



MAJOR FLOODS A TIMELY REMINDER TO HUMANITY'S GREATEST THREAT

Matthew Hole

Recent major flooding across Germany, Belgium, and China, along with wildfires in Northern America have sharply brought back into focus the need for urgent united action on climate change. Eighteen months into a global pandemic that has seen almost 200mil infections and over 4mil deaths, global warming has continued on its path towards a 1.5°C increase in global temperatures and beyond. The global community cannot wait for the COVID-19 crisis to be over before taking the concrete steps required to mitigate the worst effects of human-induced climate change. The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) is being held in Glasgow in November this year, a critical juncture in this global fight.

FLOODING AND WILDFIRES

Northern and central Europe's worst flood in over 100 years has been responsible for at least 217 deaths – 177 of those in Germany, thirty-seven in Belgium, and one each across Italy, Austria, and Romania. Damage to infrastructure across Germany and Belgium has been severe, leaving people without power for a sustained period and thousands of forced evacuations. Expected insured financial losses total €2.55bil, with the total figure much higher than this. The European floods were precipitated by heavy rain on 12-15 July as a storm complex moved from eastern France into Germany and stalled for two days. Global warming decreases the temperature difference between the poles and equator, slowing down the speed at which storms move over land and increases the risk of major flooding activity.

This same phenomenon has led China's Henan Province in Central-Northern China to receive its heaviest rainfall on record, with an annual volume of rain falling within just 24 hours on the 17th of July – as much as 201.9mm per hour. At least seventy-one people have died in these floods, with over 1.1mil relocated and over US\$12bil in property damage.

Meanwhile, the north-west of the North American continent has been experiencing a severe heatwave, which has been described as virtually impossible to have occurred without human-caused climate change. The village of Lytton in British Columbia set a Canadian record of 49.6°C before itself being destroyed in the wildfire that followed. Climate modelling for decades has predicted the increased

prevalence of extreme weather events that are now becoming our reality and are only expected to worsen whilst the temperature keeps rising.

NET-ZERO PLEDGES AND THE G20

The global fight against climate change is in a much better position than it was just a few years ago, when then US President Trump pulled out of the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C, given he described it as "very unfair at the highest level to the United States." Commitments by China, the United States and the European Union (three of the four largest global carbon emitters, the other being India) to reach net-zero emissions by 2060 and 2050 respectively, have been a critical turning point against this shared threat. But more needs to be done to limit the growth in global emissions throughout this decade, with the coal industry squarely in the cross-hairs of climate campaigners.

A recent G20 meeting held in Naples has failed to deliver an agreement on a target date of 2025 to completely phase out fossil fuel subsidies, along with an end to the international financing of coal projects. Another opportunity will come during the G20 summit in Rome in October, just one day before COP26 begins.

AUSTRALIAN COMMITMENTS LAG BEHIND

The Australian government is yet to commit to a date as to when they will meet the target of net-zero emissions, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison refusing to lock in 2050 as has been demanded by local campaigners as well as many governments across the globe. The National party, being the junior Coalition partner to the Liberal Party, no longer the party for farmers but one for Big Coal, remains a key roadblock to making a pledge in the interest of the global community. It's expected that significant pressure will come from other nations should this commitment not be made before the global climate summit in November. Coal makes up approximately fifteen per cent of our exports nationally, and whilst demand is decreasing relatively as other nations move towards renewables, this hasn't yet caused a slowdown in political donations to the major parties. Australia's political donation landscape remains one of the more opaque systems in the developed world, to which support for the fossil fuel industry increased by forty-eight per cent



between 2015-2019, the largest rise across all G20 nations.

UNIONS PUSH FOR A JUST TRANSITION TO RENEWABLES

A number of Australian unions have been campaigning recently pushing for a just transition to a renewable energy future. A new report on Australia's offshore wind potential has been in part funded by the maritime, electrical and manufacturing unions, and calls on federal and state governments to take immediate steps towards the development of an industry which has the potential to create thousands of jobs for workers currently working in fossil fuel industries – a reminder that an organised working class is the best vehicle in which to promote positive societal outcomes.

CLASS ACTION COURT RULING A LANDMARK CASE

In May this year, eight teenagers that met through the School Strike for Climate movement brought a class action against the federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley for failing to protect the health of millions

of future Australians, after she had approved the extension to the Vickery coal mine owned by Whitehaven Coal near Gunnedah, NSW. Whilst the application to have her blocked by injunction from permitting the extension to proceed was unsuccessful, federal court judge Justice Mordecau Bromberg did state that the Minister had a duty of care to protect Australian children and the environment from the impacts of climate change, in what will have cascading effects for considering precedents in future class actions.

Rather than increase efforts to combat climate change, the Environmental Minister has instead applied her focus to appeal the court ruling. Again, this is a reminder that politicians in Australia continue to work on behalf of their donors rather than in the interests of ordinary Australians.

It is being shown time and again that the interests of capital are incompatible with the interests of the majority. The Australian government must put a timeline on achieving net-zero omissions and resetting emission reduction targets for 2030 that have been unchanged since the Abbott government. All of our futures depend on it.

While such reforms may slow down climate change – fundamental socio-economic change – socialism – is the only way we may reverse it. ✪

3 The workers and the people first!

4 Ideology before health

7 Socialism: utopian or scientific: a guide

10 Profit in the stars

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ATAGI NOT THE PROBLEM, OUR PRIME MINISTER IS

With less than fifteen per cent fully vaccinated and less than twenty per cent only having their first dose, to say that the Morrison government's vaccine rollout has been a disaster would be an understatement. The failure of the vaccine rollout has a clear ideological bent of putting profits before people. As a result, Australia ranks near the bottom of vaccination rates among OECD countries.

Reports emerged that the government balked at the asking price from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer – a claim that has been denied. Instead, the government opted for the vaccine produced by AstraZeneca which, unlike the Pfizer, could be made in Australia. The company that has contracts with AstraZeneca is CSL. Who has shares in CSL? Liberal MP Dave Sharma. The reader can draw their own conclusions. Furthermore, instead of building or creating purpose-built quarantine centres, the government opted for the much less effective hotel quarantines.

With the failure of the government's nickel-and-diming approach to the vaccine rollout, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has sought to shift the blame elsewhere, his target: the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). Morrison has blamed ATAGI's "assumption" that Australia would continue to have low cases, which led to the group preferring AstraZeneca to Pfizer for under 60s as having "created some confusion in the public" about the former vaccine. Morrison also stated that ATAGI had "been very cautious and that had a massive impact on the rollout of the vaccine program, it really did." The problem with this assessment is that it is incorrect. An ATAGI statement, released on the 8th of April, explicitly stated that:

"While Australia currently has very low or no community transmission of COVID-19, this could change, particularly in the context of high global transmission rates, including of new variants of the virus."

Furthermore, ATAGI stated that:

"COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca can be used in adults aged under fifty years where the benefits are likely to outweigh the risks for that individual and the person has made an informed decision based on an understanding of the risks and benefits."

Simply put, in preferring the Pfizer vaccine over AstraZeneca for young of age, ATAGI was only doing its due diligence in giving a nuanced response. Thus, before the Delta strain entered Australia, there was no reason to stop the Morrison government from opening eligibility for AstraZeneca. Of course, it would have meant extending the commonwealth indemnity and rebate for consultations (i.e. spending more money) which it was not inclined to do until now.

It now appears that the prime minister is set on making ATAGI officials pay for his screw-up. Associate Professor Nigel Crawford has now become the new Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation chairman, replacing Allen Cheng and Christopher Blyth from this month. Of course, the Prime Minister has denied that the shake-up is a result of vaccine advice.

It was not until a national outcry that Morrison buckled and finally apologised for the failure of the vaccine rollout. Yet, it appears that he won't stop blaming others, whether they be doctors, premiers, and everyday citizens, for his mistakes, certainly not anytime soon.

CALL FOR URGENT VACCINATIONS FOR SYDNEY WORKERS AND AN END TO PANDEMIC HANDOUTS TO BIG BUSINESS

The people of south-western and western Sydney need 24-hour vaccination hubs and pop-up vaccination centres as the Delta variant continues to pose a threat to all of Australia, according to the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).

The CPA has proposed an eight-point plan including: 24-hour vaccination hubs, the restoration of JobKeeper, a multi-lingual and culturally appropriate information campaign, and an end to pandemic handouts to big business, private hospitals and private schools

"These workers keep Sydney's infrastructure and services – retail, transport, health, aged care, trades, etc – running. The only way out of lockdown and to full restoration of jobs and services is through vaccination," said CPA President Vinnie Molina.

"Why is business getting massive handouts from the taxpayer while workers are denied the right to urgent vaccinations and adequate income support?", he asked.

"Lockdowns will continue, with work and the functioning of society being disrupted until everyone who wishes to be vaccinated is given the opportunity."

Andrew Irving, CPA National General Secretary said workers must be protected. "They must be able to keep a roof over their head, put food on the table and pay their bills."

"The restoration of JobKeeper

will enable workers to remain linked to their employers and pave the way for a rapid economic recovery.

"We have a small window to get this done. We are sick and tired of all the excuses. We need the politicians to get out of the way and put the working people in charge," said Mr Irving.

"This is a crisis that threatens all workers around Australia and increases the divide between those who carry out the work and provide the services, and those who live off their backs.

The CPA proposes an eight-point national emergency program:

1. Immediate opening of 24-hour vaccine hubs, fully staffed and provided with Pfizer and AZ, in every affected locality of south western and western Sydney as a minimum emergency measure.

2. Harness the power of local communities, clubs and organisations to ensure that multicultural resources, community leaders and professionals are involved at all levels including a multi-lingual and culturally appropriate information campaign.

3. Full transparency by governments:

- on vaccine availability on a state-wide basis
- on vaccination numbers by state and region
- on public hospital preparedness including ICU beds and ventilators per region

4. End all pandemic handouts to big business, private hospitals and private schools

5. Automatic JobKeeper payments to all workers affected by lockdown

6. The Australian government must immediately support the waiver of vaccine patents for poorer countries, so that these countries can produce their own vaccines and reduce risk of more deadly, vaccine resistant strains appearing

7. Proper quarantine facilities should be constructed in all states.

8. The Australian government must investigate more options of vaccines available from the international market

But first let's get south western Sydney urgently vaccinated. Morrison must give us Pfizer and make all vaccines immediately available to all those that want them and need to keep going to work.

"We cannot survive this pandemic as a divided country! We need to collectively get through this," Irving emphasised.

Andrew Irving
CPA General Secretary

Vinnie Molina
CPA President

Message to readers

We apologise to readers that we were regrettably unable to produce a print edition of the *Guardian* for the past few weeks. The paper continued to be published on the website – cpa.org.au. We have overcome these difficulties and are pleased to be back in print with this issue. Subscribers will have their expiry dates extended in accordance with the missed issues. We hope that there will not be any more interruptions to publishing, and hope you will understand if events beyond our control occur. Thank you for your patience.

Franc Stregone – Editor

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.

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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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THE WORKERS AND THE PEOPLE FIRST!

Dorothy Costa

Incredibly, fifteen months after the first COVID-19 lockdown in Australia was declared, the Sydney outbreak of the Delta variant is now being called a national emergency by the NSW government. The Berejiklian government has been forced, by the spread of COVID-19 Delta across Sydney, to criticise the lack of supply and rollout of the Pfizer vaccine and shift responsibility for the growing disaster in Sydney onto the Federal government. The increasingly panicked conservative NSW government has also had no choice but to shine a political torchlight on the reliance of Sydney's economy on the working people of Western Sydney and the government's failure to protect them. In truth, what is unavoidable to ignore is that Sydney's working class, including essential workers, are the economic backbone of NSW.

The ideological curtain normally used to shroud the crucial position of working-class Australians in the maintenance of our essential services has been unexpectedly stripped away. These same workers who are the lowest paid, in insecure work, and often have few accumulated resources to fall back on. The reliance of the class-divided system on the availability of a cheap and vulnerable labour pool has come into sharp clarity. The result is panicking the system's political representatives, who are aware of their growing vulnerability but cannot accept that we need to adopt social, people-oriented policies that will shift the burden onto big businesses and big business budgets.

The costs of the present state and federal anti-worker policies are accumulating on the backs of workers and small businesses and the already marginalised unemployed and at-risk groups. They also threaten the long-term ability of capital to continue to extract superprofits in the face of the inevitable growth of people's resistance and political, social, and economic instability.

WORKERS: HEART OF NSW ECONOMY

Western Sydney is not only highly populated by essential workers, many of whom are casual or temporary workers, it also has a high concentration of low-income earners who manage from week to week and a largely young demographic. The new Federal income support measures introduced in response to the recent Sydney lockdown are significantly lower than Jobkeeper and Jobseeker. They also exclude many people or detach them from whatever precarious work they had before the lockdown. The result will be a post-lockdown environment in which more Australian workers and small businesses will be pushed down into poverty and destitution. An upsurge of resistance and struggle against the attempt to make people pay to save profits and profiteers is the beginning of the way out for working people.

JOBKEEPER OR DIVIDEND KEEPER?

Shockingly, evidence that the 2020 Jobkeeper scheme was exploited by big businesses to fund dividend payments and executive bonuses is now public. A recent report revealed that of the 290 ASX300 companies in receipt of over \$1.8bil in wage subsidies from the Jobkeeper scheme,



twenty-five have paid executive bonuses of over \$24mil and seventeen have paid shareholder dividends of more than \$250mil. In light of these obscene wealth shifting stratagems, the Jobkeeper scheme is being renamed, Dividend Keeper by working Australians who have been made to beg to pay their rents and mortgages.

Australians are more and more convinced that socially-oriented government action and policy is missing and desperately needed. Policy that clearly prioritises protecting people's health and their economic interests before the interests of pharmaceutical companies, pathology cartels, private providers of social services, and over the interests of mining companies and big banks who are quarantined and subsidised from economic penalties during COVID-19.

THE VACCINATION VACUUM

While the pandemic killed millions in other countries and developed more dangerous variants, our politicians have been concerned with securing a quick economic bounce back. A fake and temporary "bounce back" predicated on the working people paying the "COVID-19 debt." Future belt-tightening and austerity packages have been foreshadowed so workers are prepared to accept the pro-big business agenda that can now be accelerated on the pretext of a COVID-19 economy and COVID-19 debt. Future austerity and belt-tightening by workers for the "national interest" is the big picture agenda. An agenda to support monopolies and big capital in extracting more super profits and better positioning themselves in the global market in the post COVID-19 world. Business groups in NSW couldn't wait last week to demand more flexibility to reduce workers' shifts and avoid paying penalty rates in NSW.

THE "ALL IN THE ONE BOAT" CON

The Australian working people and small businesses around Australia accepted the

main burden of the first lockdown while fed a diet of "social contract" clichés centred on the myth that "we are all in the same boat." While cynically exploiting this image of "one boat," our governments have duplicitously pursued their anti-people agenda favouring and supporting the monopolies and protecting big banks from having to absorb losses or contribute to keeping the boat afloat. The mortgage moratorium postponed interest payments to ensure big banks would not lose, the interest on loans allowed to accumulate for working people, the big banks' super profits survived and their liquidity maintained. Socialist measures are opportunistically applied to save the capitalist sector from the reality of the markets and the system.

Despite being lauded as the fruits of a benevolent and democratic society, Jobseeker, Jobkeeper, various handouts and incentives to small businesses, including moratoriums on repayments, were ultimately designed to prevent the collapse of capitalist economies in crisis from their own contradictions. COVID-19 was the last straw. The temporary income support helped to hide the bailing out of the capitalist economy and created the image of a benevolent state. Though this smoke and mirrors trickery did not extend to large groups including casual workers and overseas visa holders in 2020, and is even less generous in 2021.

The \$100 million dollar-a-day Australian defence budget has remained in quarantine despite the increasing need of the Australian people for vaccines and income support and protection. The joint military war games with the US continued on the Great Barrier Reef in July. In concert the warmongering language and belligerent attitude towards China by the Australian government is recommitting Australia to hitching its flag to US imperialism and not the interests of the Australian people. The burgeoning profits of monopolies, including in Big Pharma, mining companies, big banks and health-related industries, have never featured in the debt/people equation of the business governments.

Reality has clearly demonstrated we are not in the same boat as the big pharmaceutical

and medical companies who are multiplying their profits at the expense of people's urgent need for masks, sanitisers, and vaccination supplies. Nor do workers and small businesses have the same interests as the monopolies and big businesses who pocket government subsidies and incentives to add to their bottom line.

Reality tells us that small businesses and workers will pay for the COVID-19 lockdowns with a loss in income, depleted savings, and added debts, and in the longer term with wage freezes and reductions, attacks on their working conditions, and harsh new industrial relations environments, unless the struggle to oppose this agenda is developed and strengthened as quickly as possible.

"FLEXIBLY ADAPTING" NOT PLANNING AND PREPARING!

Australians are not all in the same boat in a class-divided system. Many working people are struggling to stay in the "boat." Recently a new fine-tuned ideological message has been rolled out, claiming that governments are following the health advice and are flexibly adapting to an evolving situation. And this despite watching the experience in the rest of the world and while Australia was in effect granted a temporary reprieve to prepare for the more dangerous variants emerging in Africa, India, and South America!

In 2021, working people can no longer afford a system that distorts the social benefits of advances in science and technology to serve private for-profit Big Pharma. A system that refuses to challenge Big Pharma's control of vaccine patents and denies safe vaccines to people because they can't pay. It is more than time to strengthen and fire up the struggle for a system that does not face these irreconcilable contradictions between the working people's needs and the few who siphon off the socially created wealth and knowledge for individual enrichment. ✪

The temporary income support helped to hide the bailing out of the capitalist economy and created the image of a benevolent state.

IDEOLOGY BEFORE HEALTH

Vinnie Molina

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the failures of capitalism and its neoliberal policies. The privatisation of health systems, social security, education, airlines, banks and most of the publicly-owned assets meant governments were not able to properly deal with a health crisis triggered by COVID-19.

Close to five million lives worldwide, particularly in developing countries but also in several developed economies like the United States and European countries, have been lost.

The response from capitalist states has been to save the economy at the expense of workers' health and safety.

Recent experiences in Australia of tight border restrictions in WA and hard lockdowns in Victoria and South Australia have proven effective in stopping the Delta variant of the virus.

NSW delayed and then implemented a soft approach to the emergency costing lives, with the situation still critical and being recognised as a national emergency.

Workers whose livelihoods were directly affected by this wrong approach have been dealt an extra punishment. Any concessions from government to offset this have been led by the union movement.

The Australian government's lack of foresight and planning has meant we were unprepared for the delta variant, something which should have been anticipated amidst warnings from experts. Ideology before health has been the pattern

of the Morrison government policy on vaccination. The Coalition government didn't act quickly enough in 2020 to secure contracts for vaccine supplies. It is now clear that the approach was based on ideology before health as the choices were made to rely heavily on the cheaper AstraZeneca vaccine. Other options were explored but the Australian people have no accessibility to vaccines available in the international market like the Sputnik V, Sinovax and others that have proven to be effective with widespread use in a number of countries.

There has now been a realisation from the government that workers are essential to keep the economy moving. However, despite this realisation, the lack of rigour from the Australian government sees workers required to work without a proper vaccination program to take care of our front-line workers, let alone other workers.

Drive-ins and a simple no-booking system should immediately be implemented. Feedback suggests online pre-booking systems discourages many people from choosing to inoculate.

Irresponsible media publicity against AstraZeneca killed that as an option as many people fear blood clotting despite its rarity. So, we are left with a shortage of Pfizer that cannot be manufactured in Australia. Developing countries as well as Australia are blocked from producing Pfizer. A finger can be pointed at the Coalition government – it is a consequence impacting Australia from the ideological decision not to support the lifting of

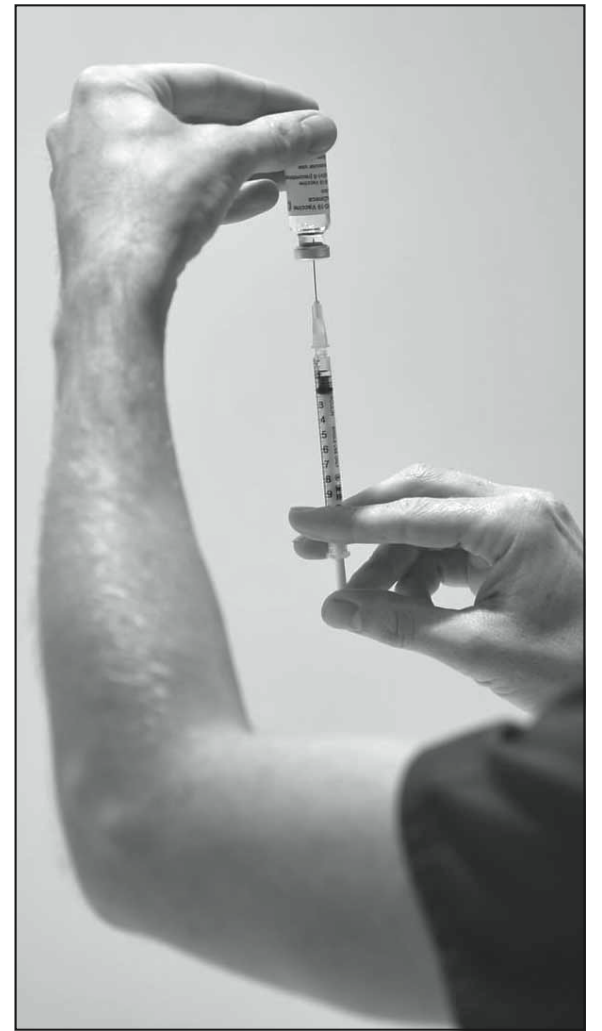
patents that many countries have called for. This saw Australia in the minority amongst around 100 other countries that supported global cooperation in the form of patent waivers on COVID-19 vaccines. There has been little solidarity among developed and developing countries and people. Capitalism shows once again it is a system based on individualism, selfishness and money-making.

Chief Health officers can surely see this and should not be held at ransom by ideological decisions made by governments.

All of this can be contrasted against what is happening in socialist countries such as China, where the pandemic is being successfully controlled and the vaccination process is advancing very well. Despite the aggressive US blockade, Cuba has developed and produced several candidate vaccines with its Abdala and Soberana vaccines now in use with more than twenty per cent of its 11mil people vaccinated on a three shot scheme. Vietnam is managing well and getting on track with discipline by its people. The DPRK has also reported a good outcome in controlling the virus entering their borders. These countries face economic and other sanctions, but their people's centred policies are proving successful.

The Communist Party of Australia demands a proper vaccination rollout for those willing to have it and COVID-19 income support for all those trapped in lengthy lockdowns. No one should be left behind.

The CPA demands can be found in the CPA statement on page two. ✪



MORRISON MUST ADOPT ALL RESPECT@WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Statement

The ACTU will appear at the Senate inquiry into the Morrison government's proposed changes to the Fair Work and Sex Discrimination Acts in response to the Respect@Work report. They call on the Prime Minister to act on all fifty-five recommendations rather than ignoring key elements of the report which would create safer workplaces for women.

The Morrison government has so far refused to accept the following recommendations:

Recommendation 28: a clear prohibition on sexual harassment in the Fair Work Act and a new complaints mechanism – instead the government has proposed a “stop sexual harassment” order that is a weaker mechanism that does not provide compensation to complainants.

Recommendations 17 and 18: positive duties to be placed on employers to eliminate sexual harassment to be included in the Sex Discrimination Act. Women will not be safe at work if employers

only react to sexual harassment and do not prevent it.

Recommendation 19: powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to initiate their own inquiries. This must be with enforcement powers to stop sexual discrimination and harassment.

Recommendation 16a: The Sex Discrimination Act should be amended to ensure the objects include “to achieve substantive equality between women and men”. The government is currently proposing a weaker formulation.

Recommendations 23 and 25: To promote access to justice for victims, the Parliament should amend the Australian Human Rights Commission Act to allow unions and other representative groups to bring representative claims to court; and, to limit cost orders to complainants who act without reasonable cause.

The ACTU is also calling on the federal government to use this opportunity to grant access to ten days paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave for all workers through

the National Employment Standards. Escaping a violent relationship takes time and money, and unions representing frontline family and domestic violence workers estimate that moving to find a new, safe place for yourself and your family costs can cost up to \$20,000 and take more than 140 hours. ✪



Fight for the Future

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

It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the great majority of the world's leading scientists.

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs.

The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

The pamphlet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

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Something to say?

Write to
the Editor!

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BETTER READ THAN DEAD WORKERS WIN AFTER HISTORIC INDUSTRIAL ACTION

N Stallon

The Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) announced that on Tuesday 27th July, Better Read Than Dead workers unanimously endorsed an in principle agreement with the store's management.

This comes after management locked out workers on Monday 26th July in retaliation to the escalation of their industrial action.

Industrial action began on 21st July, with workers initiating bans on overtime, the handling of cash, and the updating of window displays.

An escalation with new bans, including a ban on work associated with web orders was set to begin on Monday 26th July before management preemptively locked out workers.

RAFFWU stated that from Wednesday 28th July all industrial action has been lifted, with the lockout ending and workers returning to work.

The union reported that the agreement contained "historic conditions in the retail sector [...] that are] far superior to any major retail or fast food agreement in Australia".

This includes: optional casual to part-time conversion for all members; minimum consultation times for major changes and redundancies with rights to redeployment and severance pay; reclassification of all workers to at least Retail Employee Level 3 following probationary periods; restoration of 100 per cent Sunday penalty rates; abolition of Junior Rates following probationary periods; an hourly base rate \$1 more than the Award minimum; a pathway to a \$25 per hour living wage in the future; health and safety clauses as well as policies and rights detailed in the agreement; twenty days' paid domestic violence leave, twenty-six weeks paid parental leave; and a number of other important outcomes.

RAFFWU will now focus on representing former Better Read Than Dead workers in unlawful dismissal cases before the Fair Work Commission.

This has been a landmark struggle. Not only will it be both the first Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) in an Australian bookstore, but the first EBA negotiated independently by RAFFWU.

This comes as RAFFWU reported that Australian businesses are moving away from Enterprise Bargaining in a bid to avoid paying more than the minimum Award wage.

While Enterprise Bargaining was desirable when the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) routinely passed Agreements that paid below the Award rate, there is little incentive to bargain now that RAFFWU has restored many EBAs to the award rate, with future EBAs threatening to cost employers.

Most importantly, the struggle was won by a militant grass-roots campaign led by united workers that culminated in the first case of industrial action in the Australian retail sector in over fifty years.

Better Read Than Dead workers should be proud of their actions. They have demonstrated that the only way for workers to win is to unite and fight. ✪

Better Read Than Dead workers have demonstrated that the only way for workers to win is to unite and fight.



200 TRUCK DRIVERS KILLED SINCE ROAD SAFETY TRIBUNAL ABOLISHED

Transport Workers' Union (TWU) Statement

The Transport Workers' Union has blamed federal government inaction for the deaths of 200 truck drivers and warned that death rates will increase as deadly pressures are exacerbated by extreme demand during the pandemic.

On Sunday, a truck driver was found dead following a truck fire, bringing the death toll for truckies to 200 in just over five years, while the overall number of people killed in truck crashes has reached nearly 1,000 in the same time period.

In April 2016, the LNP government abolished the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal, despite

its own report concluding that truck crashes would be reduced by twenty-eight per cent.

TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine called for urgent government regulation to address the growing crisis in trucking.

"Last year we heard the Prime Minister call truck drivers 'heroes', but when it comes to the alarming death rates, poor vaccination access, workplace outbreaks and truckies forced to queue for hours in the rain for COVID tests, he is completely silent.

"A truck driver killed every ten days – that's the legacy of the LNP government's reckless move to rip

down a road safety watchdog to line the pockets of their mates at the top of trucking supply chains. For more than five years since, the federal government's inaction has enabled wealthy retailers, manufacturers and oil companies to put a deadly squeeze on transport contracts, forcing operators and drivers to cut corners in safety to stay in business.

"Trucking is Australia's deadliest industry, and it is only getting worse. Truck drivers over the last 18 months have operated under extreme pressure to meet the soaring demand of clients like Amazon, whose record profits jumped 224

per cent in the last quarter. With no tribunal in place to regulate the industry, those profits are failing to reach the workers whose jobs are under attack, like those at Toll forced to pursue strike action to protect their pay and conditions," he said.

Earlier this year a major study by Monash University revealed chronic health problems in trucking, including over eighty per cent of drivers overweight or obese, one in five suffering from depression, over seventy per cent living with chronic pain and almost a third with multiple chronic health conditions.

The federal government report

called for the tribunal's abolition because of its "significant cost to the economy ... with any potential safety benefits significantly outweighed by the associated costs." The tribunal's annual funding was \$4mil. Research shows heavy vehicle crashes cost \$4.64bil a year.

The abolition of the tribunal brought down investigations into safety in deadly sectors such as the transportation of oil, fuel and gas and tore up regulation guaranteeing owner drivers payment within thirty days of completing a job. ✪

SOMALIA TODAY



Eileen Whitehead

In the early 1960s, Somalia – a country of some 10mil people – was one of the first African countries to enjoy a democratic transfer of power. It had conducted the most democratic elections when the continent was mired in dictatorships and was suffering bloody military coups. However, today Somalia has suffered the most regressive and violent civil war which has been engineered by one of the most sectarian political elites.

There is now a situation where numerous foreign actors have interfered in political and security matters, failing to defeat al-Shabaab, and exacerbating the divisive apartheid-like political formula based along ethnic lines. In 2006, after fifteen years of civil war, the Union of Islamic Courts – a home-grown alliance of religious leaders – terminated the warlords' tyrannical terror. They pacified Mogadishu and its surrounding areas and planned for local administration for the city and surrounding settlements.

However, the international community led (as usual) by the US overturned this local initiative, once again returning the government into the hands of the warlords. Then, in 2008, under the pretext of defeating the terrorist organisation al-Shabaab, the US and its allies spent billions of dollars on, according to professor Abdi Ismail Samatar, an "illusory security and superficial

development" which removed the Somalis' democratic autonomy.

Instead, the US endorsed the tribal-based federal system sanctioned by the sectarian factions of the Somali political elite, which has ended in violence under a thoroughly inept and corrupt government. The African Union-led Task Force further exacerbated the situation: a multinational military force authorised by the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council and approved by the United Nations Security Council. This task force failed to defeat al-Shabaab as it was unable to mobilise the local people, due to the political situation which segregates Somalis into exclusive genealogical sections in all spheres of political and public life, with parliamentary representation, ministerial appointments, and employment in civil and security services (including the judiciary) influenced along tribal lines.

This tribal-based political scheme is accepted as reflecting Somali tradition, but it only suits the sectarian faction of the Somali political rulers and their former ally, the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi. The majority of Somalis reject political tribalism as they realise that such politics and policies are the root cause of the problem.

Meanwhile, Joe Biden has authorised a single drone strike against al-Shabaab militants, which attacked an American-trained elite Somali force known as the Danab. While no US troops accompanied the Somalis during the operation near Galkayo,

Pentagon spokesperson Cindi King stated that the US has the authority under Article 51 of the UN Charter "to conduct collective self-defence of partner forces." And now the US military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) is pressing for new authorities to carry out armed drone strikes targeting Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab fighters in portions of eastern Kenya, potentially expanding the war zone across the border from their sanctuaries in Somalia.

What is politically interesting in this scenario is the fact that members of the US Congress only learnt about AFRICOM after four US soldiers were killed in Niger in 2017 (ten years into its existence). They had no knowledge of the US military's presence in the country and the extent of its presence throughout Africa. What the US fails to take into consideration is the opposite affect of its drone bombing on African civilians, which leads family members and friends of those the US kills, to actually join the terrorist groups.

The African Union's motto is "African solutions for African problems," which is badly needed now. The AU should insist on the removal of the President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, whose term of office expired in February 2021, and the removal of US troops as promised by Trump in 2020.

Tunde Osazua, co-ordinator of the US's Out of Africa Network (part of Black Alliance for Peace), stated that "the International Day of Action on AFRICOM on the 1st of October, provides an opportunity to call on the

US to respect the wishes of African people and demilitarise the African continent, so that Africa can begin to be a zone of peace. That way, African countries can begin to provide for the needs of their people without the burden of AFRICOM and the US involvement."

However, another justification now being given by the US for AFRICOM is the perception of a growing Chinese influence. General Stephen Townsend, commander of AFRICOM, just before the start of PE21 (Phoenix Express 2021 a 12-day US-Africa Command (AFRICOM)-sponsored military exercise involving thirteen states in the Mediterranean Sea), said that the "Chinese are out-manoeuvring the US in select countries in Africa": going on to claim that the Chinese are "looking for a place where they can rearm and repair warships. That becomes militarily useful in conflict. They're a long way toward establishing that in Djibouti. Now they're casting their gaze to the Atlantic coast and wanting to get such a base there."

What no one has mentioned is the obvious reason for the interest in this region: the Horn of Africa is placed at the entrance to the Red Sea and the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. Let's hope that in our battle with climate change, the need for fossil fuels is so diminished that this foreign interference becomes unnecessary, and the mess that the US military is making of our world will disappear. ✪

The African Union's motto is "African solutions for African problems," which is badly needed now.

SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN OR SCIENTIFIC: A GUIDE – PART 4

Valentin Cartillier

For the final part of this series, we will see how all of the concepts we've explored thus far work together to create scientific socialism. Engels has a few concluding remarks to make on the capitalist mode of production that demonstrate the international stakes of building a socialist movement.

In the pursuit of ever-increasing profits, capitalism is required to continually expand its markets on the world stage. Capitalism, in its ruthless expansion of industry, takes on a life of its own. Individual capitalists may be “remorselessly cast aside” but this is only by other, bigger, capitalists. The fundamental mechanism remains the same; the exploitation of the working class.

Automation steadily replaces the need for manual labour, with fewer and fewer specialised labourers required for the upkeep and maintenance of machinery. As this tendency continues, either more work is expected of fewer labourers (very often without a pay rise), or more useless, bureaucratic jobs are created to maintain the expansion of the business.

Capital's ongoing expansion in the world market allows capitalists to off-shore production to places where the labour is cheaper, causing either stagnation, or driving down wages, as the working classes of different countries are forced to compete with one another.

This situation creates what Marx and Engels call the “industrial reserve army,” the unemployed workers forced to be prepared to take whatever wage they can get to survive, which capitalists use as leverage against employed workers trying to organise for better wages. This industrial reserve army is not only domestic, but international, exerting further downward pressure on the working class. As Engels says, it is:

“a constant dead weight upon the limbs of the working-class in its struggle for existence with capital, a regulator for keeping of wages down to the low level that suits the interests of capital.”

This is ultimately an unsustainable model, as it is built upon a contradiction that capitalism cannot resolve. It creates a situation where:

“The overwork of some becomes the precondition for the unemployment of others, and that modern industry, which hunts the whole world over for new consumers, confines the consumption of the masses at home down to a starvation minimum, and in doing so thus destroys its own internal market.”

A society constantly undermining its own internal market cannot keep functioning in the long-term. The introduction of new commodity markets cannot keep up with capitalism's blind pursuit of production for profit, as underpaid consumers are unable to purchase what is being produced. This state of affairs creates a grotesque contradiction: an overabundance of products with no-one available to buy them. This is the cause of all the waste we see around us; the huge food wastage while people starve, technological obsolescence, vacant houses while homeless people sleep in the street, so on and so on. Eventually, this contradiction reaches its fever pitch in the form of the periodic collapse of the market. Engels states:



“The extension of the markets cannot keep pace with the extension of production. The collision becomes inevitable, and as this cannot produce any real solution so long as it does not break in pieces the capitalist mode of production, the collisions become periodic. Capitalist production has begotten another ‘vicious circle.’”

Marx and Engels demonstrated that economic recessions and depression are not anomalies of capitalism, but they are the logical and necessary outcome of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production.

Little by little, the pace quickens. It becomes a trot. The industrial trot breaks into a canter, the canter in turn grows into the headlong gallop of a perfect steeplechase of industry, commercial credit, and speculation, which finally, after breakneck leaps, ends where it began – in the ditch of a crisis. And so over and over again.

We have seen enough of these periodic crashes within our own lifetimes to verify the accuracy of this analysis.

The other economic tendency Engels and Marx pointed out is capitalism's creation of monopolies. Whether companies or banks, capitalists merge businesses to create larger and larger conglomerates that are able to swallow the smaller ones whole. These massive businesses and banks, we are told, become “too big to fail.” However, as we have already demonstrated, regardless of their size, they are still based on the capitalist mode of production which invariably leads to crisis and collapse. Lenin's *Imperialism: the Highest Form of Capitalism* is a clear explanation of the phenomenon of monopolies in imperialist capitalism. At economic crisis points, usually the state will step in to try and bail the businesses out with tax money taken from the already exploited working class. This is a display of the capitalist state's fundamental allegiance to business over the working class, for the modern State, again, is only the organisation

that bourgeois [capitalist] society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine.

Lenin's *State and Revolution* gives a fuller picture of the allegiance of the bourgeois state and capitalism.

What is the working class to do in the face of the enormous power which capitalists wield over them? Scientific socialism states that social forces work in the same manner as natural forces, which as we saw earlier in this series, are always in motion. This means that by using the theoretical tools spoken about throughout this series, we are able to understand how capitalism as an economic system functions. By understanding how capitalism works, and bringing it to the attention of others, we are able to begin changing the way it works.

To use Engels' example, electricity once only appeared to us as lightning bolts in the sky, but, through rigorous investigation and experimentation, we were able to channel and contain that force to such an extent that we now use it for something as simple as a light switch. The same holds for capitalism. What initially appears to us as an enormous, insurmountable economic system, can be brought to heel by the concentrated and concerted activity of the working class. This is by no means an easy feat, and requires the greatest number of workers, both domestically and internationally, to act in unison against their common enemy, the capitalist class.

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels declared that “what the Bourgeoisie [capitalists] therefore produces, above all, are its own grave diggers.” The working class are the gravediggers of capitalism. To abolish capitalism is to replace it with an economic system that acts “according to the needs of the community and of each individual,” to provide for the “means of subsistence and

of enjoyment,” for all. To abolish capitalism is to do away with all class distinctions, where no-one is able to dominate another by forcing them to work to survive. Under socialism, the economic means of production are socialised and re-fashioned to suit the needs of the people. The excessive waste of the current system is eliminated, and “the senseless extravagance of the ruling classes of today, and their political representatives” is done away with.

A socialist society brings forth: “The possibility of securing for every member of society, by means of socialised production, an existence not only fully sufficient materially, and becoming day-by-day more full, but an existence guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties – this possibility is now, for the first time, here, but it is here.”

Engels emphasises *here* because the possibility for a working-class revolution exists now, just as it did then. The various socialist revolutions that have occurred since Engels wrote this text attest to this fact. The theoretical concepts of scientific socialism that we have examined throughout this series, the combination of dialectical and historical materialism, is the means by which a socialist revolution will be achieved. The productive forces of society are constantly in motion; the aim is to bring this motion under the control of the working class for the benefit of all. We shall therefore conclude with Engels' words:

“To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat [working class]. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism.” ✚

Little by little, the pace quickens. It becomes a trot. The industrial trot breaks into a canter, the canter in turn grows into the headlong gallop of a perfect steeplechase of industry, commercial credit, and speculation, which finally, after breakneck leaps, ends where it began – in the ditch of a crisis. And so over and over again.

IRAQI CP: PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IS NOT A GATEWAY TO DESIRED CHANGE

CC of the Iraqi Communist Party Statement

With the deepening political and social crisis in the Iraq, the dominant forces are monopolising political power, imposing their control over the country's destiny and the direction of social development. Moreover, with widespread corruption comes the lack of prosecution for the assassinations, kidnappings, and intimidation. Additionally, the absence of basic services has led to the deterioration of the living conditions of the people, especially the working people, which has resulted in increased poverty and unemployment. Under these complex conditions, laden with crises and risks, talk of providing an atmosphere conducive to holding free and fair elections has become nothing but an illusion exposed by the tragic daily realities and the bitter suffering of millions.

Based on these factors, we announced in the statement issued by the party's Central Committee on 9th May, the suspension of our participation in the elections in October. We considered that our participation could not take place without the necessary conditions to ensure the fair and free elections we want, as expressed by the will of the uprising in October 2019, to be a lever for the desired change. We stressed the desire for a safe electoral environment to be provided, through a fair election law and a truly independent electoral commission. We demand the following measures: the prevention of political money, ending the proliferation of arms, and holding the worst of the corrupt accountable, including the perpetrators of the assassinations with those behind them revealed. Until such demands can be met, participation in the elections will only be a process of reproducing the political system itself, the system of ethno-sectarian quotas and corruption, that is the source of crises and tragedies.

In connection with all this and in response to developments, the Central Committee decided to go back to the party organisations, to take a collective decision through a referendum for all its members regarding participation in the elections or boycotting them. This was carried out in early July, and the results of the referendum, which is an embodiment of internal democratic practice, showed that a clear majority supported the boycott. It should be noted that a high percentage of party members in all its organisations in all governorates and abroad, actively participated in the referendum. These comrades belong to various social strata, which shows that as a sample



it does not represent the communists only, but rather reflects a clear popular mood.

There is no need here to emphasise that our boycott of the elections in light of the current suffocating crises is not directed against the electoral process as a democratic practice. It is, for us, one of the means of peaceful action for change, which calls for combining all forms of popular, political, intellectual and economic struggle. As a form of struggle, it is also linked to our clear goal of change aimed at establishing a democratic civil state based on social justice.

Today we are faced with the task of real change and a radical solution, aiming to change the political course responsible for the deepening crisis, as well as the economic policy that has led to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small exploitative class and a ruling minority at the expense of the crushed and deprived majority of the people, and to the continuation of fragile economic structures, and impeding the development of national productive sectors.

While we call for boycotting the elections, we call for changing the political path by breaking with the policy of ethno-sectarian quotas and political sectarianism on which the crisis-ridden political process was based. By doing so, we call for achieving democracy, which is threatened by those who use political money, uncontrolled arms, fraud and promoting a culture of corruption, and those who circumvent any possibility to save the country from the abyss into which it is descending.

Through the boycott of elections, we are calling upon the masses of our people stifled by the ethno-sectarian quotas and corruption, the families of the martyrs of the October Uprising, its brave leaders, heroic youth and all its patriotic supporters, as well as all the living forces of our people and all those who hold dear to their hearts the country's future and the direction of its peaceful social development, to unite efforts and struggle for a reform of the entire electoral system, enact a just electoral law, and

fulfil the conditions for holding fair elections in which the broadest masses of the people express their free will, without manipulation and fraud, in choosing their true patriotic representatives.

Today, we urgently need a whole set of well-studied political, social and economic measures aimed at saving the country from the suffocating crisis and achieving change. Without these measures, the deterioration will continue and deepen, and the ruling political system will be reproduced, leading to unimaginable consequences.

On this occasion, we call upon the organisations of our party and its comrades and friends to work actively to mobilise the mass movement, escalate it and diversify its peaceful methods in the face of challenges, open up to the broadest masses and be at the forefront, in defence of their rights and freedoms, and to instigate their struggle for democracy and social justice. ✪

We announced in the statement issued by the party's Central Committee on 9th May, the suspension of our participation in the elections in October. We considered that our participation could not take place without the necessary conditions to ensure the fair and free elections we want, as expressed by the will of the uprising in October 2019, to be a lever for the desired change.

CP OF SWAZILAND: MSWATI HAS DISQUALIFIED HIMSELF FROM SOLUTION TO SWAZILAND'S CRISIS – MONARCHY AND FEUDALISM MUST GO

The Communist Party of Swaziland says that the recent response of absolute monarch Mswati that “everything belongs to the king,” ruling out any rational engagement with people calling for democracy and freedom, disqualifies him from the political future of Swaziland.

“The monarchy and the feudal system must go,” said CPS leader Kenneth Kunene in response to Mswati’s comments and refusal to end the violence against pro-democracy activists.

Close to 100 protesters have been killed by the police and army since the country’s youth started calling for democratic change in Swaziland.

Initially, many had simply called for changes to the existing regime, such as by electing a prime minister. Some Members of Parliament have also called for “more democracy.”

Kunene said that these calls for minor alterations to the system have now broadened into more full-fledged demands for real democratic change, beginning with the unbanning of political parties, free media and the safe return of exiles, and leading to free and fair democratic elections.

“Mswati has changed prime ministers, pretending that a new face in his regime means something different. But it’s a meaningless move, and people now see that,” said Kunene.

“The current system has to end in its entirety. Feudalism must be abolished, and that means the monarchy must go. Some countries have opted for constitutional monarchies in the change to democracy. This would not work in Swaziland, where the idea of absolute control by some imaginary bloodline over every area of Swazi life is hardwired into the thinking of the elite.”

Kunene said that the CPS wants to see a national democratic revolution in the country.

This would sweep aside the oppression of the monarchic and feudal system and create a new constitution that guarantees social, economic and political freedoms. It would be a strategic stage on the road toward the full liberation of a socialist system.

For now, the CPS and its activists and others in the wider pro-democracy movement are engaged in bitter struggle against the Mswati regime.

The Party’s rallying call #DemocracyNow and demands an end to all prohibitions on political and media freedoms have been taken up increasingly in many of the recent freedom protests.

The regime took a conscious decision to clamp down with deadly force on protesters.

The signal for this was the call by Mswati’s brother in Parliament for the police and security forces to “fight fire with fire,” even though protesters had not attacked them.

“Right now, what’s needed more than anything is aid to the victims of regime brutality, solidarity with the pro-democracy call, a ban on dealings with the regime, and meaningful international action supporting real democratic change,” said Kunene. ✪



Mswati.

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT REJECTS ATTACK ON DKP

German Communist Party Statement

The Federal Constitutional Court has granted the complaint of the German Communist Party against its non-admission to the Bundestag elections and the deprivation of its status as a political party. Patrik Köbele, chairman of the DKP, states:

“The Federal Constitutional Court today rejected the attempt to endanger the existence of the German Communist Party (DKP) by bureaucratic means and to ban it from standing in the Bundestag elections.

“The reasoning for the judgement is a slap in the face for the Federal Election Commissioner and also confirms that the DKP is an active political party, for example, reference is made to the DKP’s rally on the 80th anniversary of the assault on the Soviet Union.

“This decision is not only the result of our legal and political argumentation, but above all the result of the great national and international solidarity we have experienced. Especially the international solidarity has exceeded all our expectations. More than 50 communist and workers’ parties, the

World Peace Council, the World Federation of Democratic Youth and many progressive organisations have shown solidarity with us. This was a great demonstration of internationalism. Everywhere this attempt of reactionary forces was made public. MPs from sister parties made use of the EU-Parliament to support the DKP. We are proud to be part of this internationalist community. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts! This example shows how important solidarity is and what it can achieve.

“For us, this solidarity and success are a mandate to go into the election campaign

with all our strength, to fight for our political contents and for the strengthening of the DKP – now more than ever.

“The victory for the DKP is also a small stage victory in the struggle against the dismantling of democratic rights, against the reactionary restructuring of the state – against this we have to continue to fight together.

“Long live proletarian internationalism!”

PROFIT IN THE STARS: BILLIONAIRES LEAVING EARTH BEHIND



E Lennon

For the super-rich, it is in vogue to own a company dedicated to space “exploration.” As a result, two of the world’s most wealthy people have now made suborbital flights.

The three most space-focused billionaires share a goal in creating space tourism. However, Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Richard Branson’s machinations are piggybacking off workers and are fraught with exploitation.

Bezos, who founded Amazon, thanked workers employed by the mega-corporation for putting him in space.

“I also want to thank every Amazon employee and every Amazon customer because you guys paid for all this,” Bezos said in his post-flight press conference. “So seriously, for every Amazon customer out there and every Amazon employee, thank you from the bottom of my heart very much. It’s very appreciated.”

Bezos got to take the trip as a direct result of selling off shares from Amazon. The workers he thanked have faced exploitation in numerous forms: union-busting, insufficient wages, poor working conditions and even delivery drivers not being covered for health insurance amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bezos’ thank-you is completely disingenuous. For example, in his most recent letter to shareholders, he discusses a union push in an Amazon warehouse.

“Does your Chair take comfort in the outcome of the recent union vote in Bessemer?” Jeff Bezos said in his letter. “No, he

doesn’t. I think we need to do a better job for our employees. While the voting results were lopsided and our direct relationship with employees is strong, it’s clear to me that we need a better vision for how we create value for employees – a vision for their success.”

The company quashed the vote with an aggressive campaign against the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, dimming hopes for broader Amazon unionisation across the USA.

Similarly, Elon Musk and Richard Branson have revealed their own anti-worker stances.

Musk, who founded Tesla, illegally fired worker Richard Ortiz, who had been distributing union fliers in a Tesla plant’s carpark. However, a judge ruled that Ortiz be reinstated and that he be compensated for lost earnings and benefits. The judge recognised that the reason given for the firing was a cover for the company retaliating against the worker.

The Tesla boss also got in hot water for an anti-union tweet that he made back in 2018.

“Nothing stopping Tesla team at our car plant from voting union. Could do so [tomorrow] if they wanted,” Musk tweeted. “But why pay union dues [and] give up stock options for nothing? Our safety record is two [times] better than when plant was UAW [and] everybody already gets healthcare.”

The USA’s National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ordered that Musk delete the tweet. The regulatory body ruled that the social media post threatened to take away workers’ benefits. However, the NLRB’s

decision proved to be a slap on the wrist for the CEO and company.

As for Richard Branson, he too has proved himself to be negligent on workers’ rights. At the start of the pandemic, Branson’s company Virgin Atlantic suggested that the airline crew take eight weeks of unpaid leave. Even conservative MP Richard Fuller slammed Branson, stating that to pay for those eight weeks the billionaire could take it out of interest on his \$3.8bil net worth accrued during the same amount of time. In fact, he would still have some interest left over.

There’s an element of ideological tension with other nations over this space race. However, it’s not as prominent as with the tension between the (former) USSR and the United States. China, who has stated their exploration is peaceful and for science, wants to avoid another arms race, as reported by *China Daily*. This is largely because there’s no sense in creating another “Star Wars,” with the first one impacting the Soviet Union’s economy.

Idealism should not be considered in relation to billionaires. What they espouse and what their followers believe is not idealism. Idealism would suggest some sort of naivety. This is something no one in their wealth bracket can claim.

Billionaire space exploration is not for the benefit of humanity. The knowledge and resources that something like colonising Mars would yield, would be wrapped up in patents, privatisation and contribute to further wealth-hoarding.

Elon Musk has self-mythologised his way to being perceived as a brilliant genius and inventor. It doesn’t take much to pull back the curtain and see that his “achievements” fall short of this self-aggrandising.

Musk and other powerful people, billionaires or not, require these window dressings to perpetuate themselves as “great men of history,” deeming themselves necessary to create value and drive forward humanity’s achievements. This idea and its contradictory aspects fall in opposition to collective achievement and a materialist view of history and humanity, erasing the fact that workers are the ones who create the value.

Once individualism on such a scale reveals itself, it’s easy to put two and two together: no one person should oversee “colonising” another planet. Even the concept of “colonising” carries with it unsettling connotations. While no humans live on Mars, to be colonised, doesn’t mean that it wouldn’t be much different to colonialism on Earth. Elon Musk has stated that those wishing to go to Mars but couldn’t afford it would be required to pay off these loans through work. This is indentured servitude, which would see exploitation and human rights violation.

Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson look to the stars, all the while people are struggling to keep up with basic human needs and human rights. The wealth gap will continue to grow during and after the pandemic, with this inequality driven by neo-liberal privatisation and policies that made these billionaires rich in the first place. ☹

“I also want to thank every Amazon employee and every Amazon customer because you guys paid for all this.”

STUDY REVEALS SHOCKING DECLINE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY IN THE US

Al Neal

From the moment we are born there are certain immutable truths we cannot escape. And the one which drives an entire entertainment industry genre and is a constant and gnawing anxiety as we age is death.

There is no avoiding it. And it leads to a single conclusion, the time in between life and death – our actions, reactions, non-action, etc. – matters. No surprise that we find comfort in knowing (hoping) we each have a lengthy life expectancy.

For the United States, though, life expectancy fell by more than a year, from 78.8 years to 77.3 years, during the first half of 2020, a shocking decline reflecting the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic (seventy-four per cent), as well as a rise from drug overdoses, heart attacks, and other diseases accompanying the viral outbreak, according to the National Center for Health Statistics recent report.

Just as the Covid-19 related death toll ticked up higher than three large-scale wars, this latest report shows that the last time life

expectancy at birth dropped as dramatically was during World War II.

“This is a big departure. We haven’t seen anything this large since the first half of the 20th century when infectious disease was much more common,” said Elizabeth Arias, Ph.D., a health scientist for the NCHS and lead author of the study.

Breaking this down further, you find Black and Latino Americans were hit harder than white people. A clear reflection of the racial and socioeconomic disparities of the pandemic. Black Americans lost 2.7 years of life expectancy, and Latinos lost 1.9. White life expectancy dropped by 0.8 years.

US Latinos – who have a longer life expectancy than non-Latino Blacks or whites (*“The Hispanic Paradox”*), saw the largest decline in life expectancy during the pandemic, dropping three years from 81.8 years in 2019 to 78.8 years in 2020. Covid-19 was responsible for ninety per cent of that decline.

“Those are very large disparities, and it reflects that the pandemic affected these two minority groups much more than the

majority population,” said Arias. “So, they experienced the bulk of the mortality.”

The data also showed an increased death total from other causes – drug overdoses making up 93,000 deaths in 2020 – such as strokes and other long-term health issues. During the early months of the pandemic, many seriously ill people delayed seeking health care out of fear of COVID-19.

Similar studies have reached the same conclusion as the NCHS. A February 2021 paper released by the National Academy of Sciences looked at all the data for 2020 and estimated US life expectancy would fall by 1.13 years because of the pandemic, while Black and Latino Americans’ lives would see a reduction of three to four times greater than white Americans.

“Consequently, COVID-19 is expected to reverse over ten years of progress made in closing the African American–white gap in life expectancy and reduce the previous Latino mortality advantage by over seventy per cent,” read the study.

A study published in the British Medical Journal looked at US life



expectancy data and compared it with the same data from sixteen other “high-income” countries and found the US decrease in life expectancy from 2018 to 2020 was 8.5 times higher than the average in peer countries. And that the declines were mostly amongst

minority groups – Black and Hispanic people.

For decades, the US life expectancy was on the rise, but began a slow decline in 2015, and has now come crashing down.

People's World ✪

AKEL CALLS ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONDEMN “TURKISH AGGRESSION” AND TWO-STATE SOLUTION FOR CYPRUS

Steve Sweeney

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan dealt a bitter blow to the cause for a united Cyprus when he called for a two-state solution to the crisis during a recent visit to the island, communists warned today.

Cyprus’s Progressive Party of Working People (Akel) said “the definitive partition of our country has never been more visible” after Erdogan’s remarks earlier this week.

The party urged the Republic of Cyprus to counter “Turkish aggressiveness” and restart stalled

negotiations on reunification, which Akel initiated when it was in power but which subsequently stalled in 2017.

Erdogan arrived in northern Cyprus on Monday to mark the 47th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of the island and its subsequent division.

It left Cyprus partitioned into two main parts: the Republic of Cyprus, located in the south and west of the country, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is not recognised by the international community.

A UN buffer zone separates the two entities, with the north of

Cyprus considered to be occupied territory and subject to an ongoing political dispute.

Erdogan promised a new parliament building in a press statement during his controversial visit, where he was flanked by the leader of Turkey’s neo-fascist Nationalist Movement Party Devlet Bahçeli.

The authoritarian president inflamed tensions further by stating that he was going to reopen the abandoned resort of Varosha in the southern quarter of Famagusta, whose inhabitants fled a Turkish invasion in 1974.

Erdogan has rejected talks mediated by the United Nations,

insisting that third parties cannot intervene in the process as he outlined his position on a two-state solution.

Akel said in a statement: “We have been and still are of the opinion that this dangerous course can be halted and reversed only with the solution of the Cyprus problem, with the liberation and reunification of our country and people.”

The party’s general secretary Stefanos Stefanou met with Britain’s high commissioner to Cyprus Stephen Lillie and Foreign Office director for Cyprus affairs Ajay Sharma to discuss the issue on Wednesday.

He said Erdogan’s pronouncements “constitute a flagrant violation of the resolutions of the UN Security Council and at the same time undermine the prospect for a solution of the Cyprus problem and the reunification of Cyprus.”

Akel confirmed that it will never accept a two-state solution and called on the international community to condemn Turkey’s actions, which Stefanou said “are part of the occupying power’s strategy for the final partition of Cyprus.”

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US TURNS CYBERSPACE INTO ANOTHER ANTI-CHINA BATTLEFIELD, “FUTILE TO CONTAIN BEIJING”

Chen Qingqing and Cao Siqi

In an apparent attempt to contain China and as part of its ceaseless efforts to form an anti-China chorus among its major allies, the Biden administration is seeking to turn cyberspace into a new battlefield by ganging up with its allies to accuse China of conducting cyberattacks worldwide, an allegation that was swiftly denounced by Chinese diplomats, internet institutions and experts as China has always been a long-term victim of US cyberattacks.

Such groundless accusations will not change the fact that the US remains the world's top spying empire with widespread malfeasance in cyberspace, and some of its recent spying scandals even put some of its allies into an awkward position.

Along with the US, NATO, the European Union, Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan and New Zealand accused China of a global cyber espionage campaign, an unusually broad coalition of Western countries coming together to publicly blame China for cyberattacks, according to media reports. Meanwhile, the US Department of Justice charged four Chinese nationals with targeting dozens of companies, universities and government agencies in the US and abroad, including three security officials and one contract hacker, Reuters said.

Chinese embassies and diplomats quickly denounced the allegations, urging the US and its allies to stop bashing China on this subject, as the US has been a mastermind of cyberattacks for a long time.

A slew of internet research reports published previously show that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been behind more than a decade of hacking activities targeting China's aerospace sector, scientific research institutions, internet companies, oil industry and government agencies.

Such ill-intentioned tactics by the US by confusing right and wrong and orchestrating “hacker blame” with its allies is considered another step of the Biden administration in confronting and suppressing China at a larger scale.

Some Chinese experts warned the new step could lead to a worsening China-US relationship which could spiral to a new low.

AMERICA CULPRIT NO.1

Those allegations are absolutely unacceptable as they come out of political purposes with the aim of slandering and containing China, Zhao Lijian, spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, told a press conference on Tuesday in response to the latest accusations by the US and its allies against China on cyberattacks.

The so-called technical details released by the US do not constitute a complete chain of evidence, the Chinese official said, noting

that in fact, the US is the world's largest source of cyberattacks.

Over the years, China has been a major victim of cyberattacks. According to the annual report by the National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Team/Coordination Center of China (CNCERT/CC), in 2020 about 5.31mil hosts on the Chinese mainland were controlled by a total of about 52,000 overseas malicious program command and control servers, and the top three origins of overseas servers in terms of the number of compromised Chinese hosts are all from NATO member states, according to a statement of the Chinese Mission to the European Union (EU) in response to the accusations.

Since 2000, the US had already carried out extensive attacks on global education, operators and other servers on the internet side. Equation, a unit of the National Security Agency (NSA), has been hacking into important internet targets around the world, a leading anti-virus company Antiy Labs said in a document sent to the *Global Times* on Tuesday.

The US has the world's largest cyberspace attack arsenal, including high-level malicious code covering the entire system platform and a large number of undisclosed vulnerability exploitation tools and attack platforms, Antiy Labs said.

According to the Chinese company, the US has been lurking, penetrating and attacking Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, and attacking countries including its allies if they purchase Huawei products.

The US also launched the “Olympic Games” campaign against Iran's nuclear facilities, and destructed Iran's nuclear facilities through the Stuxnet worm, severely slowing Iran's nuclear program. It was the first event to use malicious code to cause significant and irreversible damage to a physical facility, the company's document said.

By using products from EastNets to hack into the international banking system, known as SWIFT, the US has been trying to monitor money flows between Middle Eastern and Latin American banks, according to the document.

From time to time, some US institutions with far-fetched evidence hype the so-called threat of Chinese hackers. In fact, with the most advanced internet infrastructure and abundant tools, the US has been dependent on its massive internet hacking capability to attack a number of countries including China in order to steal intelligence, the Chinese firm said, noting that when the US accuses others of internet spying, its own cyberattacks and hacking activities have never stopped at global scale.

The *Global Times* learned from Chinese tech giant 360 Security Technology last year of a series of attacks against China's aerospace, scientific research institutions, petroleum industry and large-scale internet



companies by a hacking organisation affiliated with the CIA. The company found proof that the hacking group, APT-C-39, belongs to the CIA, and the hack was traced back to 2008, mainly targeting organisations in Beijing, South China's Guangdong and East China's Zhejiang provinces.

This is a typical trick of a thief crying “stop thief” staged by the US government again, a leading Chinese cybersecurity company said in a statement sent to the *Global Times* on Tuesday.

The Chinese cybersecurity company said in the statement that China has been a major victim of advanced persistent threat (APT) attacks in 2020, and forty-four APT organisations from different countries have launched over 3,000 cyber attacks at national level against China.

NEW WEAPON OF US

The purpose of the Biden administration is clear, as cybersecurity issue has now become a new weapon for it to align its allies in competition with China in an all-out scale, following a number of issues that the US government has exploited to contain China including Xinjiang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea, Li Haidong, a professor at the Institute of International Relations at China Foreign Affairs University, told the *Global Times* on Tuesday.

“Biden is familiar with such ‘forming alliance’ tactics in confronting China, for example previously he tried to form a vaccine alliance, a climate change alliance, a security alliance and so on. The cyberattack allegations add some new elements to such tactics,” Li said.

At the NATO meeting in June, US President Joe Biden and the country's NATO

partners stressed the security threats coming from China and Russia, and a description of containing China in NATO's communiqué was also considered as a shift in its strategy. Given its first joint accusation of China on cybersecurity, Zhao denounced the move as turning cyberspace into a new battlefield by introducing a military alliance into cyberspace.

“It won't be helpful for maintaining its own security, but it will provoke an arms race in cyberspace, increasing conflicts among countries in the internet [realm] and endangering peace and security,” the Chinese official said.

The US recently used Denmark's secret service to spy on leaders of many European countries including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, arousing controversy and security concerns, as Denmark hosts several key landing stations for subsea internet cables to and from Sweden, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, according to media reports.

While the US has repeatedly claimed that it is under external cyberattacks and accuses China and Russia on this, observers noted that the recent spying incident on European leaders reveals the true face of the US.

Qin An, head of the Beijing-based Institute of China Cyberspace Strategy, pointed out that the US is using old tricks to contain China, as Biden wants to show its allies that the US is still leading the world. “Biden also wants to prove to Americans that he is better than Trump.”

“If NATO really cares about its member states' cybersecurity, they should first discuss certain members' massive cyber theft programs against other members, Zhao said. *Global Times* 🇨🇳



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