



COVID: IT IS A RACE!

Anna Pha

As the Victorian state government continued to grapple with the more virulent Delta variant of COVID-19, the federal government failed to recognise the seriousness of the situation. Instead, it urged the Victorian government to lift its lockdown measures.

Meanwhile, the Coalition government's litany of failures grows. It is failing in its:

- Implementation of the Aged Care Royal Commission's special COVID report
- Vaccination of all aged care residents, NDIS recipients, carers, First Nations communities, and front-line workers
- Procurement of vaccines
- Shambolic vaccination roll-out
- Lack of accurate, consistent information
- Public given no choice of vaccine
- No transparency over the stock of vaccines
- Cover-ups and lies creating distrust and vaccine hesitancy for the anti-vaxxers to feed off
- Building of dedicated quarantine facilities
- Reliance on private sector for much of roll-out, etc.

DITCH HOTEL QUARANTINE

The emergence of the highly contagious and deadly Delta strain in Victoria should ring alarm bells over the urgency for a concerted, planned, and scientifically based action on the part of the federal government. So far, there have been twenty-two leakages of the virus from hotel quarantine.

Hotels are neither designed for nor suitable for quarantine purposes. Scientists have been warning for some time that the virus is being transmitted by aerosols that linger in the air longer than droplets from coughs and sneezes. The Department of Health refuses to accept, let alone act on, this information. It is the federal government's responsibility.

It has had more than twelve months to build dedicated quarantine facilities since the onset of the pandemic. There would not have been any leakages from hotel quarantine if it had acted then. In fact, scientists and the World Health Organisation warned a few years ago of the inevitability of pandemics and the need to put such measures in place.

After months of procrastinating, the government has at last signed a memorandum of understanding with the Victorian government to build such a facility, to come into operation early next year. The state government would then take responsibility for running it. The federal government is still to agree to a facility that was proposed months ago in Queensland near Toowoomba. Other states are also calling for dedicated facilities, citing the Howard Springs facility



in the Northern Territory as an example. It has not had any leaks.

The contact tracers deserve all the praise in the world for the incredible job they are doing, despite federal government incompetence. Australians also owe a lot to the state and territory governments who stood up to pressure from the Morrison government and used their powers to implement lockdowns and close borders.

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

A week into the Melbourne lockdown, and under considerable pressure from unions, employers, and state governments for a JobKeeper-type wage subsidy, the Morrison government reluctantly announced tokenistic support for stood-down workers in hotspots. The disaster payment is \$500 (\$325 if they worked less than twenty hours a week prior to the lockdown) for workers who lose their jobs.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) described it as "too little, too late" and noted it did not ensure a connection to jobs post-lockdown in hotspots.

There is no disaster payment for the first week of lockdown.

"This payment will leave working people with nothing for a full week before a restricted number are able to access a small support payment, a third below the minimum wage and half the standard disaster relief payment,

which will not secure their employment," ACTU President Michele O'Neil said.

"The payment that has been announced is no replacement for a wage subsidy available fast to everyone affected which would keep working people attached to their jobs through a lockdown."

Workers must apply every two weeks during a lockdown for the payment to continue.

The federal government decides who is eligible. It, not the states, determines what are hotspots. It offers nothing to workers who lose their jobs outside those hotspots due to a lockdown.

Applicants for the payment must declare they do not have access to any liquid assets such as savings in a bank or a loan to recall from another person. They must not have access to unused special pandemic leave.

Recipients of JobSeeker and other forms of income support payments from the Commonwealth are not eligible. The Prime Minister said the idea of the payment was to help people who would usually be in a situation where "every dollar counts." If this does not describe the unemployed, then what does!

JobSeeker recipients are entitled to up to \$150 per fortnight through part-time work before their payment is reduced. They need those additional dollars to survive. The loss of that part-time employment leaves them in a critical situation on \$44.34 a day.

MONUMENTAL STUFF-UP

The government had responsibility for vaccinating people in 1a, the priority group. 1a consisted of quarantine and front-line health workers, aged- and disability- care residents and staff. It failed dismally.

The private contractors delivering vaccines are only offering care workers any leftovers after residents have been vaccinated! The government has left these workers to fend for themselves!

The private contracts are confidential, with no transparency, so there is no way of knowing the truth regarding obligations to vaccinate staff. It appears staff were not included in the contracts. But who knows, with a government that lies and covers up anything it thinks might damage its electoral prospects.

Following the special report on COVID by the Royal Commission in Aged Care, the government introduced a support payment for workers employed in aged care homes and banned work in multiple homes. This amounted to de facto recognition of the appallingly low wages of workers, many of whom worked at more than one centre to compensate for low wages.

Continued on page 2

3



New insights into the Stolen Generation

8



Wage strikes in US and Australia

9



US meddling comes under many disguises

10



Effects of the military – air and soil pollution

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ABC UNDER ATTACK

The ABC's integrity is being destroyed. For example, the network was expected to run a *Four Corners* episode by prominent journalist Louise Milligan about the relationship between Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Tim Stewart, who was one of Australia's most prominent QAnon adherents (as measured by Twitter followers).

However, ABC managing director David Anderson decided to pull the episode in what the *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)* has qualified as "a decision that could be seen as an attempt to dampen tensions between the national broadcaster and the federal government."

Though, according to an ABC spokesperson, "[t]he ABC did not 'pull' a story from broadcast. Any suggestion to the contrary is misleading and mischievous."

ABC sources, who spoke anonymously to the *SMH*, have provided a different story stating that "the decision was made days after [...] [news director Gaven] Morris received a call from the Prime Minister's office."

This is not the first time members of the Coalition have challenged the national broadcaster.

Just last month, Industry Minister Christian Porter dropped his defamation action against the ABC and Milligan for its reporting of a rape allegation. While the case is now being settled, the ABC still has not only its costs to pay but the mediation and other related costs as well. Unnecessary expenditure for the ABC, whose only "crime" was reporting on a story worthy of the attention it garnered.

The ABC, as our national broadcaster, shouldn't have to "dampen" tensions. It should be able to report on all matters without having to be concerned about attacks or being undermined by political parties. However, these confrontations naturally lead the ABC to censor its journalists, as evident with the *Four Corners* story.

But it's not just its reporting and editorial content that are under threat – the institution's budget is also being slashed. In last month's budget, the Morrison government handed out an extra \$58.6mil to the media sector in the budget. SBS (\$30mil), the Australian Associated Press (\$15mil), community broadcasting (\$8mil), and the media regulator (\$4.2mil) all received funding. However, the ABC was conspicuously left out. As a result, the ABC's operational funding fell by \$10mil from \$880mil in 2021-22 to \$870mil in 2022-23.

Speaking on the budget exclusion, former ABC senior bureaucrat Michael Ward stated that:

"The ABC seems to be now completely excluded from policy thinking and funding. Funding for regional news, local content and Australian children's programs is extremely important. However, it is hard to understand the decision to continue to exclude the ABC from these arrangements."

The ABC relies on government funding to do its job, but it's a job that the Coalition does not want it to do. By cutting funding, the Coalition has found ways to make the ABC not do its job and put it in a position to comply with its requests or face further cuts.

The Communists, the CPA's electoral expression, would put money back in the ABC – no strings attached – because it believes the national broadcaster should work for the people. However, we need your help with registration. By registering with us, we will make sure your voice is heard. Register here to support The Communists: <https://cpaforms.wufoo.com/forms/join-the-communists/>

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Continued from page 1

Late last year, that support payment was quietly removed. The ban on working in more than one centre only applied to employees of that centre. A large number of aged care workers are employed by body hire companies, not directly by the centres. As a result, the restrictions do not apply to them, and they can work in more than one centre.

In Victoria, staff who tested positive at two aged care centres earlier this month worked in multiple centres. This put at risk many more elderly people. If the government were genuinely concerned for the aged, it would have prevented agency staff from working in more than one centre and continued with the support payment for aged care workers.

The workers are still paid insultingly low wages for demanding and responsible work carried out under poor working conditions. Private, for-profit homes are grossly understaffed and lack adequately qualified staff. The Morrison government has largely ignored recommendations from the Royal Commission regarding staffing.

Last year almost two thirds of COVID-related deaths were in aged-care centres.

The government came in for a roasting at a Senate Estimates Committee meeting when Health Minister Greg Hunt had to retract inflated numbers of people vaccinated in aged care.

"Aged care is just a classic case study for the whole problem of insecure work," Annie Butler, the Federal Secretary for the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), said. The ANMF was highly critical of the \$17.7bil for aged care in the May Budget as not being anywhere near enough to provide safe, quality care for vulnerable nursing home residents.

NOT IN THIS TOGETHER

The situation regarding people with disability – also in group 1a – is even more appalling than in aged

care. Health Department figures released earlier this month revealed that just 355 of the 22,000 people with disability living in group homes had been fully vaccinated. That is less than two per cent! The government has had more than three months. Pfizer jabs are three weeks apart.

As of June 1, the number of NDIS participants who had been given at least one dose of the vaccine was 38,000 out of a total of 400,000 – less than ten per cent. Prime Minister Scott Morrison's raves about being "world leaders" are wearing a bit thin!

At last, under public duress, the government appears to be stepping up the vaccine roll-out for people with disability. This week, dedicated vaccine hubs are to be set up for participants in the NDIS, their primary carers, and NDIS workers.

We are certainly not "all in this together."

LACK OF VACCINE OPTIONS

The government has failed to invest in a wide range of vaccines resulting in Australians only having access to AstraZeneca and Pfizer, without a choice for individuals. There are other vaccines which have been tested and approved in other countries which the government could be looking at. Blinded by narrow minded, reactionary politics, the government has failed to look at vaccines from Russia and China.

UNPREPARED

"Our public hospitals are beyond over-stretched, and ANMF members across all sectors including aged care, are run off their feet, day in, day out. What's apparent is that the care they can provide to the community is clearly being compromised," Butler said.

If the Delta or another strain does get out of control, Australia is not prepared. The May Budget had billions for missiles and war preparations but peanuts for Medicare and public hospitals.

The ANMF is calling for urgent reform of public health funding so that it is fair and equitable, and crucially, so that health professionals can deliver safe, quality care to people when they need it. It was the public health system that managed COVID. It was beyond the capacity of the private sector.

ACT NOW

It is no thanks to the feds that Australia is in the position it is now. The states stood up to the Morrison government's pressure to lift restrictions every time there was a lockdown. The federal government must stop playing politics and the blame-game with the states and get on with taking the necessary measures to deal with the pandemic. There is no time to waste.

The Communist Party of Australia calls on the federal government to:

- Plan the distribution of vaccines
- Use public, not private, distribution of vaccines
- Prioritise the vaccination of people in group 1a
- Increase the wages of care workers and put an end to the reliance on casuals
- Be open with the public about the supply it has and CSL's role
- Give all Australians a choice of the vaccine they have
- Create vaccine hubs in all major cities and regional and remote areas
- Build fit-for-purpose quarantine facilities in every state and territory near a public hospital
- Ditch hotel quarantine
- Increase funding to public hospitals
- Revive the JobKeeper payment and JobSeeker supplement that were put in place in March 2020 during periods of lockdown for the full period of lockdown
- Nationalise, reform, and adequately fund the public health system. ☆

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

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NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

Casey Davidson

A recently updated report released a staggering increase in Indigenous people disclosing themselves as Stolen Generations survivors. Since 2018, the number coming forward born before 1972 has almost doubled to 33,600, suggesting that many more First Nations people are willing to share their experiences. The data collected amongst the Stolen Generations demographic over 50 years old revealed that economic circumstances, health outcomes and health risks were worse for them than those of Indigenous people who were not removed from their families as children. Although the Stolen Generations is often discussed through a historical lens by mainstream dominant powers in Australia, the reality is that even today, Aboriginal children are 9.7 times more likely to be removed from their families than non-Aboriginal children, and over 23,000 live in out-of-home care.

The 2021 report, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over: updated analyses for 2018–19* provides a clear indication that Indigenous children suffer more as a result of being removed from their families. The analyses showed that they were more likely than Indigenous people who were not forcibly removed to be receiving welfare, experiencing discrimination, suffering from a severe disability, living with poor mental health, and identifying as a smoker. Results from the research also indicated that almost ninety per cent had not completed Year 12 schooling, and the majority did not own a home.

It is encouraging that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have felt comfortable enough to reveal that they were victims of the Stolen Generations but the sudden spike requires more analysis to understand the reasoning behind it. Fadwa Al-Yaman, spokesperson for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) suggests that it is just a matter of time and willingness, however, as First Nations people continue to struggle for sovereignty and receive more recognition, it may be paving the way for more Indigenous people to explore their identity and share their experiences.

But more exposure does not necessarily mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are receiving better outcomes for their children now. As of June 2020, 23,344 Aboriginal children were reported to be living in out-of-home care, which makes up for thirty-seven per cent of all fostered, adopted or institutionalised children in Australia. With the recent report showing the negative consequences for those removed from their family, it is likely that similar outcomes could occur for these young people in the future.

This current situation can be attributed to the Howard's Northern Territory intervention which was implemented in 2007 and carried on into the Rudd years. Rather than addressing children's issues in the Northern Territory by supporting communities in poverty, the blame was directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Hope Beyond the Window by Jacqui Stewart. The painting represents children from a Stolen Generation. (Source: Stolen Generations stories – Creative Spirits, retrieved from www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/stolen-generations/stolen-generations-stories)

Howard's attacks on First Nations people included the discontinuation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the abolition of the self-determination policy, the abandonment of the Reconciliation movement and the Native Title Amendments Act, and in his final blow, an intervention, which would result in land seizures, and a sixty-five per cent increase in Aboriginal children being removed from their home.

This was a racist and colonialist project which refused to acknowledge differing cultural practices along with the intergenerational trauma, poverty, discrimination, and First Nations disconnection to land and culture. The intent was not to protect children but to pave the way for new uranium mines and transport routes, essentially destroying families and homes to dig up natural resources. The foulest part of all is the illusion of benevolence – that the white man was coming in to protect Aboriginal children.

In sections of the Australian public, a commonly held myth pervades that children who are taken from these homes are given better opportunities; the countless horror stories from the Stolen Generations and the health outcomes tell a different story. One

First Nations Stolen Generations man, James "Michael" Widdy Welsh recalled a place "like a concentration camp" – being flogged with a cane, given numbers, having his clothes burnt, and experiencing sexual and mental abuse. He recalled being forcibly taken from a "beautiful life" with his seven siblings in northern New South Wales.

Another survivor, Netta, spoke of being coaxed with a tin of apricot jam away from her mother by a police officer and being forced into an institution in Alice Springs to be trained to work as a domestic servant. She described being treated like an "inmate" and "like bullocks in a paddock." Some were adopted into loving families but would often wonder where they really came from. Maree Lawrence described how her school friends would call her "Blackjack", and that she still suffered for years wondering what life could have been like, disconnected from her own culture.

The new report also detailed a greater proportion of female Stolen Generations survivors, who Jens Korff, author of *Creative Spirits* explains as an outcome of a strategy of the white Australia policy to "breed out Aboriginal genes" by encouraging Aboriginal women to marry white men.

The forcible removal of children is not uncommon in settler-colonial states like Australia: take Canada, for example. 215 bodies of Indigenous children were recently found buried at a former institution in British Columbia. Survivors described how they were beaten and verbally abused, and others across the country are expressing their harrowing experiences in other schools. It is predicted that up to 6000 Indigenous children have died in these institutions across Canada. The Canadian government has since admitted to "race-based genocide" against its indigenous people (see page 12 for full story).

Australia's government refuses to take responsibility for the ongoing discrimination towards indigenous children and families. Although Kevin Rudd delivered an apology at federal parliament in February 2008, the interventionist policies continued to remove Aboriginal children from their homes at an increasing rate. For this reason, the apology has often been criticised as disingenuous.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), offers a consultation guide to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. Rather than deceptive and discriminatory policies, which can lead to worse economic and health outcomes in the long-term future of the children involved, their strategic plan aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across the country and reduce out-of-home care where possible. One of its biggest priorities is to address and change parts of the National Framework which were decided in the absence of First Nations people – particularly around the purpose of protection systems.

Indigenous communities deserve to be consulted on these matters and recognised for their unique circumstances. Until then, the Stolen Generations cannot only be described as a moment in time but as a continual process of discrimination and colonisation. ✪

James "Michael" Widdy Welsh recalled being forcibly taken from a "beautiful life" with his seven siblings in northern New South Wales.

STAND WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS AGAINST FRACKING!

Letter by Seed Mob

The Federal Government is funnelling millions of dollars into dirty fossil fuel corporations to fast track dangerous gas fracking plans in the Beetaloo basin. Despite Traditional Owners and First Nations Communities continually standing up and saying no to dangerous fracking on their country.

Traditional Owners from across the Northern Territory are coming together to put a stop to the ongoing threat of dangerous fracking on their Countries.

They are calling on you to help elevate their voices. Will you add your name to their open letter to Parliament below?

We speak as Traditional Owners and custodians of and around the lands and waters that you call the Beetaloo and connected basins. Although we come from many Nations, we have come together to put an end to the ongoing threat of fracking on our countries, which will denigrate and desecrate our lands.

We know our country. We read it, we understand it, and we alone speak for it and its songlines. It is our birthright – handed down by bloodline.

Together, we fight for it.

Our connections to country have been established and proven time and time again by the white man's law. We hold Native Title and Land Rights – a system that is meant to protect and enforce our rights. These have been denied to us.

For years, we have been told lies by

the gas and oil corporations. That there would be no damage to the country or poison in our waters. These companies won't even answer the most basic of questions – where they plan to drill or how many wells they want to build.

These gas corporations lack any respect for us as Traditional Owners. They have failed to follow proper process in consultation with us, failed to acquire consent, failed to provide transparency in their dealings with us, and have systematically excluded our voices from the decision-making process for activities on our Country.

We don't have the same resources as these corporations. The system is already set up against us.

This Federal Government coming in over the top of what little processes we have undermines our land rights as Northern Territory Traditional Owners. The same government who has never

come out to our communities to sit with us or meet with us. They are failing to represent us.

Giving \$50 million to mining corporations for an "economic recovery" to start drilling will only line the pockets of huge corporations who want to take more than we're willing to give. It does nothing but hurt us, our communities and our country more.

What about our recovery? The money to finally fulfill the empty promises of proper housing in our communities, or resourcing the health services we've been calling for years.

And what about country's recovery? Country's water is the blood that flows through our body, and it is already poisoned. Where is the money to clean the water many NT communities are forced to drink?

This is short term money that will cause long term pain, sow division and damage country and community. We will not allow you to cause any more pain, hurt or division in our communities.

Hear us when we say – we won't allow fracking gasfields on our country. Not now. Not ever.

We are united. This is our land, and we're ready to do whatever it takes to protect country.

Sign here:
nt.seedmob.org.au/open_letter



CPI(M) LETTER TO MODI ON INDIA'S ABSTENTION ON THE RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE

Letter via CPI (M)

Dear Prime Minister Modi, I am writing this letter registering my strong protest over India's vote of abstention in the UN Human Rights Council on the Resolution on the Palestinian issue and human rights of all peoples.

Indian people's support to the legitimate Palestinian right to their homeland predates our independence and was part of our freedom struggle. Our support to the Palestinian cause emerged as a national consensus. India's vote in the UNHRC violates this consensus.

India consistently championed all the

UN resolutions and opposed Israel's blatant violations of these and its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands.

India's Permanent Representative at the United Nations speaking in the Security Council on May 17, 2021 expressed India's support to the "Just Palestinian Cause." He reiterated India's consistent stand of a two-state solution with equal sovereign rights, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. However, ten days later comes this vote abstaining on a resolution which seeks at securing Israel's compliance with international human rights covenants.

This vote by India received a chorus of international disappointment, dismay and protests. Many correctly see this abstention as stifling the important work of the UNHRC in advancing human rights for all people including those of the Palestinians.

I am also constrained to point out that this volte face comes at a time when the standards of upholding human rights, democratic rights and civil liberties in India is perilously declining. India's abstention is being correlated with the global concern over the fall in the standards of upholding human rights in India. India must reiterate its consistent

support to the Palestinian cause and cannot renege on the national consensus of support to the Palestinian struggle.

I am requesting your immediate attention and a positive consideration by India taking a forthright stand of cooperating with the independent commission of enquiry set up by the UNHRC after adopting this resolution, to investigate violation of international law by Israel.

Yours sincerely,

Sitaram Yechury
General Secretary,
Communist Party of India (Marxist)

ACTU CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO SAVE LIVES AND SUPPORT A WAIVER ON VACCINE PATENTS

ACTU Statement

Australia is just one of twelve countries stopping a waiver on patents for COVID-19 products which would allow developing countries to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. The ACTU calls on the Federal Government to change their position at tomorrow's (8th June) meeting of the WTO Trade Related-Aspects

Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Council.

At the current rate developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa will not receive required vaccinations until 2023 or later, and a temporary waiver would enable them to ramp up production of vaccines, PPE and lifesaving tech such as respirators.

ACTU President Michele O'Neil

stated that "The Morrison Government is currently siding with big pharma who are profiteering during a global pandemic – it is imperative that they support the effort to end the pandemic as soon as possible and support India and South Africa's waiver proposal at the TRIPS Council meeting."

By stalling negotiations and refusing to support a waiver, the

Federal Government is siding with big pharmaceutical companies who are protecting their exclusive patents and huge profits during a global pandemic.

A waiver would save lives and ensure that we emerge from the pandemic sooner.

Experts believe the world has less than a year before mutations render the majority of

first-generation vaccines ineffective – there is no time to waste.

Almost 12,000 people signed a petition run by the ACTU and Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA calling on the Australian Government to support the waiver. The petition was handed over at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Sydney 7th June. ✪

WA HOUSING CRISIS

Emily Muagututia

Since the moratorium on evictions and rent-rises ran out at the end of March, Western Australia has been experiencing a housing crisis and a rising number of unhoused people as we head into winter.

The pandemic and ensuing housing crisis are disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable members of our community, such as women fleeing domestic violence, children, Indigenous people, single-parent families, elderly people, and people with disabilities.

WA's rental vacancy rate has reached a forty-year low of less than one per cent, while rent has been on the rise. Many rental property prices have become out of reach for people with low-moderate incomes. Many people are being forced out of rental homes they've resided in for some time as landlords increase their rent. One family reported an increase in their rent of \$270 per week, a fifty-five per cent jump from what they had been paying. They had no choice but to find new accommodation as they couldn't afford the increase. Before the moratorium's end, Housing Minister John Carey said he would not extend protections for tenants despite still being in a precarious situation due to the pandemic. He offered these wise and compassionate words of advice to landlords: they should think of their tenants before increasing rent prices. Helpful!

At the end of April, just a month after the moratorium ended, the rate of homelessness had increased by fifty-eight per cent and the public housing waitlist had already received 16,660 applications – the list had around 15,000 applicants before 29th March. The average time on this waitlist is around two years and this situation is predicted to worsen in the coming months.

It is estimated that there's a shortfall of over 39,000 public housing units and almost 20,000 affordable homes around WA as the list of people waiting for public housing rapidly increases.

The WA government has only built 119 public housing properties in the last three years. In that same period, they also sold off 1150 public housing properties.

Housing Minister John Carey has done little to address the issue of public housing, instead focusing on the fact that 23,000 new private homes have been approved for construction, with many of these homes being purchased by first homeowners. "As people move from being tenants to homeowners, we will see more [private] rentals open up, helping to ease the pressures we are currently experiencing," he said. However, this does little to address the people who are already homeless or facing homelessness and the spike in average rental costs that are pricing many people out of the market.

Women fleeing domestic violence are



The WA government has only built 119 public housing properties in the last three years. In that same period, they also sold off 1150 public housing properties.

feeling the full impact of this crisis. Many have had to remain in dangerous situations or have had to return to perpetrators in an attempt to protect their children from homelessness – even voiding Violence Restraining Orders (VROs) to do so. South West Refuge reported that the amount of time women are staying in their shelters has nearly tripled since the beginning of the pandemic. Minister Carey's remarks about newly built homes opening up spaces in rentals do little to address assistance for people requiring immediate public housing, such as the women and children in these circumstances.

WA's gender pay gap is by far the worst in Australia at 22.9 per cent – the next being Queensland at 15.9 per cent. Along with WA's average weekly childcare costs of \$475 and only 37.9 per cent of women having full-time work, single mothers are some of the most vulnerable in the housing crisis. The insufficiency of legislated rental protections is an attack on single mothers with dependents,

who already face adversity in finding housing on one income.

Indigenous people in WA have long been fighting for housing rights. The pandemic has only worsened their situation. While only making up three per cent of WA's population, Indigenous people account for forty-one per cent of the unhoused population. In November last year they marched on parliament house to bring attention to the suffering of unhoused Indigenous people and demand housing initiatives that authentically meet the material and cultural needs of their communities. "We will never Close the Gap in First Nations injustice and disadvantage without a serious and sustained commitment to provide homes for the families who need them," Megan Krakouer, Director of the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project, said.

This issue isn't isolated to WA either; people around Australia are vulnerable to losing their housing as the Australian government refuses to extend Jobkeeper payments and Jobseeker COVID supplement payments, and state governments refuse to extend moratoria on evictions and rent increases to protect tenants. In Queensland, potential tenants sometimes offer \$100 per week over the asking price in the hope of securing housing. In the Northern Territory, renting is now more expensive than buying, as rent regularly exceeds \$400 per week. NT tenants feel pressure to pay higher rent and many were evicted with no grounds – even while rental "protections" were in place. In NSW, social services and housing are already at capacity with 1mil people in the state dependent on these services. Similarly in the ACT, the social housing waitlist has increased to an average three-and-a-half-year wait. The strain on already limited public housing leaves many fighting for a place to live.

Victoria has faced its own unique challenges with especially lengthy and numerous lockdowns. Many workers are casuals, and these lockdowns have left renters facing eviction, or even having to self-evict due to financial stresses. Once evicted, this also affects their ability to secure accommodation or even purchase a house in the future. The Renters and Housing Union (RAHU) in Victoria has created a petition demanding

that the COVID-19 rental protections be reinstated; amnesty on rental payments be enacted through the duration of the stage 4 restrictions; and a \$500 stimulus support payment be provided to all renters in Victoria.

Homeowners still remain vulnerable to the housing stresses of the pandemic. 41.3 per cent in NSW are now in mortgage distress – an increase from 38.2 per cent in April. In Canberra, 42 per cent of families are struggling with mortgage stress, up from 38.3 per cent. In Tasmania, 56.8 per cent of households are in mortgage stress, and more than 40 per cent in WA.

The housing crisis has also opened the door for many scammers to take advantage of people desperate for housing. WA Scam-Net has recorded a marked increase in rental scams since around September last year, as scammers take advantage of people in desperate situations. Many of these victims have been single mothers, including one woman who was scammed out of \$3600 leaving her and her four children homeless.

Why does the Australian government refuse to put any real planning into public housing? Because in this system, housing is a commodity first, not a human right. The interests of the "housing market" – i.e., property investors and speculators – come before the needs and dignity of human beings. The threat of homelessness is a fear tactic and a boost to demand that pushes prices further up.

There have been studies undertaken in Australia weighing up the cost of providing public housing versus the cost of homelessness. Ignoring the issue of homelessness is proven to be more expensive, puts more strain onto the healthcare system and increases rates of otherwise avoidable crime.

Ensuring that housing is a right guaranteed to all Australians is perfectly achievable and sensible. The only thing standing in the way is the fact that the government does not care to achieve it. The interests of the wealthy property investors come first, even if it is at a greater expense to the state.

To overcome this, we need a fundamental change in governance – a people's government that puts the needs of the working people first. ✪



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ALL THE QUESTIONS SOCIALISM ASKED BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO ASK

Editorial Note: The following is an edited version of a longer view by *Challenge* – the magazine for the Young Communist League (Britain). For the full interview please visit challenge-magazine.org

In the 1990s and 2000s conventional Western wisdom was that China had long abandoned socialism. But by 2018, when president Xi Jinping lauded Marx as the greatest thinker of modern times at the closing speech of a two-week celebration of Marx's 200th anniversary and reaffirmed China's commitment to Marx's vision of communism, many on the left – and the right – were willing to take him seriously. [Alexander Norton] sat down to long-term expat Keith Lamb, a socialist from Scotland and commentator for the CGTN news agency, for an informal interview on life in China, its political system, its contradictions and its vision for the world.

What led you to move to China in 2004? How do you support yourself out there, and where?

I finished at Glasgow University [and] really wanted to continue studying. Learning a language seemed like a good thing and Chinese I considered the hardest so I chose that. I chose China not only because of the difficulty of the language but also because I saw it was developing and I really knew so little of the place. In 2004 my plan was to go over and work for a couple of years or two, master the language and then go somewhere else. I supported myself originally through teaching.

I was in a few places Shijiazhuang, Nanjing, Beijing but for most of the time in Xiamen, and life just took over. I opened up a Brazilian Jiu-jitsu school in Xiamen which I started as a socialist project. We taught students for free and if they wanted to donate money they could. The school ended up turning into a business, but it will never make anyone rich – it's more of a very serious hobby.

Are you “free” to have this conversation in the West we are given the impression that all conversations are closely monitored, and critics of the government found out and punished. Are you allowed to say what you are aren't allowed to talk about?

You can talk about anything you want – I've never found that to be a problem. In many ways I find it's actually more free because they don't have political correctness in the way we do in the UK. Publishing something in a paper though – that's another thing. There is all sorts of talk online. Everyone says conversations get deleted, but I've seen loads of slugging-off online – so far nothing I've said has been deleted, but I have had my comments deleted a few times before in the West on the *Guardian* no less. I'm not saying it's not a thing, obviously censorship does take place. Certain websites are blocked in China.

Topics themselves aren't banned, it's more how or where you talk about them. For example, in many universities and schools there will be a clause in the contract not to proselytise or talk about independence issues such as Tibet and Taiwan. Talking outside of class privately is not a problem. I have met large numbers of Americans who are in China for the purpose of converting people to Christianity.

And they aren't sent to re-education camps?

No, they are not sent to re-education camps. They're usually well received because many Chinese people want to learn English and the missionaries tend to be very patient. But strictly speaking if they have signed a

contract, usually there will be a clause not to do missionary work.

Were you politicised before you came to China?

I was. But I didn't know much about China back in 2004 – I had the same general opinions that the left has today. Typical “enlightened Westerner” complex that I knew better than the Chinese themselves. Sort of thing Westerners get after reading a book like *Wild Swans*. I assumed the people were unhappy with their government and I assumed support for the CCP [Communist Party of China] was due to brainwashing or at least their closed media.

I think a lot of socialists in the West are idealists; they transpose their vision of socialism and how it should be achieved onto others – it's another form of Western domination. Because often Western socialists really have very little idea of the contradictions in China that are vastly different to the ones they have in their countries. Having said that, it's not that I don't think we shouldn't criticise it's just that rarely do I find it comes from a place of understanding.

So the Western narrative goes something like this: “Mao was a true believer, even more so than Stalin, and in his final years he tried to jump straight to a purer, classless communism, unleashing chaos with his Cultural Revolution to avoid the slide back to the market he saw was coming. It was a disaster and the pro-market side regained control, creating the modern-day, hyper-capitalist country, with the Communist Party in charge only to maintain their control and avoid the sticky end leaders like Ceausescu came to.”

What is the Chinese version of this narrative? Is some or any of it accepted?

Well the Chinese version isn't so dissimilar. They judge Mao as being 2/3 right and 1/3 wrong. They see the mistakes he made as being part of the revolutionary process. But of course they recognise the good things too like the eradication of basic diseases, literacy, industrialisation. This Maoist vs Market is a bit of a false debate – it forgets history.

In terms of the pro-market system they have today it's a method used for building the economy. It's solved a lot of problems such as Chinese citizens' demand for consumer products and lifted millions of people out of poverty – which is quite unlike other large states in the developing world who have followed market policies for years and remain stagnated in poverty; clearly you can't say it's a turn to capitalism without any qualification. Indonesia and the Philippines come to mind, both of which I've visited. Now if



Keith Lamb's classroom, 2005.

the criticism is that the government did this to hold onto power – well any government that wants to hold onto power should make improvements to the country. It's a bit of a tautological argument.

With China of course the majority of the surplus leaves the country. You can see this prominently in the profit of an iPhone – only three per cent stays in China – but what remains is used to develop the country. Many of the state-owned companies left are largely monopoly industries and they have been used to direct development, whereas it's the industries which work better under market conditions [that] have been privatised.

Of course here lies the problem of liberal democracy. In the UK we've seen the forces of capital just rob us of our national industries and the profits then privatised. The free media under Thatcher launched a huge PR campaign directed against the British citizens to convince us that this was the right thing to do, all the while destroying those industries from the inside. This was anti-democratic and yet it was achieved through liberal democracy.

A private media in the hands of the few works time and time again to negate socialists and when a country does vote in socialists such as in Venezuela they are sanctioned by the US, there's a capital strike or worse – there are machinations to bring in a right-wing dictator if the government can't be toppled.

Does the everyday person understand or accept all this? Will they tell you – “in the '60s we fought as Red Guards and questioned even the authority of the lowly school teacher for having a capitalist mentality, but after Mao we accepted we need to make China the

cheapest place to produce everything from steering wheels to children's toys – to build up the resources for socialism tomorrow?”

Well they understand the politics I outlined above. They've fought the US twice in Korea and Vietnam so they are all too aware of the geopolitical and historical situation. In terms of the turn to market they accept it as a necessary dynamic. For many there is a lot of pressure, long working hours etc. But it is sold to them as an epoch rather than the end of history.

Up until about 2012 I was sceptical myself. For example, Deng said first they would develop the East of China – this happened but developing the West? That didn't seem to be happening (and it was hardly profitable to do so either). So myself like many Western Marxists believed perhaps China was just another neoliberal state.

From about 2012 (maybe much before actually) I saw some amazing changes in the West of China. One example I can think of is Yinchuan, a city in the West. It was dirt poor when I used to go – shacks everywhere, people obviously unable to take a regular shower, poor infrastructure. In 2012 the city it had transformed itself: the slums were gone, the place was clean, the people were clean. I travelled right across the West of China and Yinchuan wasn't the exception. I had to conclude that indeed the CCP had kept to their promise

“For many there is a lot of pressure – long working hours. But it is sold to them as an epoch rather than the end of history.” How is it sold to them?

In their education, in their textbooks, they learn about Marx and “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” In Xi's speeches,

“For many there is a lot of pressure – long working hours. But it is sold to them as an epoch rather than the end of history.”

SOCIALISTS HAVE ABOUT CHINA NOTHING TO ASK – PART ONE



Keith Lamb teaching Brazilian Jujitsu.

in the news – their socialist goals are not a secret, it's discussed openly; they are given very concrete dates for five-year plans, ten-year plans, twenty-year plans. 2020 was the year they expected extreme poverty to be wiped out. If you asked me could this have been done in 2012, despite the progress I saw, I would have said no. But they achieved it one month ahead of schedule in November. 2030 is the year they expect to achieve a generally moderately wealthy society – maybe a level like Greece or Portugal.

In 2020 the alleviation of extreme poverty was a big topic. A friend of mine in the grassroots of the CCP who was a PE teacher at the first college I worked at was sent to the countryside to help. Cadres have been sent to villages to look at specific causes and methods for dealing with poverty. This really deals less with the workers and more with the peasants. Factory workers may not be rich but also they are not considered in the band of extreme poverty by Chinese standards. Often poverty alleviation has come through building roads to out of the way places. At times new housing has been built. Whereas 2030 is more about building a basic welfare state.

Can you talk a little about what you know of the Uyghur situation?

I first went to Xinjiang in 2016 – before that the only Uyghurs I met were street sellers and my students. The street sellers were unhappy with the CCP and some expressed desires for independence. They were always quite poor though, from southern Xinjiang.

From about 2014 suddenly there were large amounts of students arriving in Western China and I had many Uyghur students. Of course first thing after class I talked to them

about was the situation in Xinjiang. To my surprise they did not have the same views as the street vendors. They were distinctly Uyghur, with their own language and obviously very proud of their identity, but mainly pro-China.

That led me to go there in 2016 to look for myself. What I found was a divided society. I travelled to several towns. Surprisingly to me, there were many Uyghurs that supported the Chinese state.

I had a taxi ride in a small town in Xinjiang and the taxi driver was very anti-Han Chinese (not that there were many in this town). I asked him about the police as they were all Uyghurs. He answered that they were the dogs of the Han and they'd throw you in jail for waving a Xinjiang independence flag. It seemed strange to me that they could have Uyghur police – imagine if the police force in the North of Ireland during the Troubles were Catholics.

Then the taxi stopped and I arrived at the station. A Uyghur policeman asked to see my passport. I mentioned to him that he could pass for European he laughed and said to me "We're Chinese too though." I had another ride in the capital of Xinjiang where I offended a Uyghur taxi driver by complementing his mandarin – he thought it was belittling. So the situation in Xinjiang is complex. There is definitely support for independence but as I've seen it also has an Islamist drive behind it.

I've spoken to Uyghur girls who are empowered by being part of a larger Chinese state. They certainly don't want to be part of a Caliphate and they even felt their parent's restrictions on who they could marry was an intrusion into their freedom. Part of

the problem was that people in the far West of Xinjiang felt they were being left behind, but as I saw there is a lot of development taking place now.

Of course there are ethnic tensions that are extremely complex, and there were the terrorist attacks at Kunming train station. I have a Han friend who lives in the capital of Xinjiang who told me that the Uyghurs went on the rampage killing hundreds of Han Chinese. He also said that they were getting a cash reward from a terrorist group for each killing. But when the Han rose up on the second night to get revenge the army closed the city down to protect the Uyghur communities. These are his words.

Of course, no doubt people are concerned of claims of 3mil in what is made out to be concentration camps, which are basically ridiculous claims. Considering there are only about 10 million Uyghurs in China and they have the highest birth rate we're being asked to believe pretty much every adult of working age is in a camp. If this was the case there would be a considerable refugee crisis on China's border.

I think those who believe the ridiculous figures need to remind themselves of what we did to Iraq based on claims of false weapons of mass destruction. We ended up with the Labour Party taking part in the biggest imperial crime of the 21st century. The propaganda machine is in full swing again now. Even the US Uyghur activist Rushan Abbas turned out to be a translator interrogating Uyghur prisoners at Guantánamo Bay.

Now to say there isn't a genocide or concentration camps doesn't mean to say Xinjiang is all fine and dandy. It would seem based on the research I've seen, about

100,000 people had to go to de-radicalisation centres which also taught attendees vocational skills. Now is this ideal? Absolutely not but it's certainly better than Western war on terrorism which has led to millions of deaths – and an increase in terrorist attacks.

We also have to keep in mind that terrorist attacks in Xinjiang, being next to Afghanistan, were far worse than anything we've seen in the West. Ultimately, certain forces in the West would like to turn Xinjiang into another Iraq or Afghanistan – at the very least the aim is to demonise China to justify any future conflict. [...]

Xi has been seen as an unexpected and sudden return to Marxism – is that fair?

People listen and read Xi's speeches where he declares himself a true believer in Marxism-Leninism. If there were any worries that China was leaving the socialist path he has dispelled them in the minds of the people through fighting corruption, putting poverty alleviation into practice as well as emphasising the superiority of Marxism-Leninism politically and theoretically.

I think before Xi the problem of corruption within the party had become so gross that if action wasn't swiftly taken then perhaps the CCP could have fallen. If you ask Chinese people if corruption has decreased the overwhelming answer is yes. Is it "a sudden return to Marxism?" Perhaps, but maybe Xi's actions and speeches could be viewed as emanating from a CCP which at the current historical juncture is more confident in expressing what it always thought. Like I said, Marxism is taught in schools and always was.

Challenge 🇺🇸

Ultimately, certain forces in the West would like to turn Xinjiang into another Iraq or Afghanistan – at the very least the aim is to demonise China to justify any future conflict.

DIVIDED WE BEG, TOGETHER WE BARGAIN: WAGE STRIKES IN US AND AUSTRALIA

Valentin Cartillier

Across the Pacific there's a peculiar phenomenon occurring. As the latest wave of the COVID-19 pandemic recedes, businesses are struggling to hire workers. Workers are refusing to go back to subpar wages and minimal benefits. While primarily a US phenomenon, given their lack of even the most basic of social security nets and incredibly low wages, there are parallels to be found in Australia.

Millions of workers across the US have become unemployed during the ongoing pandemic, and now businesses and policymakers have been left scratching their heads as many of them are refusing to go back to work. This has been consistent across a range of industries, from fast food to IT. Small businesses have been hit the hardest. However, major multinational franchises like McDonald's, Subway, and 7/11 have also been feeling the squeeze, unable to fill their often punishing round the clock rosters. This has been a double-edged sword for the working class. While it has allowed unemployed workers to exert more bargaining power, those who stayed employed are forced to work harder and harder by their employers. This becomes particularly dangerous in high-risk front-line jobs.

Naturally, the usual right-wing crowd have been blaming the unemployment benefit scheme for being too cushy, disincentivising people from going back to work. But it's got to make you wonder: if your business can't afford to pay workers a decent crust, what are you even doing in business? The Biden administration passed a stimulus package that would grant individuals \$300 a week in unemployment aid until September. For a brief period in 2020, the payment was \$600 a week, meaning that most workers were earning more on unemployment than they were at their jobs. For reference, \$600 a week roughly works out to \$15-\$16/hr for a 40-hour work week, more than twice the current minimum wage in the US.

With many workers still unvaccinated, the risks greatly outweigh the benefits of going back to such low paying jobs. For single parents, that prospect is even more unappealing. It is important to note that while many workers are refusing to take poorly paid jobs, Heidi Shierholz, director of policy at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in Washington, points out that there is still a massive job shortage. This means that employers will regain the upper hand in the long run if workers don't organise. She also went on to reiterate that the lack of meaningful wage increases is one of the central pillars of the current labour shortage.

Shierholz and the EPI support a minimum wage increase to at least \$15/hr, a position she backed in the US House of Representatives in February this year. She stated that, among many of the benefits of raising the minimum wage,

"A majority (59 per cent) of workers whose total family income is below the poverty line would receive a pay increase if the minimum wage were raised to \$15 by 2025. Essential and front-line workers make up a majority (60 per cent) of those who would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage. A \$15 minimum wage by 2025 would generate



\$107 billion in higher wages for workers and would also benefit communities across the country."

While a government policy lifting minimum wage would be welcomed, labour movements must go beyond this. Often these small concessions are offered by the capitalist class to appease an increasingly hostile working class. Capitalists sense that danger is afoot and hope to nip it in the bud.

Some of the biggest labour movements in history arrive in times of crises as the weight of capitalism begins to collapse under itself. In June 1933, as the Great Depression continued getting worse, President Franklin D Roosevelt passed the *National Industrial Recovery Act* (NIRA) in an attempt to implement programs that would help alleviate the economic crisis. It is important to remember that the NIRA was not created out of sheer benevolence but was forced by one of the largest union movements in US history. The NIRA gave workers the right to unionise and guaranteed a minimum wage alongside maximum hours. It also contained Section 7(a) which provided that:

"Employees shall have the right to organise and bargain collectively through a representative of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers."

Unfortunately, the NIRA was deemed unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court and replaced by the *Wagner Act* in 1935. Nevertheless, it was a defining moment in US union history and spurred more and more workers to join their unions, thus further building the labour movement. One should not forget the critical role communist and socialist parties played in supporting, organising, and leading these union movements.

Mass strikes aren't the only way for workers to assert themselves; even the smallest of victories can demonstrate what is possible. A cafe called White Electric in Rhode Island, US showed this recently. After its workers unionised to demand better wages, greater diversity in hiring staff, and wheelchair accessibility, among other demands, the owner chose to sell the cafe rather than grant them. The workers then banded together to buy

the cafe, and from May 1st it has re-opened as a workers co-operative, one of only a few in Rhode Island.

Both Marx and Engels called the unemployed under capitalism the "reserve army of labour." While Engels was the first to use the term in his 1845 book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Marx made it a necessary part of the way capitalism organises production in *Capital*.

Capitalism requires that a certain percentage of the population be unemployed at any one time. This allows employers to threaten workers with unemployment if they demand better conditions since the employer can simply tell the worker(s) that they'll hire other people for cheaper. This picture has become even more complicated over the past few decades with the mass proliferation of offshoring both labour and manufacturing. The only exception to this is in periods of total war, such as the two world wars, where the entire working class is either thrust into manufacturing or put out onto the slaughterhouse of the battlefields.

However, what we're seeing in the US is a reversal of this rule. Instead of the employers using the "reserve army" to threaten employed workers, the "reserve army" itself is refusing to work until better conditions are granted. The employers are being forced to bargain with them. This is quite a rare form of general strike, while uncoordinated, it is an adamant refusal by the working class to continue under the same conditions as before.

Australia is facing a similar, though slightly different, problem to the US. Unemployment is currently sitting at 5.5 per cent just 0.6 per cent lower than the US. Businesses are able to do in unemployed people on Job-Seeker who refuse job offers, see *Guardian* "Dobseeker: Morrison's Attack on Workers" #1960. This led *Business Insider Australia* to make an astonishing discovery in one of its articles entitled "There's a simple solution for companies struggling to hire: Pay workers more." Who would have thought?

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack, who makes over \$400K a year, told Victorians whose lockdown has now entered its second week that a "week, in the scheme

of things, is not a long time" to go without pay. This came after many working Victorians voiced their concerns over lost wages and the lack of JobKeeper support. According to McCormack the government has already given out enough economic support, particularly to Victoria. He said:

"We have already provided \$40 billion, 40,000 million dollars for Victoria to help their economy, to support their businesses. We have done it to make sure that we keep Victorian businesses going, to keep their employees engaged with those businesses ..."

Note the particular emphasis he places on helping businesses before workers. Another Liberal MP, Dan Tehan, told Victorians to go to Centrelink to access the emergency health payments to cover their loss of income but couldn't confirm if or not they'd actually get any help or not. Given the massive strain that the chronically understaffed Centrelink is already under and that it can often take weeks for a claim to be processed, we can pretty safely say that's not a viable option for a lot of workers. To say they're out of touch would be far too polite: this is blatant contempt for working class people.

The example of the US has shown that the slightest show of solidarity within the working class is enough to make the capitalists tremble. Divided we beg, united we bargain. This is what is occurring right now on both sides of the Pacific: workers are refusing to work for a pittance. In 2020, billionaires made \$3.9 tril while workers lost \$3.7 tril in wages which only confirms Marx's analysis that capitalism only functions by the former exploiting the latter. It is a system that the working class cannot and should not allow to continue. One is reminded of the poem printed onto the Banner of Operative Painters & Decorators Union of Australasia, Victorian Branch from 1915. ☺

UNITY

The murmurs
that go to make
the thunders roar
Taken singly, might -
Lull an infant to repose
United their very crash
would shake the eternal
vaults of Heaven

Some of the biggest labour movements in history arrive in times of crises as the weight of capitalism begins to collapse under itself.

US MEDDLING COMES UNDER MANY DISGUISES

Seamus Carey

Despite all the catastrophising Western reporting on the passage of the Hong Kong national security law almost a year ago, there has been mostly silence since then as life in Hong Kong has continued as normal, contrary to the apocalyptic predictions that proliferated. There was never any mass crackdown and destruction of democratic rights. Instead, the threat of stronger legal defences against agents of foreign influence has been successful in restoring peace to the Chinese region.

China's explanation of the violent disturbances experienced in Hong Kong is proving to match reality. The imperialists, seeing Hong Kong as a pressure point, saw the opportunity to provoke conflict in an attempt to weaken China from the inside. These attempts have been thwarted.

In Volume 3, No. 2 of the journal *American Economic Review: Insights* published by the American Economic Association in early June 2021, a paper appeared named "Persistent Political Engagement: Social Interactions and the Dynamics of Protest Movements." Its abstract states: "To identify the persistent effect of protest participation, we randomly indirectly incentivise Hong Kong university students into participation in an anti-authoritarian protest. [...] We find that incentives to attend one protest within a political movement increase subsequent protest attendance but only when a sufficient fraction of an individual's social network is also incentivised to attend the initial protest."

In short, these American "researchers" openly admit to paying ("incentivising") Hong Kong youth in order to get them to attend protests under the guise of "research." This particular "experiment" took place in 2017 and 2018, and we may have to wait another few years before finding out what "experiments" were taking place over the following years.

The National Bureau of Economic Research bankrolled the experiment, a US think tank that is in turn funded by the US government as well as private charities including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Do American academics simply have so little regard for the rest of the world that they feel comfortable meddling in the internal politics of other countries like specimens in a petri dish? That alone would be cause for disgust, but rank stupidity and arrogance do not suffice to explain this. Deliberate US interference for the sake of political-economic objectives is rampant in every corner of the globe.

In May, agents of the US "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED) were fooled into a call with a pair of Russian pranksters posing as Belarusian opposition figures, including US-handpicked leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.

In the call, the NED representatives revealed unambiguously their role in encouraging and directing the neoliberal opposition in Belarus. This incident is reminiscent of an infamous 2014 call between US diplomats in Ukraine, intercepted and released online



The imperialists, seeing Hong Kong as a pressure point, saw the opportunity to provoke conflict in an attempt to weaken China from the inside.

in unknown circumstances, in which the Americans deliberated over who should be part of the Ukrainian government.

The NED is funded by the US government and is basically an offshoot of the CIA's regime-change operations, founded as a separate organisation after the CIA became too widely known as an organ of US interference in the affairs of other countries. As it too becomes a laughing stock, we can expect the US to increase the use of new or more diffuse means of influence, via its ever more opaque web of financing to think tanks and other organisations. In Australia, the growing influence of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) has been a very effective means of spreading American propaganda, encouraging huge military spending and conflict with China.

If the US had truth behind it, it would have no need for the endless subterfuge and criminal intrigues that every US government commits without shame or conscience.

Last year, a report by Max Blumenthal

revealed that a Twitter user who goes by the name of "Kong Tsung-gan," widely cited by Western media as a Hong Kong activist taking part in the "pro-democracy protests," is in fact a white American man, Brian Kern. The fact that the media so readily took up the views of such a person as consistent with their view of the situation is equal parts revealing and unsurprising.

Not all protests are created equal. Large sections of the left in imperialist countries allow themselves to be taken in by US narratives about their enemies and are fooled into supporting colour revolutions that are only in the interests of the imperialists. A class-conscious and anti-imperialist theoretical outlook is necessary to counter the idealist delusions of liberal concepts of democracy. True democracy is not measured by any portrayal of ideas or words, but by concrete outcomes relative to material conditions.

What is the democracy where the interests of the wealthy minority come before the masses of working people? What is the

democracy where the interests of a foreign power come before the interests of our own people? It is the democracy of the ruling class, not us. With respect to us, it is nothing but a lie.

All the peoples of the world share a mutual interest in peace, prosperity, and independence. The predominant capitalist system tarnishes all it touches, and condemns the vast majority to subordination and poverty. Only the destruction of the exploiter class and the building of a future without exploitation, on a planned and rational basis, can deliver humanity into its maturity.

The ever-growing catalogue of American interference operations around the world inspires revulsion. Just as now we look back at the slave trade or European wars over religious doctrine as disgusting, cruel episodes from a backward time, so in 100 years will the whole world look back at this era of US hegemony. ✪

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EFFECT OF THE MILITARY ON CARBON EMISSIONS AND SOIL POLLUTION

Eileen Whitehead

Every second year the US and Australian military hold war games, called Talisman Sabre in Queensland, in areas of high environmental significance: some being world heritage areas and natural heritage sites. Such areas are a habitat to many migratory birds and threatened species such as dugongs and humpback whales.

Potential environmental impacts include reducing air quality, harming marine animals, fire, noise pollution, waste disposal and spills, and erosion from amphibian craft landings and weapon target zones.

Talisman Sabre takes place in Shoalwater Bay, home to the largest dugong population in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park World Heritage Area. This sanctuary is considered crucial to the stabilisation and recovery of local dugong numbers.

The region also supports nesting sites for green turtles and endangered loggerhead turtles and is used by twenty-six species of dolphins and whales, including the endangered Blue Whale. Humpback whales are known to use the area for breeding.

Threats from the Talisman Sabre war games include nuclear-powered vessels, potentially carrying nuclear weapons and almost certainly carrying depleted uranium munitions, as well as perchlorate, a highly toxic chemical and a key ingredient in live ammunition. Also, white phosphorous, a highly reactive and toxic chemical with the potential to have long term impacts on all environments – in particular:

- Inshore seagrass beds (critical dugong and turtle feeding grounds);
 - Mangroves (critical fish breeding grounds and shore protection); and
 - Red phosphorous, a highly reactive and toxic chemical used in marine markers for sea mines.
- The US Navy also disposes of domestic waste (including paper and plastic) overboard into Australian coastal waters.

IMPACT OF WARS

Iraq: The environmental havoc wreaked by the war in Iraq is appalling. Not only did the war lead to a spike in carbon dioxide emissions through US military activity, but it also resulted in the widespread poisoning of the Iraqi environment through the use of toxic munitions and so-called burn pits on military bases. The environment has become so toxic in some places that it has led to elevated rates of cancer and crippling congenital disabilities – terrible individual punishments inflicted on innocent future generations. Much of this impact can be blamed on the use of depleted uranium munitions by US forces. Despite vowing to cease their use, the military continued to use such toxic munitions during its most recent bombing campaign in Syria.

Afghanistan: Here, wildlife and habitats have disappeared. The past 30 years of war has stripped the country of its trees, including previous native pistachio woodlands. Illegal logging by US-backed warlords and wood harvesting by refugees caused more than one-third of Afghanistan's forests to vanish between 1990 and 2007. Drought,



Shoalwater Bay, Queensland.

desertification and species loss have resulted. The number of migratory birds passing through the country has fallen by 85 per cent.

South Korea: Gangjeong village is the site of the controversial naval base built by the South Korean government and Samsung C&T Corporation on the southern part of Jeju Island – the “island of world peace.” The waters along the coastline are within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and are protected by international law. The once unique coral populations and surrounding biodiversity have suffered irreparable damage due to constant leakages of fuel, heavy metals, and other contaminants. Reduced and changing current patterns around the base have led to the demise of coral populations near the seawalls. The waters off the Gangjeong coastline once represented a major habitat of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin but this has been disrupted due to the passage of warships in and out of the base.

Rwandan and Congolese Civil Wars: During these civil wars, almost three-quarters of a million people lived in camps on the edge of Virunga National Park. Around 1,000 tonnes of wood were removed from the park every day for two years to build shelters, feed cooking fires, and create charcoal for sale. By the time the conflict ended, 105 sq

km of forest had been damaged and 35 sq km stripped bare. Virunga Park is home to critically endangered mountain gorillas as well as chimpanzees, elephants and other charismatic megafauna.

CONCLUSION

The effects emanating from military exercises and actual conflicts are never mentioned when discussing climate change or conservation, yet they are profound. Conservation groups are constantly running campaigns showing the effects of fossil fuel extraction – which is admittedly huge – but don't investigate the military's influence.

We need to start the transition to a net-zero carbon emissions economy immediately and start making very deep cuts in emissions if we are to keep average global warming below two degrees Celsius. Immediate large-scale investment in low-carbon technologies and energy-efficient systems is not only urgent and necessary from the environmental point of view but can be linked with recovery from the global economic downturn post-COVID-19.

In Australia, Beyond Zero Emissions, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, has a solution – the Zero Carbon Australia 2020 Stationary Energy Plan, which shows

that it is technically possible to reach 100 per cent renewable energy for Australia within a decade and the technology to achieve this transition is commercially available now. We have one of the best solar resources in the world, and solar thermal power in the ZCA plan will supply sixty per cent of Australia's electricity.

Wind will supply forty per cent of Australia's electricity in the ZCA plan. This is comparable to Denmark's fifty per cent by 2025 goal, and Spain's twenty-five per cent by 2020. In another comparison, China's wind energy industry has been growing by 100 per cent per year for the last four years.

The plan sets out detailed resource and labour requirements. A transition to 100 per cent renewable energy will create around four times more permanent jobs than currently exist in the domestic fossil fuel sector. The ZCA Plan will generate an investment of \$370 billion over ten years – a stimulus to the Australian economy that is equivalent to three per cent of our GDP over ten years, and the investment required for the transition is affordable at \$8 per household per week.

The CPA supports the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) in its quest to get Australian organisations and individuals to participate in a submission contributing to a national discussion in order to motivate the government to immediately fund infrastructure providing manufacture of renewables and encouraging the many businesses already providing innovative battery storage technology and green hydrogen research.

This submission is due in July 2021. If you feel strongly about this please write a submission at www.independentpeacefulaustralia.com.au

The effects emanating from military exercises and actual conflicts are never mentioned when discussing climate change or conservation, yet they are profound.

AUSCHWITZ LIBERATOR DIES AT 98

David Dushman, [one of] the last surviving Soviet soldier involved in the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, has died in Germany, aged 98.

The Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria reported on Sunday that Mr Dushman had died at a Munich hospital the previous day.

"Every witness to history who passes on is a loss, but saying farewell to David Dushman is particularly painful," said Charlotte Knobloch, a former head of Germany's Central Council of Jews.

"Dushman was right on the front lines when the National Socialists' machinery of murder was destroyed."

As a young Red Army soldier, Mr Dushman flattened the forbidding electric fence around the notorious Nazi death camp with his T-34 tank on January 27 1945.

He admitted that he and his comrades didn't immediately realise the magnitude of what had happened in Auschwitz.

"Skeletons everywhere," he recalled in a 2015 interview with Munich newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

"[Inmates] stumbled out of the barracks, they sat and lay among the dead.

Terrible. We threw them all of our canned food and immediately drove on, to hunt fascists."

More than a million people, most of them Jews deported there from all over Europe, were murdered by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau between 1940 and 1945.

Mr Dushman had earlier taken part in some of the bloodiest military encounters of World War II, including the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk. He was badly wounded three times but survived the war — one of just 69 soldiers in his 12,000-strong division. [...]

After the war, Mr Dushman helped train the Soviet Union's women's national fencing team for four decades, training some of its most successful fencers, including 1976 Olympic gold medallist Valentina Sidorova, and continued to give lessons well into his nineties.

Mr Dushman lived in Austria for several years in the 1990s before relocating in 1996 to Munich. In Germany he visited schools to tell students about the war and the horrors of the Holocaust and also regularly dusted off his military medals to participate in veterans' gatherings. 🇺🇸



OVER 7.1 MILLION VETERAN CPC MEMBERS HONOURED FOR "50 YEARS OF GLORY"

The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee will for the first time award honorary medals to over 7.1 million veteran Party members, as the CPC marks the 100th anniversary of its founding.

The awarding started on the 2nd of June and will last until the 1st of July, the day of the CPC centennial. The medals will be given to those who have been in the Party for 50 years or more as of the 1st of July and have consistently performed well.

In the future, the CPC Central Committee will award certain Party members with medals every year on the day, according to

the leading group office of the CPC centennial celebrations.

The commemorative medal is fifty millimetres in diameter, made of copper and zinc alloy, and with red and gold as its main colours. It features various designs that represent the Party's spirit, achievements and glory.

The main body of the medal is engraved with the Party emblem and decorative elements including the five-pointed star, flags, monuments, sunflower, glorious flowers and brilliant rays, which all have their own special meanings.

The Party emblem in the middle of the

medal, for instance, symbolizes the core position of the Party's leadership and the firm faith and loyalty of the Party members.

From the centre of the circle outward, there is a sunflower surrounding the Party emblem, which indicates that people of all ethnic groups in China are closely united around the Party.

The outside circle of the medal is embedded with monuments, signifying the glorious course and great achievements made by the Party.

The five-pointed star represents passing on the Party's ideals and missions, the flowers refer to prosperity, peace and praising

of glory, and the flag indicates that the lofty ideals of Communism will continue.

Another part on the top of the medal is engraved with mountains, rivers, a Chinese knot and a ribbon, with the words "50 years of glory in the Party" conveying the idea that Party members will not forget their original aspirations and missions and will strive to move forward.

Founded in 1921, the CPC had fifty-eight members in its early organization. By the end of 2019, the total number of CPC members has reached 91.9 million.

Global Times 🇺🇸

RUSSIA WITHDRAWS FROM THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

Russia's President Vladimir Putin on Monday enacted the law to withdraw his country from the Open Skies Treaty. Previously the Lower House (Duma) passed that law on the 19th of May and the Senate ratified it last week.

In 2020, the United States left this multilateral agreement, which was signed in 1992

and entered into force in 2002. In May, Washington notified Moscow that President Joe Biden's administration will not return to the agreement.

The Open Skies Treaty allows some thirty countries to fly over any part of the territory of the other participating nations. It also allows them to take aerial photographs to control the

proliferation of weapons and military activities.

The United States broke with this multilateral commitment because Russia was allegedly restricting its flights over some regions, including Kaliningrad and areas near the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Repeatedly, however, Moscow rejected those

allegations and tried to salvage the Open Skies Treaty at several meetings in Vienna with the other partners to the multilateral agreement.

On Monday Russia also announced that it will not participate in the International Space Station (ISS) project if the US sanctions against several Russian companies are not lifted soon.

"If the sanctions against Progress and TsNIIMass remain in place [...] our US partners will be responsible for Russia's withdrawal from the ISS," said Dmitry Rogozin, president of the space agency Roscosmos, before the Lower House.

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GRAVE CONTAINING 215 INDIGENOUS CHILDREN EVIDENCE OF CANADIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL GENOCIDE

Karl Engels

Indigenous communities across Canada and throughout North America are reeling following the disclosure last week that the remains of at least 215 children, some as young as three years old, have been found buried in a mass unmarked grave on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.

A news release from Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation Chief Rosanne Casimir said the remains were confirmed in mid-May with the help of ground-penetrating radar. She said last Friday that more bodies could still be found, as there are several areas on the former school property that have yet to be searched.

The Kamloops Indian Residential School, which operated from 1890 to 1969, was one component of a vast Canadian government system aimed at eradicating Indigenous culture and identity. Over the course of more than a century, at least 150,000 First Nations children were taken from their families and communities and shipped off to state-funded Christian boarding schools; many never returned.

Authorities forced conversion to Christianity on the children and they were forbidden from speaking their native languages. The schools were plagued by physical, mental, and sexual abuse, and as many as 6,000 children are estimated to have died while attending. The destruction of family and community ties interrupted the transmission of cultural knowledge and left survivors isolated and damaged.

As such, the schools also served to weaken collective resistance from Indigenous peoples to resource theft and land expropriation during the crucial years of Canada's economic development. The residential school system was part of the effort to open up vast tracts of Indigenous territory for expanding Canadian capitalism.

From 1915 to 1963, documents for the Kamloops facility report fifty-one deaths, meaning the deaths of the overwhelming majority of the 215 children whose remains were found were never recorded. The Kamloops school was operated by the Catholic Church and funded by the Canadian federal

government. Casimir says the discovery is proof of an "unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented."

The findings have sparked calls for fresh examinations to be made on the grounds of every former residential school site across Canada. There were over 130 residential schools; the last one only closed in 1996.

The grave in Kamloops containing the children has not been exhumed, but Casimir said a full survey of the property and lands adjacent to it is expected to be finished by the middle of June. At that time, the information will be disclosed initially to First Nations tribes and bands before decisions are made on returning the remains to families.

Terry Teegee, the British Columbia regional chief for the Assembly of First Nations, told the press Friday that the discovery "resurfaces [...] the wounds" from Canada's "legacy of genocide towards Indigenous peoples."

A six-year investigation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded in 2015 that the residential school system amounted to cultural genocide. The commission was modelled on similar bodies established in Chile after the end of the murderous Pinochet dictatorship in 1990 and South Africa in 1996 following the abolition of apartheid.

The Canadian parliament tasked it with documenting the history and impacts of the residential schools; it heard testimony from over 6,500 witnesses and survivors. The TRC's final report condemned the schools for the mass abuse they meted out, the erasure of children's family and cultural traditions, as well as for the low quality of education and healthcare they provided.

The report supported claims long made by Indigenous leaders that the abusive and isolated existence experienced by children at the schools was a major factor explaining the epidemic rates of alcoholism, drug addiction, broken families, and economic underdevelopment seen on reservations.

The United States government oversaw a boarding school system similar to that operated in Canada over roughly the same time period; a few facilities still operate today. Like those in Canada, the US schools were often run by



churches and dedicated to cultural annihilation. Abuse was rampant, and overcrowding and poor funding led to repeated health epidemics and deaths.

As bad as the Canadian schools were, most experts conclude those in the US were likely even worse, but no official government effort has been made to unearth and document the scale of the crimes committed. A short "Apology to the Native Peoples of the United States" was tucked into a 2010 defence spending bill. Still, it was short on details and denied any liability on the part of the federal government.

In Ottawa, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ordered flags lowered to half-staff in mourning for the 215 children. He said he was "appalled by the shameful policy that stole Indigenous children from their communities."

Trudeau admitted that the cover-up of mass death at the Kamloops school was "not an exception or an isolated incident." He said, "We're not going to hide from that. We have to acknowledge the truth." Trudeau was blunt about the nature of the cultural genocide perpetrated by the Canadian government in the past. "Residential schools were

a reality — a tragedy that existed here, in our country, and we have to own up to it. Kids were taken from their families, returned damaged, or not returned at all."

The acknowledgment by Trudeau of Canada's past crimes is welcomed, but many say the government could be doing a lot more to address the legacy of its actions and stop ongoing oppression.

Kimball Cariou, the British Columbia provincial leader of the Communist Party of Canada, told *People's World* that the Kamloops discovery was "absolutely shameful," but that it was "not a new story, unfortunately."

Cariou pointed out that among the ninety-four recommendations made in the TRC's 2015 report was a mandate for immediate government action "to recover the names and full stories of all the children" victimised by the residential school system. But six years later, he said, the work is only beginning.

A statement issued by the BC Communists Monday said that the mass graves "tell the story of exploitation and genocide." It called on the provincial government to take immediate action on behalf of First Nations peoples, including

cancelling controversial hydroelectric dam and natural gas projects. Speaking directly to Trudeau, the party demanded a "full-scale and complete accounting of all deaths in residential schools."

Cindy Blackstock, who heads up the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, said that the 215 children found in Kamloops are probably only the tip of the iceberg. The TRC has officially documented 4,100 Indigenous child deaths at the schools, but Blackstock believes the number is much higher.

"Many of these deaths were hidden," she said. The government must "fully fund the work that needs to be done to identify the unmarked graves of children across Canada, because there are many, many more."

"We've got governments at both the federal and provincial level that bend over backward to pour public money into energy companies looking to build pipelines or resource companies looking to mine on Indigenous lands," Cariou told the *World*, "but somehow they can't find the resources to bring finality and justice to Indigenous families and communities."

People's World ✪



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