From the very beginning, disability advocacy groups released statements criticising the government’s introduction of IAs, particularly around the lack of experience that assessors have working with disabled people, and a lack of training about trauma-informed practice and person-centred practice.”

Australian Greens Disability spokesperson Senator Jordon Steele-John, in the same vein, said on the 15th of April:

“When the plan to introduce compulsory independent assessments was announced, our community said very clearly that this proposal was just a smokescreen for blocking access and cutting support ... Scott Morrison, the Liberals and their mates in the agency told us we were being ridiculous; they told us these changes were about ‘consistency’ and ‘fairness’. We knew they were lying and now we have proof.”

From the very beginning disability groups and disabled people have seen right through the lies of the Morrison government and their attempts to implement a system that would only further complicate the already difficult process of getting on the NDIS. The IAs introduce a further bureaucratic impasse by denying NDIS participants the opportunity to appeal the outcome of their IA since the NDIS would only have its own report to refer to in accessing an applicant’s request to access the scheme. This is just another instance of a government agency investigating itself through its own criteria of investigation.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

No sooner had the ink dried on the latest federal budget, and there was already talk about how expensive the NDIS is going to be. The 2021 Budget forecast that the support covered by the scheme will cost \$31.9bil by 2024-25. However, this came as no surprise for the government. In April, a leaked document from the NDIS revealed that the

government had already been trying to calculate the rising cost of the NDIS. Under the name “Sustainability Action Taskforce,” the government was already trying to find ways to cut costs and participant numbers.

The leaked document stated:

“The actions of the [Sustainability Action Taskforce] will make immediate changes to slow growth in participant numbers, slow growth in spend per participant and strengthen operational discipline.”

They’re already concerned about the future cost of the scheme so they’re already trying to find ways to cut corners. This is a truly grotesque sleight of hand the government is pulling. On paper it looks like they’re investing more money into the NDIS. In reality this has only been achieved by implementing the more costly IAs while at the same time trying to cut costs over the long term by slowing the intake of participants and reducing the amount spent on them. Morrison said that IAs were “designed to make the NDIS fairer and more sustainable into the future.” By the looks of it, “more sustainable” simply means a worse service for a cheaper price (For more on this see *Guardian* “Government’s contempt for disabled people” #1956). Fairer NDIS for All was right on the money when they said “IAs are a dodgy move to take money from participants’ plans” to funnel it elsewhere.

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and for Government Services, Senator Linda Reynolds confirmed despite ongoing protests that the IAs will continue to be rolled out, but that “what form they take is very much the subject of consultation.” However, Fairer NDIS for All has expressed grave scepticism over this sentiment. There has been next to no genuine community consultation over a reform that’s clearly not designed to help the people it’s supposed to. The very fact that the IAs are going ahead is evidence enough.

WHAT NEXT?

One of the fundamental problems of understanding disability within society is the complex position it occupies within it. Under capitalism, disability is medicalised and individualised, cut off from its social context.

This is why Fairer NDIS for All endorses the “social model” which defines disability as:

“a social category, not a medical category, [which] is fundamentally a labour problem, not an individual problem. In short, under the social model there is no such thing as a “severe disability”, and individual solutions will not achieve justice for disabled people as a whole ... This model is preferable because it more accurately reflects the experience of being disabled in the current world, and recognises the need for social change not just medical intervention.”

We live in a capitalist society whose only way of determining the value of an individual is their ability to produce wealth. There is a vast array of ways that capitalism denigrates people who don’t conform to this standard. Disabled people are not exempt from this. Once someone falls outside the standard of producing value, they are considered valueless in economic terms and the state will only begrudgingly offer some assistance to the lucky few. While the NDIS does support hundreds of thousands of disabled people, it is being undermined by government greed and capitalist contempt for offering a helping hand. The social model grasps the fundamental point that to combat this, societal change is required. For a properly elaborated explanation of this change see *Guardian* “Marxism and the NDIS” #1932.

Disabled people need to be given the support they need, in line with their material needs not with the government’s bottom line. The only way to ensure this can properly occur is to adhere to the maxim of political self-determination: “Nothing about us, without us.”

Fairer NDIS 4 All recommends that the Federal Government:

- Abandon plans to introduce independent assessments
- Provide free medical and allied health services for people applying for the NDIS
- Stop privatisation and expand public disability services
- Scrap the NDIA’s staffing cap. ✪

The image is a composite of two photographs. The top photograph shows a male teacher in a blue patterned shirt smiling as he interacts with four young students in green school uniforms. They are gathered around a table, looking at a colorful educational chart. The bottom photograph shows a female nurse in blue scrubs, wearing a light blue surgical mask and blue gloves, focused on a task in a hospital room. The background of the top photo is a whiteboard with numbers, and the bottom photo shows hospital beds and curtains.

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PEOPLE'S BUDGET!



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ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE OF PALESTINIANS CONTINUES

Emily Muagututia

Israel has once again unleashed abhorrent attacks on the Palestinian people, justifying the disproportionate civilian deaths as merely collateral in their "stand against terrorism."

In recent weeks tensions have been rising as the Israeli police have been further repressing Palestinian people by trying to prevent their access to the Old City and stopping their participation in prayer during the holy month of Ramadan – a blatant attempt to disrespect Islamic rituals and weaken traditions that contribute to the Palestinian identity.

In April, far-right groups of Israeli settlers marched in the streets of Jerusalem in a bid to "restore Jewish dignity." They chanted hateful slogans such as "Death to Arabs" and attacked Palestinians, leaving around 110 Palestinian people injured. Palestinians who protested these marches were met with stun grenades, skunk water and brutal beatings by Israeli authorities.

The latest onslaught led by Israel began in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood that recently has been exhausting their legal avenues to fight against illegal evictions. The attacks then escalated to worshippers attending the Al-Aqsa Mosque for prayer on the final Friday of Ramadan, eventually expanding to Gaza. As of now the death toll for Palestinians has been around 200, all of them civilians.

Israel has once again demonstrated to the world their flagrant disregard for human life and international law. Many countries remain hesitant to condemn Israel's actions, thus proving the incredible influence Israel wields throughout the imperialist bloc. These countries will comfortably overlook genocide in efforts to protect their interests.

Israel has experienced rising internal conflict in recent months. A real or perceived crime wave has arisen, particularly in Israeli Arab towns. Many instances have been racially motivated. Demonstrations have been taking place as residents feel that the police and government are doing little to address the issue.

Political instability compounds this uncertain atmosphere. Israel's parliament has undergone four elections in just two years each without a clear result. No governing coalition has been able to form, all while Netanyahu has faced corruption charges and challenges to his popularity.

Just last year, Netanyahu announced the annexation of the Jordan Valley to cultivate support from the dominant Israeli right. Netanyahu is now utilising intensified persecution and brutality against Palestinians in an attempt to solidify public approval. Although Israel's circumstances are factually dependent upon American sponsorship, it is ideologically necessary – for the Zionists – to construct a facade of independent strength.



These aggressions against the Palestinian people are both an opportunistic political move, and a continuation of Israel's long-standing genocidal policy; the median of two forms of cowardice and brutality.

Palestine too has undergone its own internal political instability. On top of the now decade-and-a-half-long split between Fatah and Hamas, the Palestinian Authority has also delayed a new election on the grounds of disruption due to the pandemic. There has been dissatisfaction surrounding this decision, with some claiming that it is merely insurance against a potential loss for Fatah. Whatever the validity of this concern, it is both, a product of the complicated circumstances, and a contributing factor to further inflammation of Palestinian political agitation.

Members of the United Nations Security Council have convened to vote for a ceasefire. Of the fifteen members, fourteen voted in support, including the UK, France, Russia, and China. But, the US used its veto power to oppose the motion. This highlights the truly international consensus against Israeli apartheid; the US and Israel stand alone in their colonial pursuits.

Palestinian ambassador to the UN, Riyad Mansour, said: "There is no people on Earth that would tolerate this reality.

Israel keeps saying, 'Put yourselves in our shoes,' but they aren't wearing shoes, they are wearing military boots [...] Why not put yourself in our shoes? What would you do if your country was occupied? What would you do to achieve independence? How many Palestinians killed is enough for condemnation? We know one Israeli is enough, but how many Palestinians?"

What right does the US have to stand in the way of these rights of the Palestinian people and the demands of the overwhelming majority of the world's nations, and the UN Security Council?

For the Americans it is no question of right, but of interest.

Instability in the Middle East is in US interests – divided peoples are easier to exploit. Political instability is nothing more than an opportunity to seize resources.

Australia's reaction has been less than surprising. News outlets across the nation are using the latest attacks as a time to reflect on "cycles of violence," framing blatant genocide as a "conflict" and glorifying Israel's "fight against terrorism." All the while, Scott Morrison calls on Australians not to "bring Palestine's problems to Australia."

While the Australian government continues to provide monetary backing to Israel, still refusing to condemn Israel's human rights

abuses (even allowing Australian citizens to join the IDF with no legal consequences!) we are all complicit in Israel's genocide. As Australian citizens, we have a responsibility to do what our government refuses to do: to stand in solidarity with Palestinian people and speak out against Israel's perpetration of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Full support for Palestine need not mean full support for Hamas. Criticism of Hamas is often justified, as most Palestinians would agree. But Israel's demonisation of Hamas, and assigning collective blame to all Palestinians for the real or claimed crimes of Hamas, extends far beyond a reasonable assessment. But there is no possibility of a "neutral" position in such an unequal situation.

The Communist Party of Australia demands a free Palestine, a two-state solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. We have no quarrel with any Israeli's genuine demand for peace. What must be recognised is that the situation today is an asymmetrical one. The US has no place in the Middle East and it should be clear to anyone that their exit would drastically change the balance of forces in favour of reality – the Palestinian people have a right to live in their own country, without fear. ☺

While the Australian government continues to provide monetary backing to Israel, still refusing to condemn Israel's human rights abuses (even allowing Australian citizens to join the IDF with no legal consequences!) we are all complicit in Israel's genocide.

OP-ED: HAVE WE BECOME THE 51ST STATE?

Eileen Whitehead

How can Australia's subservience to the United States be explained? At the very centre of this must be our mutually historical beginnings born out of British invasion and colonisation with the concomitant brutal dispossession of the indigenous land and culture in order to prevail. But the Americanisation of Australia since the end of the Second World War has presaged the change in our relationship with the world and transformed our economy and society. Unfortunately, the re-shaping of our economic and political culture has brought about a messianic mindset – inherited from the US – that only western “civilisation” can save the world.

We have gone from being an arm of the British Empire to serving the interests of American capital. Whereas, originally, Australian capitalism grew from the dispossession of Indigenous land and its resources, we are now the avid worshippers at the altar of American capitalism. However, we need Asia's growing wealth in order to sustain our Western way of life and rely on US hegemony to safeguard our markets and capital investments. Hence the recent 'QUAD' “jamboree” being proposed to form a NATO-style alliance between Australia, Japan, India, and the US in the Indo-Pacific region, which is simply an alliance to make sure China is brought to heel.

Australians have seen their power diminish with the expansion of capitalist activities aided by its neo-right political elite. Under both the LNP and Labor, we've seen a marked decline in our democracy and a rise of the suppressive powers of the state. This is largely due to the adoption of a US model of economic and political culture. We only have to look at our universities teaching US business and management values and practices and the political influence of neo-conservative think-tanks on our politicians.

Post-WW2 the US and its key allies have acted to politically stabilise the rest of the world utilising their military but have achieved the exact opposite. This control is vital to safeguard their hold on the global financial market and secure vast investment funds. The tentacles of American economic and military influence are global. With all our concern about China's influence on Australia, it's nothing compared to American influence. Chinese investment is \$3.4bil and American investment is \$860bil, which is probably why, when Washington says “jump,” we jump.

Privatisation is the new buzzword giving power to corporations to control governments. As Dr Erik Paul noted, “Australia's market democracy is fuelled by postmodern greed and the accumulation of more wealth.” We are told that the solution to rising problems, such as unemployment, poverty, and



The tentacles of American economic and military influence are global.

destruction of the environment, is to pursue economic growth and keep consuming! It's become our national policy – but the only people benefiting are the elite; the rest of us see our wage packets declining in line with public education, transport, and health funding, which are the responsibility of our government (Sound like America?).

Furthermore, the US global free trade agenda sets sovereign states against each other in geopolitical struggles for diminishing resources. As the world order changes, the US, in order to remain “top dog” in the world economy, is becoming more militaristic and using more sophisticated weapons

systems. It's already using predatory policies regarding the global economy, which could involve Australia becoming part of its protective, military shield. US affluence and mass consumption are kept in place by its military-industrial mega-machine, which has become largely autonomous, which according to economist John K Galbraith, is “standing above and apart from democratic control.”

The events of 9/11 have eroded US – and Australia's – democratic foundations with legislation restricting citizens' human rights. As Norman Mailer once said, the “combination of the corporation, the military and the complete investiture of the flag with mass

spectator sports has set up a pre-fascist atmosphere in America.” US imperial ambitions have now become more overt – invading Iraq and Afghanistan – illustrating its plans to re-shape the politics of the Middle East. As the world's dominant military power, the US intends to respond to any challenge to its hegemony, and our “joined at the hip” relationship will see Australia incapable of withdrawing from American policies and being dragged into even more US-validated conflicts.

We have learnt nothing from being tied to the UK's apron strings and have just replaced one colonial ruler with another. ✪

ISRAELI COMMUNISTS CALL FOR “JEWISH-ARAB PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RACISM, HATRED AND VIOLENCE”

Israeli Communist Party-led coalition Hadash has called for a “Jewish-Arab partnership against racism, hatred and violence” in the face of the Benjamin Netanyahu government's willingness “to let violent fascist gangs riot unhindered.”

Jewish extremists have led attacks on Palestinian citizens of Israel in cities including Jerusalem

and Lod, staging marches chanting “death to Arabs,” attacking homes and shops and torching cars.

Followers of the far-right terrorist rabbi Meir Kahane, who died in 1990, dragged a Palestinian from his car on Wednesday and beat him up in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, while riots in Lod in response to the shooting of a Palestinian by a Jewish man saw an explosion of

communal ethnic violence. Riots have also erupted in Haifa and Jaffa.

Nadav Argaman, head of the Shin Bet, Israel's secret police, said that he would not tolerate ethnic violence “by Arabs nor Jews” and would “not allow violent lawbreakers to carry out terrorism on the streets of Israel.”

Hadash said that “the winds

from the Netanyahu government heated up Jerusalem, deported families and violently suppressed demonstrations. They continue to set the country on fire.”

“The only way to deal with the flames that threaten to destroy us is through solidarity, standing together and a Jewish-Arab struggle against racism, hatred and violence.”

It called for support for another protest against the eviction of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrar neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and pointed out that joint Jewish-Arab protests calling for an end to the Israeli assault on Gaza and to racist violence had attracted over 300 people in Rahat and a similar number in Haifa.

Morning Star ✪

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: editor@cpa.org.au

MAY BUDGET

Dear Editor,

Please do not underestimate the LNP. This is NOT a "Labor Budget" or a suspending of ideology!

LNP is continuing its privatisation/user pays strategy, which despite COVID's lesson, they determined to maintain – including in this budget. However, they want working men and women to pay for the increased spending, not the rich.

Then-Prime Minister Howard turned aged care into a business opportunity in 1995 with changes to legislation. Snouts have been well and truly in the trough since then, and the cost to frail, defenceless residents has been very high. The loss of the family GP exacerbated the situation in Aged Care. Most GPs got out years ago when nurse ratios fell and registered nurses started to disappear.

It's all a part of the Americanisation strategy – e.g. privatisation and user pays for health care, aged care (for decent care) and everything else. You pay pay pay, or you die.

The plan seems to be to give increased funding **but** delay the money, and then the money runs out – how convenient! Problem fixed for LNP government! And the pro-business model of aged care remains on track.

Thus, the march to privatisation, user pays, and Americanisation remains on track. Medicare is still underfunded by \$1bil per year and here is nothing of note in this year's budget. Further still are cuts to desperately overburdened public hospitals as reported by the Victorian health Minister despite a COVID epidemic imminent and likely to become endemic in the future.

Still, there is no rush to provide purpose-built quarantine centres! Does Australia have no option but to stay locked up until at least late 2022? Does this make any sense?

Our super-rich are escaping responsibility. Gina, Twigg, and mates – who continue to rape and pillage our vast mineral resources – have again dodged a mining super profits tax thanks to their political mates. No mining super profits tax to share the burden of COVID's \$300bil cost!

There was no mention, much less budget review of the military spending that's been allocated over the next twenty years – oh! Except an extra, lazy \$250bil of our taxes in this budget to top up the military.

This budget was not designed by mistake or incompetence by LNP. They are NOT hopeless. It is clear and brazen intent.

Signed,

cc



Fight for the Future

This attractive new booklet is a call to action to save our planet and humanity.

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“DEFENDER EUROPE 21” – A MILITARY PROVOCATION

Jan Dieles

The United States continues its march towards a new world war.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Ukraine on 6th May. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky requested an expedited admission into NATO.

The same day, the European Union granted US troops “unhindered movement” across EU member states.

Meanwhile, the massive “Defender Europe 21” military exercises are taking place, with EU and US troops across Europe and Northern Africa, most significantly near the Russian border.

All this sums to a huge escalation in US-EU aggression towards Russia.

While the Trump administration had alienated Europe, the Biden administration signals a return to “normal” US imperialism. But the escalations under Trump have only continued.

The war plans against China are clearly still in place. That war is already an

unwinnable one. How could the same US who failed to defeat the Taliban expect to defeat a rising advanced power that is the most populous country in the world? But the unwinnability of a war has never dulled the American thirst for blood. By this point, it is all they know.

The deepening Russian alliance with China has made such a war all the more unwinnable. The US has gone to great lengths attempting to drive a wedge between the two, or to topple either government and install a puppet. Navalny has been groomed for that role in Russia, but his failure has been so embarrassing that even the American government must question, for a moment, its abilities.

So here we are, with the most ridiculous war theatrics imaginable. US troops are circling both Russia and China, with the shameful support of such American puppies as the EU countries, Japan, South Korea, and our own country.

Around 70,000 US troops are stationed in Europe. This is more than a

presence, it is an occupation, maintained since WW2.

Previously, the US military presence in Europe was targeted against the Soviet Union. But since the destruction of the Soviet Union, this presence was maintained, even when the US-friendly Yeltsin government held power. True to expectations, resistance against the US highway robbery of the Russian people found some sort of voice in the form of Vladimir Putin.

The US is an expert in creating enemies. The US Department of Defense reports: “[Pentagon Press Secretary] Kirby said that openly discussing the Defender Europe 21 exercise and why US, NATO partners and other European allies are gathering troops is an important facet of the operation. Other nations have not been so clear or forthright about their own amassing of troops, he said.”

Is such openness really something to brag about? The fact that the US is able to be so open about its aggressions is only another symptom of its status as world hegemon.

This comment is intended to imply that

Russia is amassing troops unprompted. Can such a claim be made reasonably in the circumstances of a decades-old US campaign of hostility? Consider the ongoing US interference in Russia's neighbours, including Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus.

The US loves to play victim, but no reasonable person is fooled.

The US aggressions in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, are crimes against the whole world's peoples. The defeat of US imperialism is the only path forward for humanity.

The Australian people have so far been sheltered from the worst impacts of imperialism – with the significant exception of the very people whose land this is. This temporary stability for the majority breeds complacency; but it cannot last forever. We are today seeing the US empire in desperation, crumbling. There will be an end to it, the only question is how destructive it will be. We must act to oppose the drive to war and build a peoples' resistance. ✪



SMALL NUCLEAR REACTORS STILL HAVE HUGE NUCLEAR PROBLEMS

Norm Knight

Ottawa and four provinces have jumped on the small modular nuclear reactor (SMNR) bandwagon and if things go as announced there will be SMNRs operating in Canada by the end of this decade.

New Brunswick has given a total of CAD 30mil to two SMNR developers, US-based Advanced Reactor Concepts (ARC) and UK-based Moltex. ARC will build a 100-megawatt reactor at the province's nuclear site at Point Lepreau, and Moltex will build a 300-megawatt station there. Lepreau's existing 660-megawatt CANDU reactor is due for retirement in 2040.

The federal government has given an additional CAD 50mil to Moltex and CAD 20mil to Terrestrial Energy, a Canadian SMNR designer which is working with Ontario Power Generation to install a 190-megawatt reactor at Darlington. Moltex, Terrestrial and US firms Kairos and Ultra Safe Nuclear Corporation have received other federal money of undisclosed amounts to develop SMNRs at the national nuclear laboratory at Chalk River, Ontario.

Saskatchewan and Alberta have joined Ontario and New Brunswick in a memorandum of understanding to develop SMNRs, and late last year the federal government released a Small Modular Reactor Action Plan which enthuses about this "promising new technology."

The idea of SMNRs became fashionable in the nuclear industry around 2010, after a hoped-for "nuclear renaissance" of large nuclear power plant (NPP) construction had failed to materialise during the preceding decade. Nuclear accounted for 17 per cent of world electricity generation in 1996 but provides only 10 per cent now, and only one new NPP has been completed in North America this century. The stagnation in the nuclear power industry has been caused by increased regulatory caution and difficulty in obtaining the CAD 10bil or so in capital needed to build a conventional NPP. SMNRs, because they are smaller, reduce the severity of the financing problem and are thus seen by some as a way of reviving the industry.

The oft-repeated claim that SMNRs are "cheaper" than conventional NPPs can be misleading, however. A single SMNR costs less to build than a conventional NPP because it is smaller, but for their size SMNRs are no cheaper than conventional NPPs and, according to some experts, are more expensive because they have inferior economies of scale. Importantly, wind and solar are now cheaper than any nuclear option and their cost is falling.

The other frequent claim made for SMNRs is that they are "safe and clean." Actually, it is unclear whether they have an

advantage over conventional NPPs in this regard. Small reactors are less prone to meltdown; but on the other hand, employing multiple small reactors increases problems of radioactive materials transportation, and of monitoring and securing the sites.

There are more than fifty companies worldwide offering SMNR designs. Many propose to use substances other than water, which is the current standard in NPPs, as their core coolant. Most of the alternative coolants have been tried in the past but found less economical or less safe than water. Liquid sodium, which ARC will use as a coolant, was used in the US nuclear powered submarine *Seawolf* in 1957. Molten salts, which Moltex, Terrestrial and Kairos will use, were used in a reactor at Oak Ridge, Tennessee in the 1960s.

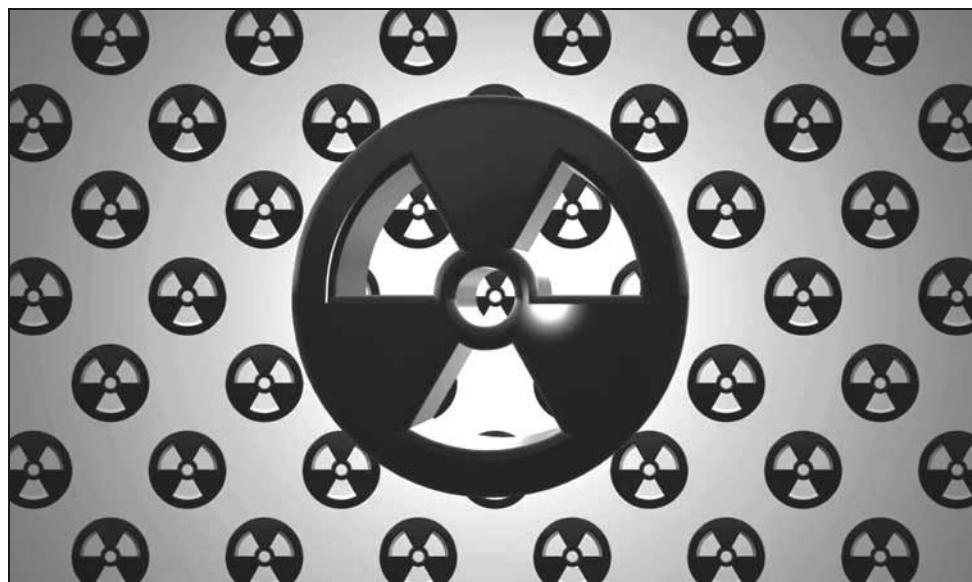
All SMNRs are nuclear fission reactors and consequently share the two principal liabilities of conventional NPPs: radioactive waste and links to nuclear weapons manufacture.

Regarding waste, water-cooled SMNRs have essentially the same characteristics as conventional NPPs; whereas some other SMNRs, including the Moltex, have the ability to reduce the output of actinides, which are the longest-lived radioactive products, at the expense of making the fuel and waste more difficult and dangerous to handle in the short term.

The most serious problem with nuclear power is that many of the materials and techniques it uses are similar to those used in making nuclear weapons. Consequently, civilian nuclear and weapons nuclear are symbiotic. They form, in important respects, a single enterprise in which personnel and theoretical advances flow back and forth, and institutions and plant are often difficult to delineate as being either civilian- or weapons-related. This is not a view confined to anti-nuclear or peace activists. Lukas Tracimavicius, a weapons and energy analyst employed by NATO, recently authored a report on SMNRs and states:

"There has always been a close overlap between civilian and military nuclear programs. Even though militaries no longer rely on NPPs for their weapons-grade nuclear material, both of these programs depend on the virtually same know-how. Nuclear power and nuclear weapons require similar expertise in engineering, modelling, metallurgy, chemistry, along with scientific expertise in physics and mathematics, just to name a few. Therefore, governments that possess nuclear weapons have a clear reason to maintain a pool of highly trained personnel in the civil nuclear energy sector, so that it would support and maintain their nuclear weapons programs."

Canada's nuclear laboratory, Chalk River, exemplifies the civilian-military overlap.



Founded during World War Two to produce plutonium for the atomic bomb project, it was for decades a dual-purpose institution that used its deuterium-moderated reactors to produce plutonium for US nuclear weapons while developing the same reactor type for civilian purposes such as electrical power. The US has publicly acknowledged receipt of 250 kg of Chalk River's plutonium between 1959 and 1976, an amount which would make forty bombs of the type that destroyed Nagasaki.

In 1962, Chalk River built Canada's first nuclear power plant at Rolphton, in partnership with Ontario Hydro and atomic weapons contractor General Electric. That reactor was then developed into the CANDU type that is used for electric generation in Canada today. The reactor technology was also exported. India's 1975 nuclear bomb test used plutonium from a Canada India Reactor Utility Services (CIRUS) reactor patterned on one at Chalk River, and India's second round of nuclear bomb detonations in 1998 used plutonium from either CIRUS- or CANDU-type reactors or electrical power plant reactors supplied by the US.

Chalk River is currently run by SNC-Lavalin and two US-based nuclear weapons contractors, Fluor and Jacobs. Fluor, which has been providing infrastructure for the US nuclear weapons program since 1942, is currently building a nuclear missile facility in Wyoming and is the lead partner in the Savannah River, South Carolina facility that supplies plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons. On the civilian side, Fluor is majority investor in the SMNR firm NuScale. Jacobs is a major partner in the UK's Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) which manufactures the Trident nuclear missile, and the company is involved in nuclear weapons manufacture in the US.

About half the fuel used in NPPs in Canada comes from nuclear weapons manufacturer Babcock and Wilcox (BWX). BWX is also the main North American manufacturer of TRISO, the nuclear fuel used by five of the twelve SMNRs that have entered the pre-licensing design review process in Canada. Among these five are Ultra Safe, which is also developing nuclear-powered rockets with NASA, Quebec firm Star Core and Urenco U-Battery. Urenco's main business is centrifuging uranium, which can produce weapons-grade material, and the company's centrifuge designs have been used in bomb making.

In the global context of great-power competition, states feel that they must not fall behind in certain key areas of technology that support their war preparedness. The awesome and terrible capabilities of nuclear technology make it one such area. It is likely, then, that nuclear power will continue to receive state support within the NATO imperialist bloc as well as in countries that seek to defend themselves from it, whether or not it is a safe and economical way of generating electricity.

The inter-firm competition on which capitalism is based tends to coalesce into competition between monopolistic capitalist blocs which are closely integrated with their respective states and groups of states. The competition then tends to escalate into armed struggle. Given humanity's present level of technological know-how, another such struggle could mean extinction. A dual strategy is therefore needed: the human race must slow down the development of dangerous technologies as best it can, while seeking a way out of capitalism.

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AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS DOMINATED BY MONEY

Zhong Sheng

Does the US want democracy or money-dominated democracy? US society should really think hard about this question – although some politicians in the country already have an answer that they dare not to expose: American democracy is merely a disguise as it is actually dominated by money.

“There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can’t remember what the second one is.” The quote from the late Mark Hanna, American industrialist and prototype of the political kingmaker, revealed the truth about American politics more than a hundred years ago, and is repeatedly proven true today.

The 2020 US presidential election is a recent example of what Hanna said in the late 19th century. While the chaotic phenomena during the election made it seem like a political mystery, the eye-catching money-squandering plots were not surprising at all.

US presidential and congressional candidates spent a total of 14bil USD in the 2020 election campaigns, which was more than twice that for the 2016 election, and even surpassed the gross domestic product (GDP) of dozens of economies in 2020.

According to US media, the top ten donors in the 2020 US election contributed more than 640mil USD, and funds collected from small donors accounted for less than half of the total amount of money raised by both democratic and republican presidential candidates.

Data has shown that the American-style democracy is like a monodrama of the wealthy. On the “political fundraising market,” the ability to raise funds has become a rigid standard, sometimes the primary standard, for measuring the career prospects of American politicians. People even dubbed the US president’s term in office the single highest priced commodity in Washington, DC.

According to media reports, some members of the US Congress spend as long as five hours per day on raising money for re-election, almost the same amount of time as on legislative work.

Money is a plague in American politics, said James Moran, former Democratic member of the US House of Representatives who served in the Capitol Hill for more than twenty years, noting that money distorts political process and gives the rich disproportionate political influence.

The US used to be a democracy, which is a government of the 100 per cent, by the 100 per cent, for the 100 per cent, and sadly today’s US has become a plutocracy; a plutocracy is the government of the one per cent, by the one per cent, for the one



per cent, Singaporean scholar Kishore Mahbubani pointed out.

It’s ironic that power-for-money deals are made totally legitimate in the US What the widely-denounced super Political Action Committees (super PACs) has been doing is a typical example.

In 2010, a judgment from the Supreme Court of the US gave the green light to companies and groups providing unlimited amounts of political contributions through the super PACs. The judgment was followed by a ruling made by the Supreme Court in 2014 that struck down certain limits on individual campaign contributions.

While the Supreme Court tried to wrap the decision in nice-sounding phrases and said that campaign donations are a constitutionally protected form of free speech, it ignored the fact that in reality it’s not uncommon for a company to provide political campaign donations for both parties, which is obviously not for the purpose of freely expressing a self-contradictory standpoint, but to hedge “risks” and avoid the loss of political channels.

On the surface, the super PACs need to follow relevant legal provisions, which

require them not to donate money directly to political campaign teams or have cooperative relationships with candidates or their campaign committees. However, interest-driven “peripheral” campaign operations, such as advertising and article posting, can certainly make the political beneficiaries know who they should “thank.”

The apparent “legal corruption” has long been controversial in the US, and the relevant laws, which are occasionally tinkered with, are more like decorations designed to deceive the public, as they are fundamentally against democracy, freedom, equality, and justice.

How can the country with a democracy dominated by money guarantee the democratic rights of the common people?

In the early days of the US, Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the Declaration of Independence, worried that the financial aristocracy would erode the country’s democracy if they have disproportionate influence in the government. The same concern still exists today.

An editorial by the *New York Times* pointed out that in recent decades, “the rich keep getting richer, and the Supreme

Court has made it much easier for politicians to tap that wealth. The result is an arms race that leaves politicians ever more beholden to funders.”

Political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page have proven in the book *Democracy in America?: What Has Gone Wrong and What We Can Do About It* that the rich in the US can even successfully block a popular policy as long as they don’t like it.

In the final analysis, the present American-style democracy is a game in which the stink of money contaminates real democracy. It’s astonishing and ridiculous that certain US politicians are still shamelessly peddling the trick that perfectly explains how “money talks” and even use it as a criterion for judging the political systems of other countries.

It must be understood that there is never real democracy if the democracy is dominated by money. The root cause of various deep-seated problems in the American-style democracy is that the country replaced the say of “people” in decision-making with “money.”

Peoples’ Daily ★

It’s not uncommon for a company to provide political campaign donations for both parties, which is obviously not for the purpose of freely expressing a self-contradictory standpoint, but to hedge “risks” and avoid the loss of political channels.



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