



# WEALTH GAP WIDENS

Anna Pha

**The latest national income figures showing economic growth barely above zero are suggestive of a sluggish economy, struggling to avoid recession. The economy is hardly growing, by even the kindest of measures. But: the big banks and corporates are awash with record profits, while workers struggle on shrinking wages! Welcome to capitalism, a system based on greed and wealth for the few and pain and suffering for the majority.**

This profit surge has been propelled by taxpayer-funded corporate welfare, tax cuts, close-to-zero interest rates, booming housing prices, and above all, an assault on wages and working conditions. The public sector is starved of funds; JobSeeker at \$44 a day remains below the poverty line; and pensioners, carers, and other social security recipients struggle to put food on the table.

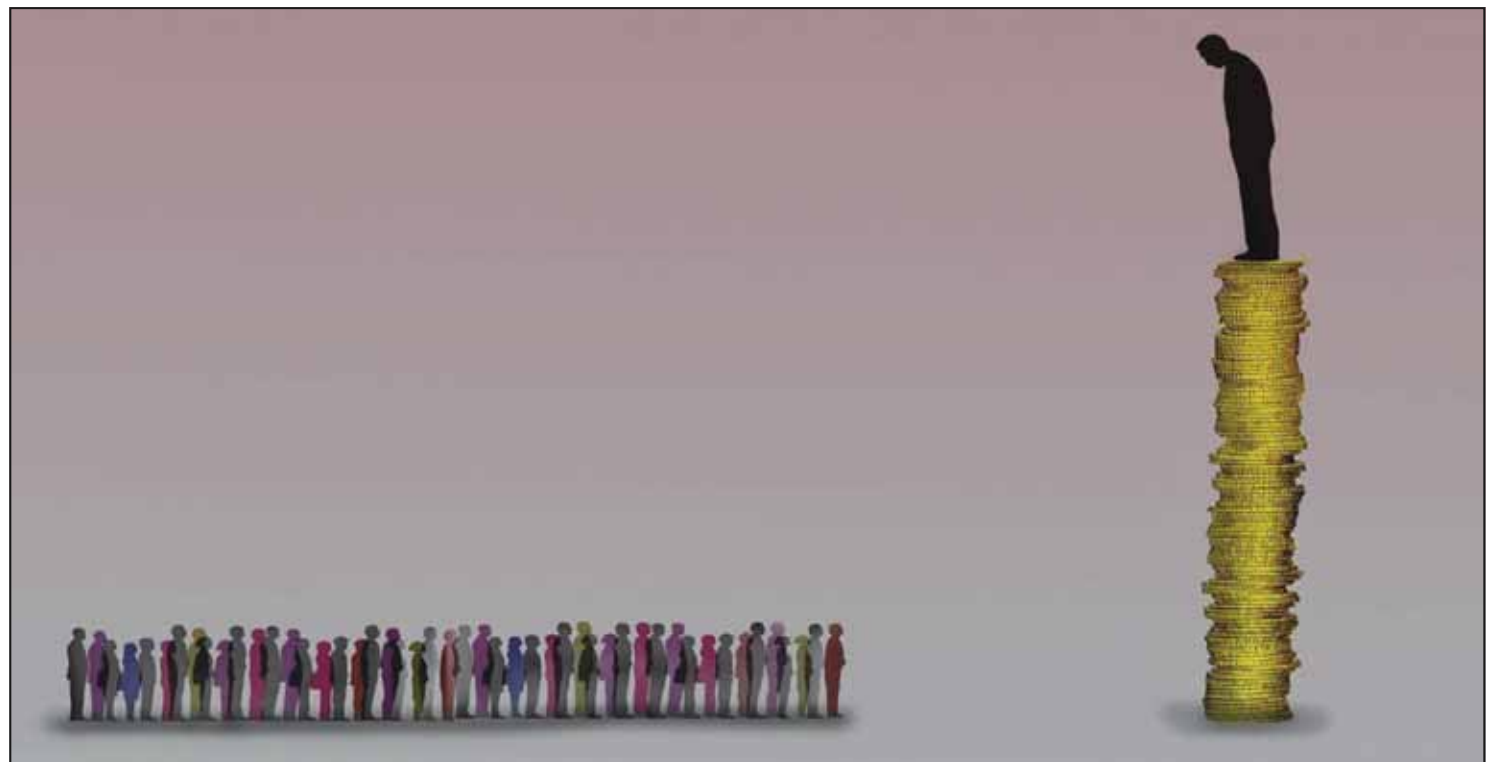
This profit season has delivered a record \$86.6 billion bonanza for shareholders. This is despite some large corporations like Qantas and many small businesses being hit by border closures and lockdowns during the pandemic. Behind the curtain of COVID, a massive transfer of wealth is taking place, and not in a desirable direction! The wealth is not trickling down, but soaring upwards. The wealth gap is rapidly widening in Australia.

## PROFIT SURGE

As the annual business reporting season draws to a close, a record \$31 billion in dividends for shareholders has been declared. But it doesn't stop there. Awash with surplus capital, a record \$15 billion in share buybacks will further enrich shareholders. Companies buying back shares further line the pockets of shareholders in addition to the dividends. It also results in fewer shares remaining on the market, with an immediate increase in the value of remaining shares.

Another \$34 billion will be paid out to shareholders in takeovers of businesses, drawing on accumulated profits and access to cheap loans due to record low interest rates.

BHP, Rio Tinto, and Fortescue Metals combined are paying \$18.27 billion in dividends, mostly to wealthy shareholders and directors. These resource companies have made mammoth profits from record high iron ore prices and other resources extracted from the land that belongs to First Nations people – who receive little or nothing in return. These monopolies are also the beneficiaries



of huge subsidies from governments, while paying peanuts in royalties.

Relatively little of the \$86.6 billion cash will flow into the economy. It will mostly go to people on higher incomes, generating relatively little in terms of additional demand for goods and services. It will not boost the economy like increasing low wages and social security payments would: people on lower incomes spend every extra cent they receive.

The economy is awash with surplus capital, but workers' pockets are empty. According to Oxfam, Australia's thirty-one billionaires have seen their riches increase by almost \$85 billion over the past eighteen months. The richest one per cent own more wealth than the bottom seventy per cent of Australians combined.

This widening of the wealth gap is not unique to Australia. In its *Inequality Virus* report released in January 2021, Oxfam noted:

"The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to lead to an increase in inequality in almost every country at once, the first time this has happened since records began. The virus has exposed, fed off and increased existing inequalities of wealth, gender, and

race. Close to two million people have died, and hundreds of millions of people are being forced into poverty while many of the richest – individuals and corporations – are thriving."

Wages remain stagnant, and lower for the thousands of workers on reduced hours of work. Employers did not hesitate to make the most of the government's "flexible" work arrangements during the pandemic to drive down wages and conditions, which alongside the massive profits and dividend payouts to the wealthy, are proof of the fast-widening gap.

## LACK OF DEMAND

It is unusual for big business to distribute such a large percentage of their profits as dividends for shareholders. They always have an eye on accumulating more capital for investment in expansion or modernisation to generate even more profits. So why not this time?

Put simply, they only invest when they see it as being highly profitable to do so. At present the economy is experiencing a crisis of overproduction and overcapacity. Until demand for goods and services increases, they are unlikely to invest as much. These

developments are uneven; there are a few booming sectors such as mining and construction.

The fact that a smaller portion of profits has been held for future expansion suggests an economy in bad shape.

## ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK

Housing, increasingly unaffordable for workers and their families, has become a commodity for investors seeking secure, safe investments. Low-interest rates have fuelled the rapid rise in housing prices during a period in which the underlying economy is flat.

In 2020, in order to address the economic fallout of the COVID crisis, the Reserve Bank of Australia gave banks a major line of credit of \$100 billion at 0.25 per cent interest – what was known as the Term Funding Facility. This was later doubled to \$200 billion, and the rate reduced to a near give-away low of 0.1 per cent. Almost half of that line remains unused. It seems the banks have too much cash!

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**Guardian**

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**RESPECT@WORK  
REPORT ONLY  
ACCEPTED IN PART  
BY GOV'T**

When it comes to women's rights progress, unfortunately, moves at a glacial pace. Earlier this month, parliament passed *The Sex Discrimination and Fair Work (Respect at Work) Amendment Bill 2021*, and while there were some positive elements, many felt that much was left on the table.

What's been the gain? Sexual harassment is now a fireable offence. Additionally, the amendments further clarify that under the Act, harassing a person based on their gender is prohibited. Importantly, it broadens the definition of what constitutes work and who is a worker, meaning vulnerable employees will be covered, such as people working from home. The legislation also opens the window for employees to lodge sexual harassment complaints with a twenty-four-month window with the Australian Human Rights Commission, which was originally only six months.

Furthermore, the Bill now makes sexual harassment a workplace health and safety issue, meaning "victims can apply for an 'order to stop sexual harassment' through the Fair Work Commission" (ABC).

One of the more crucial aspects of the Bill, particularly in light of recent parliamentary sexual assault allegations, closes a loophole that had exempted public officials – which includes judges, members of parliament and their staff – from being the subject of complaints under the act.

So what did the amendments leave out? One of the key recommendations made by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins that was not taken up was imposing a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. However, despite a push from the ALP and Greens, this recommendation was ultimately defeated by the government. Speaking on the importance of this recommendation Jenkins stated at the annual conference of the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors, "[That requirement] is the one thing that I will not let go. The idea that we have a piece of legislation that only comes to life if someone complains, we now know doesn't work [...]. Employers are saying 'we are keen to do things differently' and that is exactly what a positive duty does."

Another key recommendation that was not taken up was over changes to the Human Rights Commission Act that would allow unions to bring claims to courts, allowing them to shoulder the expense and risk.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions said this was a missed opportunity.

"The Respect@Work report was a key opportunity for parties to bridge political divides to protect women – instead the Morrison government chose to shut down substantive change," ACTU President Michele O'Neil said in a statement.

Of the twelve specific recommended legislative reforms, only six of the twelve were ultimately adopted.

The failure to adopt the most transformative aspect of the recommendations highlights that the Morrison government intends to keep the burden on individual women, rather than businesses ensure that their workplaces are operating in safe and appropriate ways.

We must continue to push for the adoption of the other six recommendations. While the adoption of these additional six recommendations will not solve the totality of workplace inequality, it will provide a solid foundation for women's right to be advanced.

**WEALTH GAP  
WIDENS**

Continued from page 1

The Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) and the other three big banks are awash with surplus cash. They screw retirees and others with savings in the bank, paying as little as 0.01 per cent interest, while raking in record high profits through a massive increase in housing loans on a booming market.

In the first half of 2020-21 Westpac's net (post tax) profits rose 213 per cent, NAB's by 144.3 per cent, ANZ's by 45 per cent and for the full 2021 financial year the CBA's net profits rose by 20 per cent.

**GENEROUS  
CORPORATE  
WELFARE**

Although JobKeeper was paid to workers through their employer, it indirectly assisted them by keeping their workforce attached and keeping them afloat during the 2020 lockdowns. Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office shows that at least \$13 billion in JobKeeper was paid to companies that ultimately recorded an increase in revenue. This was because companies with turnover of more than \$1 billion were eligible for JobKeeper if they had had, or "could anticipate," a drop in revenue of more than fifty per cent. The government, as has been widely reported, refuses to demand repayment of those monies. It was negligent in not making a drawback provision in the original program.

Depending on their size, businesses were eligible for between \$20,000 and \$100,000 under the COVID "cashflow boost for business" scheme. The total cost of the program was \$35.5 billion, only surpassed by the \$90 billion program for JobKeeper and the \$89 billion plus cost blowouts for new attack submarines. There is a commitment for sixty per cent of this to be fed into Australian military businesses.

Businesses with a turnover of less than \$50 million have also benefited from a phased-in reduction in taxation of profits, from thirty cents to twenty-five cents in the dollar this financial year.

Oil and gas companies and major fossil fuel users receive more

than \$10 billion a year in government subsidies. Instead of subsidising fossil fuel industries, the money should be directed to research and development of renewables, and job creation.

**DISASTER PAYMENT  
INEQUITIES**

"Currently, more than half a million people in lockdown and their children are excluded from the disaster payments because they did not have paid work going into lockdown, despite trying to find it. Now in lockdown, they are restricted in finding paid work and most are continuing to struggle on the JobSeeker payment, which is just \$44 a day," Cassandra Goldie, CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) said.

ACOSS is calling for the government to restore the \$550 per fortnight JobSeeker supplement that was temporarily introduced during the pandemic crisis in 2020.

No one can live in dignity on \$44 a day in Australia. An already dire situation is compounded by lockdowns and loss of income. Only people who normally work for more than eight hours a week and have lost work because of the lockdown are eligible. This is even though finding paid work during lockdowns is almost impossible.

**CHARITIES  
OVERSTRETCHED**

"Single mothers, international students, casuals who have lost work and can't access extra COVID payments, and people who are isolating are among those struggling to pay their bills and purchase food," Food Bank Australia CEO Brianna Casey said. She described the demand as "mind blowing." Food Bank is Australia's largest hunger relief charity.

Prices have continued to rise during the lockdown. It is not surprising that food banks and other charities in Victoria and NSW are facing a huge demand beyond anything experienced in the past – even the 2019-20 bushfires.

Food Bank Australia says it is giving out more than 2500 hampers and food parcels a day – a

number they would normally do in a week. That's the equivalent of 2.3 million kilograms of food and groceries every week. It cannot meet the demand that has grown rapidly during lockdown.

**SUPER PROFITS TAX**

Last week the Greens proposed a forty per cent super profits tax on non-mining businesses and a separate tax on resource companies whose profits reach a certain level. With such a tax, CBA's tax would increase by \$1.3 billion, Wesfarmers by \$570 million and Telstra by \$300 million. The Greens plan to take comprehensive proposals for an overhaul of the taxation system to the next federal elections.

"In balance of power, the Greens will kick the Liberals out and push the next government to make billionaire corporations pay their fair share of tax so we can get dental and mental health into Medicare and build affordable housing," Greens leader Adam Bandt said.

Bandt said the measures would bring in \$338 billion over the next decade, a figure based on costings by the Parliamentary Budget Office.

The Greens' plan would effectively raise the Commonwealth's tax take from corporate Australia by a third. About \$124 billion over a decade would come from a mining profits tax and another \$214 billion via a forty per cent company tax rate applied to non-mining corporations with \$100 million or more in annual income. A six per cent wealth tax on Australian billionaires would raise another \$48 billion over ten years.

Over recent decades, successive governments have flattened the personal income tax system and made substantial cuts to company taxes, making a once progressive system increasingly regressive. This has reduced the government's income by tens of billions of dollars and will make it more difficult to balance the books.

The neoliberal Coalition government will seek to bring the budget into surplus as quickly as possible and clear its mounting debt. It should be increasing corporate taxes and income tax paid by the wealthy. No way are further cuts to services and social security acceptable. ☺

**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.

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# MCCARTHYISM ON THE RISE IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Casey Davidson

**In Australia's latest self-sabotaging attack on China, the Morrison government has released a proposal that targets students and academics at Australian universities who may have ties with or support the Chinese government. These draconian policies encourage students to report on those who defend China in tutorials and lectures and force academics to share the past ten years of their political activity – sabotaging a basic right to privacy and freedom of political expression of workers in Australia.**

## A TOOL OF WASHINGTON

The move comes after the neo-liberal deceptive think tank Human Rights Watch (HRW), which was founded as a propaganda tool against the Soviet Union, released an article which essentially tipped facts on their head, suggesting that supporters of China's peaceful rise were intimidating, harassing and censoring students who have pro-imperialist views. In reality, it is those academics who make even the slightest comment that might challenge Western thought, and those students who challenge ignorant Western bias who are intimidated into self-censorship.

Chen Hong, professor and director of the Australian Studies Center, East China Normal University expressed, "I am afraid the real situation on Australian campuses is the opposite of what Human Rights Watch's report portrayed. As anti-China hysteria has hit fever pitch in Australia in recent years, a McCarthy scare not only prevails in Australian politics, but also in universities. Many mainland students dare not publicly express their support for the Chinese system or China's policies on Hong Kong and Xinjiang."

## THE HOUSE OF UN-AUSTRALIAN ACTIVITIES

In August, Professor Jane Golley was stood down as director of the Australian Centre on China in the World (CIW) after she was targeted for making remarks that the estimated a figure of one million Uyghurs in re-education camps *might* be exaggerated. Even this statement barely touches on the actual situation, in which China introduced vocational centres to address rising extremism and terrorist attacks in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region amongst some Uyghur separatists. Unlike the US, which bombs countries in the name of countering terrorism, China developed educational centres to bring stability to the area. With this approach, Xinjiang has not had a terrorist attack since 2017, and the Uyghur population now have more opportunities to study and work.

## ANTI-ASIAN DISCRIMINATION

With the spread of disinformation in Australia about human rights abuses in China, COVID-19 being labelled the "China virus," and the ramping up of unfounded fears of Chinese influence in Australia, ethnically Asian people in Australia have increasingly reported being targeted and facing harassment and intimidation.



In March 2020, University of Queensland (UQ) student Drew Pavlou dressed in a hazmat suit at the front of the university's Confucius Institute, labelling it a "biohazard risk." This was just one of Pavlou's many insults against Chinese people and Chinese institutions at UQ leading to his suspension. The decision was made on the ground that he violated university policy by discriminating against, harassing, and bullying staff and students. Yet it seems Pavlou would likely be celebrating the latest wave to suppress any genuine understanding of Chinese culture and politics, along with his readmission to UQ this year.

## THE AMERICAN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Universities have not been the only institutions to be forced to decouple from research and expertise coming out of China. In June this year, a cooperative research partnership between the CSIRO and China's Qingdao National Laboratory for Marine Science and Technology (QNLN) was cancelled following fear mongering presuming Australian submarines would be more easy to target. Many scientists were outraged at the move, making comments that the presumed defence risk was a joke, and the move would only hurt Australia's ability to predict and adapt to significant threats from climate change.

The Universities Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) was established by the Minister for Education, Dan Tehan in 2019 under the premise of addressing foreign interference in the educator sector. If the new

guidelines released by this taskforce were in line with genuinely cracking down on these concerns, there would be little investigation needed to seek out US foreign interference in Australian universities. Unfortunately, the average Australian has been convinced into thinking the US supports the interests of everyday Australians, with shared values of democracy, freedom and liberal rights. Nothing could be further from the truth, and Australians should be most concerned about the interoperability of US influence on political decisions, which have undermined any form of democratic notion in the country, including students' ability to make non-biased, informed decisions about their biggest trade partner.

The taskforce leader, Tehan, even met with the Biden administration earlier this year to discuss strategies to "protect values" and "counter China's actions." In an interview in Washington he even warned, "if we have to pay an economic price [to counter Beijing], that's something that we're prepared to pay." This statement is a gross insult on the working class in Australia as well as academics and students as it creates more boundaries for trade, cooperation, and crucial research with China, hence threatening living standards in Australia now and into the future.

## MISCALCULATED BLOC TACTICS

The threat of China is a fabrication aimed at isolating China and maintaining US hegemony. By taking away the average citizen's ability to study geopolitics earnestly

and make their own understandings, the world becomes further divided. This division is strategic and not at all new. During the first Cold War, the West used similar tactics against the Soviet Union, in creating a Western and Eastern Bloc of allied and adverse countries, essentially based on whether the nation conformed to US interests or supported national sovereignty and socialist ideals. The strategy was successful for the imperialists, and threw the Soviet Union and supporting nations into turmoil, allowing reactionary forces to destroy major wins for workers all over the world.

While the current climate of reactionary behaviour towards China is comparable, the geopolitical conditions are vastly different. China's approach to making market reforms and engaging in international cooperation means it has created allies and positive relationships between the East and the West. No longer can the US rely on the world trusting in their rhetoric of liberal rights or freedom of democracy with their track record – especially when China can offer something vastly more peaceful and cooperative. The actions of the Chinese nation speaks volumes over the deceptions of the US empire, and will be trusted moving forward. Australian politicians need to recognise this and put themselves on the right side of history. Any delay in this will only see Australia follow the US into isolation from the rest of the world. ☸

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# VALE FRED PATERSON

Peter Wills

**Growing up in the rural farming town of Tully in abject poverty, I quickly learnt the difference between the working and ruling class. The rich farmers made huge profits off the often broken backs of their farmworkers that were paid barely enough to survive, who lived payday to payday. Living in poverty, I quickly came to despise the inequalities in the capitalist system, being forced to leave school at fifteen and start work on the railway. I joined the union right away and was given a book on the Russian Revolution by a union representative not long after. After reading it I embraced communism, not fully knowing the theory behind it and lamented that the working class didn't have a comrade like Lenin to lead them in Australia, the working class I figured needed a working-class hero, someone to inspire them into action, then I heard and read about comrade Fred Patterson – I had found my hero.**

Born on the 13th June 1897 on a pig farm at Gladstone, Fred Paterson became the first communist elected to a state parliament in Australia, serving in the Queensland parliament for two terms (1944–1950) – defeated when the Bowen electorate was divided into two separate electorates, Whitsunday and Burdekin. This redistribution was a deliberate act to unseat him. Although he contested the new seat of Whitsunday, he was unsuccessful and lost to a country party candidate. The Menzies government was on an anti-communist crusade at the time and pressured the state government to redistribute the electorate to get Fred out of the state parliament.

Much has been written about Fred's life in politics, so I am not going to repeat what is already known and readily available. However, his work on the cane fields, supporting and defending cane-cutters – particularly Italian immigrants who faced discrimination from both the ALP government and the AWU, which was nothing more than a right-wing bosses union – is notable. The White Australia Policy was still in force, and a policy was formed that preference would be given to Anglo men for cane cutting jobs at the rate of seventy-five per cent to twenty-five per cent for Italian immigrants – Fred was ably assisted by Jack Henry, a lifelong member of the CPA and northern district organiser, in fighting their equality.

Before the invention of the mechanical cane harvester, all sugar cane was cut by hand. During the 1934-35

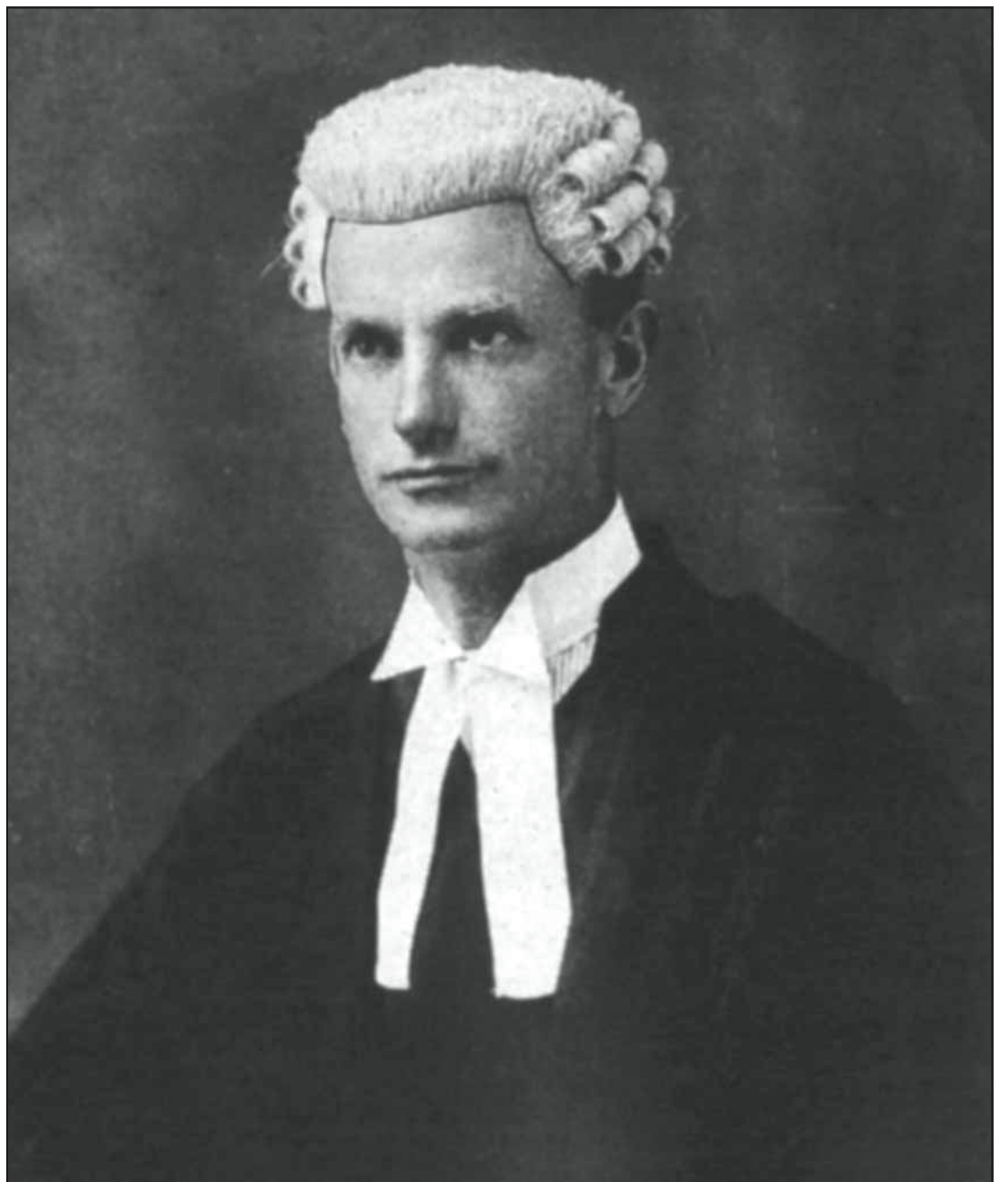
cane-cutting season, nineteen cane-cutters died from Weill's disease spread by rats living in and around the cane fields urinating on the cane stalks and spreading to the cane cutters while handling the cane. It was determined that burning the cane was the best and most effective way to eradicate it, but this was not popular amongst growers who all part-owned the local sugar mill in Tully as part of a co-op. Their resistance to burning the cane was due to several factors all tied into increasing cost of production.

Burning cane reduces sugar content, and the cane needs to be crushed within twelve hours of being burnt before the sugar starts to sour as opposed to twenty-four hours for green cane. These seasons coincided with the record-low sugar price of £8 per ton – well under the cost of production. The record-low price was due to the ramping up of production during the depression years, where international sugar production quota agreements were ignored, leading to excessive supply and diminished returns – setting the stage was set for a showdown between growers and cutters.

Cane-cutters received no support from the conservative AWU or Labor state government who sided with the growers and millers against the cutters. Despite this, and with help from local communists, the cutters organised and went on strike demanding the cane to be burnt. In August of 1935 they went on a nine-week strike. The Labor government's response was to send armed police into the canefields arresting and shooting at the strikers. Cutters were evicted from barracks and fined £100 for participating in a strike, with police escorting scab labour onto the canefields. The AWU tried to stop the strike but was unsuccessful with local workers organising themselves in opposition to the bosses' union.

Eventually, the workers won the day with the state arbitration commission ordering all cane be burnt before cutting in 1936. The AWU tried to claim credit for this, but the fact is they did nothing to help the workers. The fight was led and won by local communists like Fred Patterson and Jack Henry organising the cutters into powerful groups.

In spite of the dirty tricks campaign by the Labor party during the 1944 state election, Paterson – assisted by staunch comrades like Jack Henry and the cane-cutters (particularly those of Italian descent) – went on to win the then-seat of Bowen. Patterson is still highly regarded amongst the Italian communities in the northern cane towns of Queensland. ✪



**The working class I figured needed a working-class hero, someone to inspire them into action, then I heard and read about comrade Fred Patterson – I had found my hero.**

## Party Badges



Port Jackson Branch has only 40 left of the original CPA badges, an elegant design adopted by the Central Committee some years ago after a Party-wide competition.

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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.

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# DISABLED AND NEURODIVERGENT WORKERS' ALLIANCE GAINS MOMENTUM

Tara Fitzgerald

**The Disabled and Neurodivergent Workers' Alliance (DNWA), an organisation of neurodivergent and disabled workers both employed and unemployed, held their first AGM online in late August. The group – formed in Victoria but operating nationally – intends to bridge the gap between trade unions and disability advocacy by being active in both communities. It acts as advocates for the disabled and neurodivergent by participating in political and industrial actions.**

The alliance challenges the traditional view of disability. It embraces the social model of disability as opposed to the medical model. The medical model of disability conceives disability as deficiencies in a person, whereas the social model acknowledges differences in ability for each individual. It values the importance of all abilities in society and aims to address barriers that prevent differently-abled people from participating and contributing fully in society. The social model of disability aims to elevate the functionality of all members, empowering and including the differently-abled.

The DNWA's objectives are to support the interests, rights and welfare of disabled and neurodivergent members of society. It endeavours to promote accessibility in the workplace and other organisations such as trade unions, to improve and protect conditions in the workplace, whilst also advocating for improved conditions for disabled and neurodivergent unemployed.

The term neurodivergent refers to any variation to what is considered normal functional cognition. This could include but is not limited to variations in sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions. These differences could be inherited genetically, could be a result of illness or injury or could be developmental. Consideration and adjustments should be made for all variations to support and value contributions made by all workers.

Under the capitalist system, the "value" of an individual worker is heavily linked to their ability to produce. Western society frames itself as supportive and inclusive, however deviations in ability can lower production and can therefore be seen as less desirable as employees. The reality is that workers are

complex human beings with needs and differences. Unsupportive workplaces and practices can lead to impaired mental cognition, further impacting productivity in a negative feedback loop. Workers may be unable to access treatment during work hours or be unable to discuss these concerns with their employer. Despite the ever-increasing rise in mental health conditions due to increasing insecurity in employment, workers will often forgo their own needs and avoid voicing concerns in fear of it impacting job security.

The DNWA is also active in protecting the rights of unemployed neurodivergent and disabled workers. Through collaboration with union and advocacy groups the DNWA was influential in the outcome of the "Fairer NDIS For All" campaign. The organisation was invited to present to the Retail and Fast-Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) on obstacles disabled and neurodivergent workers face daily. This presentation called for several important considerations such as the implementation of "Disability leave" into the National Employment Standards (NES), the call for privacy when negotiating employment conditions, and increasing employment for disabled and neurodivergent people. The DNWA is also one of the many organisations to call for the abolition of the wage assessment tool under the supported Employment Services Award. This is a scheme that based payment of disabled workers against the productivity of able-bodied workers enabling employers to pay disabled workers significantly less than their able-bodied co-workers. This is yet another tool to devalue the contributions of the disabled workforce.

There are significant challenges faced by neurodivergent and disabled people in day-to-day life that abled bodied and neurotypicals have no lived experience of. There are additional obstacles faced in the workplace and in obtaining and maintaining disability support payments from the government. When taking into consideration the large number of Australians that will suffer from mental illness at some stage in their lives, ensuring inclusivity and fair working conditions for the disabled and neurodivergent is vital in improving living conditions for all members of society.

To join or support the DNWA please visit the website [dnwa.org.au](http://dnwa.org.au). Membership is currently free; meetings are held once a month and all members are invited to join. ✪



**Under the capitalist system, the "value" of an individual worker is heavily linked to their ability to produce.**

## AGED CARE WORKERS EXPOSE INDUSTRY'S DIRTY SECRETS

### United Workers' Union Statement

**After years of Federal Government inaction on aged care, aged care workers are speaking out to expose the daily understaffing and safety risks facing older Australians across the country.**

Using an innovative new whistleblower reporting tool, more than 2000 aged care worker reports have revealed the heart-breaking reality of life in aged care facilities, reporting widespread understaffing and how it leaves older Australians unsafe – even the regret of being unable to offer the required care to a dying older Australian.

Thousands more aged care workers are expected to use the Aged Care Watch reporting tool – at [agedcarewatch.org.au](http://agedcarewatch.org.au) – since its official launch, bringing the daily hidden failures in the aged care system into the public spotlight.

Families, friends and aged care residents themselves are also able to use Aged Care Watch to report issues as they arise in aged care facilities in real time.

Workers have included harrowing stories about the impact of inadequate staffing in residential aged care including older Australians left in distress,

unattended older Australians experiencing serious injuries from falls, and older Australians being left soiled and unattended for extended periods.

Aged care workers are also routinely reporting being unable to complete their work, missing breaks, and suffering injuries and abuse on the job due to understaffing problems.

Reports from across Australia show an aged care sector getting even worse since the Aged Care Royal Commission was called more than two-and-a-half years ago, amid staff cuts and continuing COVID-19 fall out.

The reports also show aged care workers, sick of inaction, delays and federal government bungling, are speaking out to hold their facilities and the federal government accountable.

United Workers Union Aged Care Director, Carolyn Smith, said: "Aged care workers are saying they have had enough, and they are no longer going to keep the lid on the failures in aged care.

"They are exposing the dirty secrets of aged care, and it's not a pretty picture.

"Aged care workers are telling the public about the terrible

conditions they face on a daily basis as they campaign to change aged care – and politicians need to take notice."

Aged care worker Grace said: "If it happens and you have the app, it's easier for you to report, whatever it is."

A family member, Joy, supported the tool as a valuable step towards protecting older Australians.

"They do need a lot of care, and I'd like to see my husband get more care," she said. ✪

# FROM THE ACCORD TO THE IR OMNIBUS BILL

Graham Holton

Over the past forty years, since the implementation of the Accord agreement between the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Australian Labor Party (ALP), wages and salaries have not progressed – taking inflation into account – despite the great increases in productivity in Australia. The purchasing power of the average worker's wages has not progressed since 1984 when Bob Hawke was Prime Minister. This, while the cost of living has greatly increased, especially for rent and housing. If this is not enough, the Coalition government has increased its war on workers through the IR Omnibus Bill, which allows an increase in the casualisation and reduction of working conditions in the workplace.

Today, job insecurity is a massive problem, which has worsened with the COVID shutdowns. People on casual or insecure contracts are forced to decide whether or not to work when sick, as they are not entitled to sick leave. This makes it difficult to plan from week to week, especially for families with an insecure income wishing to apply for a home loan.

It began in 1983 when Hawke wanted a social contract – an agreement between the ALP and unions – through a prices and incomes policy to be agreed upon by the ACTU and the ALP. From the beginning, the CPA and a number of left union leaders were critical of the Accord. They knew it would enforce income inequality, the casualisation of workers, force women to survive with poorly funded retirement, and the unions would be left with no real power to improve the rights and conditions of workers.

The Accord oversaw the implementation of neoliberalism: real wage reduction, suppression of industrial militancy, capital-focused industry policy, and in its later versions, the deregulation of industrial relations through enterprise bargaining. By 1987 the government had delayed tax cuts and pension increases, toughened welfare criteria, reintroduced university student fees, increased taxes, and privatised government-owned assets. The Accord led to twelve-hour shifts, loss of penalty rates, and limited annual leave for some workers.

The labour activist, Liz Ross, writes in *Stuff the Accord! Pay Up!* (2020): “The impact of these changes was to drive wages down. Using 1983-84 as a benchmark, by 1990 real wages had fallen by \$1,032.21 on an annual basis, offset by a \$57.07 increase in the social wage. Taking social and real wages together, living standards were lowered by \$975.14, or 5.4 percent.” Through a process of amalgamations by 1996, only 132 remained out of an original 326 unions before the Accord.

In 2020, the federal government introduced the Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill, also known as the Omnibus Bill, into Parliament to reform five areas of industrial relations: award simplification; enterprise agreement making; casuals and fixed-term employees; compliance and enforcement; and Greenfields agreements



for new enterprises. The bill had three major aims. The first to allow employers to list staff as casual, even if they were not, and staff could not prevent it. The second, and the most destructive, was to end of full-time work contracts. The third was to tilt bargaining for better wages and conditions in the employer's favour. This bill would have led to increased job insecurity and reduced wages and working conditions.

On 9th December 2020, the IR Omnibus Bill was introduced into Parliament and passed the House of Representatives by thirty-five votes to thirty-three. It failed to pass the Senate.

On 18th March 2021, the Senate passed a “stripped down” version of the Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill, known as the ‘IR Omnibus Bill’. It commenced on 27th March 2021. The Act introduced amendments regarding casual employment and the obligations on employers of casual employees. These amendments are a major win for employers.

The Bill inserts a statutory definition of “casual employment” based solely on the offer of employment. If an offer of employment is made and accepted, with “no firm advance commitment to continuing and indefinite work according to an agreed pattern of work for the person,” that employee will be defined as a casual employee regardless of the hours worked. A casual employee who works regular hours is now defined as a “regular casual employee.”

In theory, this enables the employee to accept or reject work as a casual even if their employment is not casual. In practice, as every worker knows, it is a matter of agreeing or being shown the door. The employee will work only as required; and the employee will

be entitled to a casual loading or a specified rate of casual pay. A regular pattern of hours will no longer be able to be used to reassess staff as not casual. Employers will be allowed to offset any loadings already paid to casuals against future claims for other permanent employee entitlements such as sick leave or annual leave.

The employer has certain obligations to offer permanent work where a worker has been employed for the past twelve months and during at least the last six months of that period, the employee worked a regular pattern of hours on an ongoing basis. But employers do not have to make an offer of permanent employment if there are “reasonable grounds” not to do so and they must not reduce or vary an employee's hours of work or terminate their employment in order to avoid this obligation.

These “reasonable grounds” are based on what is known or reasonably foreseeable, and include if the employee's position will cease to exist in the following twelve-month period; the hours of work which the employee is required to work will be significantly reduced; there will be a significant change in the days or times that the employee's hours of work are required and the employee cannot make themselves available to work these days or times; and making an offer which does not comply with a recruitment or selection process required under state or Commonwealth Law.

ABC business reporter Gareth Hutchens interviewed Professor David Peetz of Griffith University, who says that many casual workers are actually working regular hours, which means they are “leave deprived.” Half of these leave-deprived employees receive the prescribed casual loading, but some are illegally underpaid, as witnessed by the

audits and cases undertaken by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Alison Pennington, a senior economist at the Australia Institute's Centre for Future Work, says that the standard ways of understanding the economy's performance via employment growth and GDP growth, “were not indicative of the scale of chronic insecurity.” Pennington says more and more people are being locked out of “traditional standard work” due to Omnibus regulations, which allow long-term employment to be considered casual. Casual work should be “temporal, seasonal, or genuinely on a casual basis.”

The Australia Talks National Survey 2021 was conducted between March 2 and 8, 2021, shortly before the JobKeeper program ended. The survey questioned job security and how secure they felt in their job. The result was: 88 per cent thought job security was of concern; and twenty-seven per cent thought they might lose their job within the next twelve months.

According to the ACTU, over two million workers, thirty-five per cent of working Australians are casually employed. Those between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four account for about forty per cent of total casual workers. They work at jobs that are temporary with few benefits, and no guarantee of employment permanency. A major problem with casualisation is how it impacts certain industries, such as hospitality, where underutilisation, uncertainty and instability mean there is little work-life balance in their employment. There are no indications that the conditions of casualisation will improve in the future. It is our aim to help Australian workers understand these issues and join their trade unions in struggle to defeat the arbitrary use of casuals. 🚫

**More and more people are being locked out of “traditional standard work” due to Omnibus regulations, which allow long-term employment to be considered casual.**

# MEDAL BONUSES DON'T ADDRESS ABLEISM IN PARALYMPIC FUNDING



B Curphey

**On Thursday, 2nd September, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that medalists at this year's Paralympic Games would get equal payments to their Olympic counterparts for the first time in Australian history. This rectifies a huge disparity in pay between Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Olympic medalists get paid \$20,000 per gold medal, \$15,000 for a silver medal, and \$10,000 for a bronze. Until Thursday's announcement, Paralympians got nothing.**

The Paralympic Games have been held around the same time as the Olympic Games every four years since 1960 when the first Paralympic Games were held in Rome, under the name Stoke Mandeville Games. The first Games featured 400 athletes from twenty-three countries. This year 163 countries were represented.

At the time of writing, at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, Australia has won eighty medals: twenty-one gold, twenty-nine silver and thirty bronze. There have been some notable achievements at this year's games. Dylan Alcott won gold in the

wheelchair tennis quad singles against The Netherlands' Sam Schroder. The Australian women's goalball team, the Belles, made a quarter-final for the first time ever. Goalball is a sport for athletes with a visual impairment. According to Paralympics Australia,

"The object of the game is to roll the ball into the opponent's goal while the opposing players try to block the ball with their bodies. Bells inside the ball help orientate the players by indicating the direction of the oncoming ball."

Ellie Cole won her 17th Paralympic medal in the 4x100m medley relay, making her the most decorated Australian Paralympian in history. Vanessa Low broke the world record for long jump three times in one night, and Madison De Rozario won gold in the women's T54 marathon.

These are just to name a few – the list of achievements at this Games is long and impressive. So it's no wonder that the pressure on the government to pay Paralympians an equal medal bonus became too much for the government to ignore. The Prime Minister said of the change

"Australia's para-athletes

have represented our nation with great distinction and pride in Tokyo, delivering performances that have buoyed millions during what is a difficult time for the nation"

With the announcement of equal medal bonuses, some progress has been made towards equality between the treatment of Olympic and Paralympic athletes. However, there is still a huge disparity in funding for Paralympic sport and it is high time that the government's ableist approach to funding in sport was addressed.

Government funding of Paralympic sport has increased forty per cent since 2012, but it still represents only twenty per cent of total funding for high level sport through the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS). This might not seem like a big issue until you realise that sport for athletes with a disability is much more expensive than sport for able-bodied athletes, due in part to the high cost of specialised equipment and training. As former Paralympian racer Kurt Fearnley stated during coverage of the Games this past week, there is a huge financial hurdle for para-athletes getting involved in sport at all.

To meet the cost of training future Paralympians, Paralympics Australia has been crowd-funding at the 2020 Tokyo Games by asking members of the public to buy a virtual seat at the games. 90,673 seats have been sold so far at \$25 each for a total of over \$2 million raised. According to the Paralympics Australia website:

"Every seat purchased is invested in the next generation of Para-athletes through Paralympics Australia's community and sports programs, changing community perception, and breaking down barriers. We could not achieve this without the generous support of individuals and organisations."

This goes to show that current government funding through the AIS is not making the cut. Many athletes at both the Paralympic and Olympic games are sponsored, but here Paralympians are also at a disadvantage. Jodi-Willis Roberts, a Paralympic gold medalist who competes in goalball, discus and shotput, recalled in an article for *ABC News* that she was rejected for sponsorships because corporations felt her disability would reflect badly on their product.

"We're not a sideshow," she

stated "we're athletes out there doing it every bit as hard as every other athlete, and unfortunately we don't get the same rewards."

100m T13 runner Chad Perris also brought up the issue of funding. He stated that he expected a reduction in his funding after he finished fifth in his race. This can have flow-on effects, he said, because athletes may have to go out and find other work to fund their next competition, cutting down the number of hours they can train and therefore, in theory, their potential to medal. Scott Morrison's new funding measures don't appear to help people in Perris' position.

But Roberts says the lack of funding is not the fault of Paralympics Australia, who do the best they're able to with limited funds. The ableist government funding models are the root cause of the problem, but discrimination in sponsorship also needs to be addressed. It is time the government put its money where its mouth is and committed to addressing the disparity in funding and sponsorship opportunities for Olympic and Paralympic athletes. ❖

# MIKIS THEODORAKIS (29/7/1925 - 02/09/2021): OF HIS TIMES AND FOR THE PEOPLE

Dorothy Costa

On 2nd September, the internationally renowned Greek composer, Mikis Theodorakis passed away in Athens aged ninety-six years. His death has been mourned by the people of his beloved Greece and by democratic and freedom loving people worldwide. Theodorakis' music spanned the popular to the classical. The music he created will continue be his living legacy, it's universal, lasting appeal derived from its ability to transcend a moment in time, to capture our deepest humanity, and through difficult times, to inspire optimism.

Theodorakis was a composer and artist of international stature whose greatness was magnified by his reimagination and strengthening of the inseparable connection between art and the life of the people. His music, often set to the powerful and beautiful words of modern Greek poets, gave a cultural dimension and a cultural weapon to the Greek people's democratic and anti-fascist struggles of the last 70 years. It also resonated with a wider international audience and renewed the great traditions of Greek music.

Theodorakis was born on the Greek island of Chios to Cretan parents. In 1943 as a seventeen-year-old he enlisted in the Greek Popular Resistance, EAM, to fight against the German occupation of Greece. He joined the Communist Party of Greece, KKE, not long afterwards. After the war Theodorakis, took part in the Greek civil war and in the legal and illegal struggle against fascism and the military junta which controlled Greece between 1967 and 1974. During these decades he was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled. In the late 1970s and 1980s he was elected as KKE member of parliament several times.

Throughout his long life Theodorakis was an internationalist in word and deed and a strong supporter of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. Theodorakis spoke out against the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and the Zionist policies of the Israeli government towards the Palestinian people. Closer to home he opposed the cynical plans of imperialist blocs to realise their regional and international geopolitical interests by manipulating nationalist sentiments in Greece and Turkey.

He supported the development of friendship and solidarity between the people of Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus for their common interests and against the increasing militarisation of their economies and their countries. Theodorakis never wavered in his support for



**Theodorakis and his music will forever be an inseparable part of the 20th century history of the Greek people as well as the history of the struggle of the peoples of the world for a better future.**

the people of Cyprus in their struggle to end foreign occupation and for an independent and united Cyprus. In 1983 he was awarded the Lenin Prize for Peace in recognition of his artistic and social contribution.

At home, in his later years, he was strongly critical of the policies of Syriza, (the Greek new left party formed from disaffected PASOK and other reformist political groupings). Theodorakis spoke out in 2015 against Syriza's agreement with the European Union to implement a cruel austerity package on the Greek people to meet the debt obligations of Greek capital.

In the second half of his life Theodorakis expressed doubts and differences with the political strategies of the left, particularly over questions of uniting the Greek people. He searched for a political answer in different places but did not find lasting answers outside of the KKE. Prior to his death he wrote to Cde Dimitris Koutsoumbas, the General Secretary of the KKE, expressing his conclusion that the best and most meaningful years of his life were in the ranks of the KKE. He stated in his Letter to the KKE, he wished to die as a communist. Just prior to his death, he also spoke

by phone with Cde Koutsoumbas to inform him of his final wishes.

Theodorakis and his music will forever be an inseparable part of the 20th century history of the Greek people as well as the history of the struggle of the peoples of the world for a better future. His refusal to stand apart from the people and the struggle for their rights, needs and dreams defined him as a man and as an artist. Theodorakis was a great artist and man of his times. His death will be a sad loss, but his legacy will live on in his music and contribution to the people's march to a better world and socialism. ✪

## MADURO WARNS OF PLOT TO DESTROY DIALOGUE FROM COLOMBIA AND US

**The President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, denounced the attempts by Colombia and the United States to boycott the dialogue process between the government and the opposition, which recently completed its second day in Mexico.**

The Venezuelan President stated that while the second day of the dialogue in Mexico was successfully completed, Colombia was urging the representatives of the opposition to abandon the process.

"[Y]esterday, Colombia tried to give orders to the representatives of the opposition to abandon the negotiations, as well as provocations to force negative reactions among the members of the Government Commission," he added.

"President Iván Duque, desperate, at the head of an outlaw narco-State [Colombia], ordered the raid and assault of the Venezuelan petrochemical fertilizer company and subsidiary of Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), Monómeros, intending

to provoke the abandonment of the talks by our delegation," said the head of the Venezuelan Executive.

Likewise, the President insisted that external agents are trying to break with the dialogue initiative and submerge the country in a crisis. "I make these warnings and denunciations, on which we will show evidence in the coming hours [...] there are international manoeuvres from Colombia and the United States, to put an end to this process built

with patience and wisdom," he added.

Regarding Duque's manoeuvres, President Maduro pondered the timely response issued by his Executive Vice President, Delcy Rodríguez, who via Twitter reproached the Colombian President's interference, "it is another expression of incitement to the opposition to return to their violent adventures of conspiracy," he said.

The head of state congratulated the signing of two partial

agreements between the Government and the opposition, which focus on the ratification and defence of the Essequibo Guayana, in accordance with the 1966 Geneva Agreement; and the protection of Venezuela's economy and social safety of the people, through the rescue of assets stolen from that country, which would be destined to promote its economic-social development.

teleSUR ✪



# SUDAN'S ONGOING STRUGGLE: "A REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING"

Sudan drew global attention throughout 2019, as the people rose up against the corrupt and repressive regime of Omar al-Bashir. The uprising was celebrated for opening a transition to democracy and secularism, but that transition is far from complete. *People's Voice* interviewed Elfadil Elhashmi, an activist in the Sudanese Communist Party, to discuss the ongoing struggle. The following is the first of that two-part interview.

**People's Voice (PV):** The Sudanese people won an important victory in April 2019, when they forced Omar al-Bashir from the presidency. Could you give us some background to that struggle?

**Elfadil Elhashmi (EE):** The first phase of the Sudanese December 2018 Revolution lasted more than five months. Back in April 2019, I said what was going on in Sudan is a revolution in the making; I still argue that its heated tanks will keep boiling. It is an unfinished process in which the political ruling strata have been defeated but the old system, the deep security and militia State and economically deeply rooted system is still hanging on to its resources. The Old is half alive, and the New has yet to emerge from the womb of the Old.

The post-colonial national liberation project of equitable development and social justice never came to fruition following independence in 1956. The bloody military regime of political Islam, which was a dependent comprador in close alliance with regional and international imperialists, gave heavy blows to the grassroots forces of democratic transformation in Sudan. The regime adopted the prescriptions of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) of privatisation of successful public sector entities and austerity measures of cutting subsidies to real producers and basic commodities. Expenditures on health, education and basic infrastructure were also seriously cut, and there was privatisation of the Gezira irrigation project and the transportation sector. Land-grabbing was widespread, resources were plundered, and the military generals have been involved in embezzling public funds and tax exemptions.

The absolute injustice necessitated an absolute ideology of "Islamisation" or political Islam; hence the space of political and class struggle became brutally fascist. Class, race and religion have been overlapping and seem to explain identity and resources intersectionality that caused long civil wars in the South and currently in Darfur, Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.

The contemporary paradoxical global sociopolitical mode of production is dominated by parasitic rentier finance capital. This globalisation is approaching a new fascist phase in which it is constructing, reinventing and reproducing terrorism, Zionism, monarchies and dictatorships in the developing countries. It also fictitiously pretends to support the discourse of democracy, human rights, anti-terrorism and anti-fanaticism, while in the global South, absolute



exploitation and injustice have no other way but to adopt absolute ideologies to continue stealing the resources.

The essence of popular revolutions in the developing countries since the eighteenth century has been anti-colonial and anti-feudal. It has raised popular slogans and demands of grassroots democracy and condemned parasitic capitalism.

When the streets in most big cities exploded in December 2018, a popular body emerged to lead and organise the movement under the slogan of Freedom, Peace and Justice. It was called the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). It was formed mainly from political parties and professional organisations and trade unions (medical doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, judges, pharmacists, workers etc.) which formed their parallel bodies outside the pro-government legal framework. The December 2018 Revolution was completely a peaceful movement, so the West was shyly obliged to support it although they were a keen ally of the dictatorial political Islam regime.

Revolutions in the periphery have been calling politically for democracy but never lost sight of its class content as they demanded social justice and equitable development, and defined their enemies as parasitic merchant capitalists, rich generals and big landowners.

When the socio-political and economic crisis disabled the system and made it dysfunctional and it became impossible to survive, revolution came about with vanguards emerging from the oppressed, marginalised and disadvantaged sections against centuries' long surplus extracted through violence (slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and current global imperialism) and locally led by powerful and privileged strata of ruling classes.

**PV:** After April 2019, the FFC

alliance entered negotiations with the military and negotiated a political agreement with the Transitional Military Council. The Sudanese Communist Party opposed these negotiations and withdrew from the coalition in November 2020. Can you give us more information about political agreement and why the SCP chose to withdraw?

**EE:** Some parties and professionals in the FFC happened to buy into the so-called "soft landing" introduced by the US through Ambassador Princeton Lyman, a special envoy for Sudan. Soft landing means a negotiated transfer to civilian-military partnership which keeps the existing economic system intact with no legal repercussions to the military rulers accused of mass killings. This section of the FFC hijacked the negotiations and welcomed the Transitional Military Council (a de facto Bashir creation) into a power-sharing model that has nothing to do with the revolution's demands.

The Sudanese Communist Party almost single-handedly resisted this reactionary approach and exposed the fallacies of this model to the masses. Such a model has turned into a clear domination by the military council, which issues serious partial decrees and laws about peace and economic issues behind the passive and compliant civilian component of the government. The military component has become a class in itself, owning hundreds of companies that used to belong to the public sector which trade in basic commodities (animal stock, gum Arabic, oil seeds) and has mysterious links to militia smuggling activities, including gold and money laundering.

The SCP withdrew from the FFC coalition in early November 2020 and boycotted participation in the transitional executive government institutions. The main reasons for the Party's withdrawal from supporting the transitional

government can be summarised in the following points:

- The government's consistent breach of the Constitutional Document signed by the FFC and the consequent fatal mistakes that contradict and reverse the demands of the Revolution.
- Purposefully adopting visions, strategies and tactics that oppose the Revolution demands of deconstructing the old economic and political system.
- Sluggish approach to legally bringing the old system criminals to justice and delaying or refusing to hand over Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court.
- Too slow and malicious process of completing the investigations into the barbaric killings of the peaceful sit-in demonstrators in the Military Headquarters in June 2019.
- Executing the partial and irresponsible Juba Peace Agreement that was single-handedly led, designed and planned by the military generals instead of the Prime Minister.
- The appointment of ministers regardless of competencies and treatment of such privileged positions as war spoils.

Above all, the partnership model with the military, which is in fact handing over power to them, has added to the insult of succumbing to the dictates and prescriptions of the WB and the IMF. Such prescriptions include further privatisation of public sector, further opening the economy to international companies, a free exchange rate of the Sudanese pound, and austerity measures which remove subsidies from production of gas, gasoline, medicine, electricity and water.

**PV:** In the current situation, what is the state of the people's

movement and what are the main sectors and organisations that are propelling that movement forward?

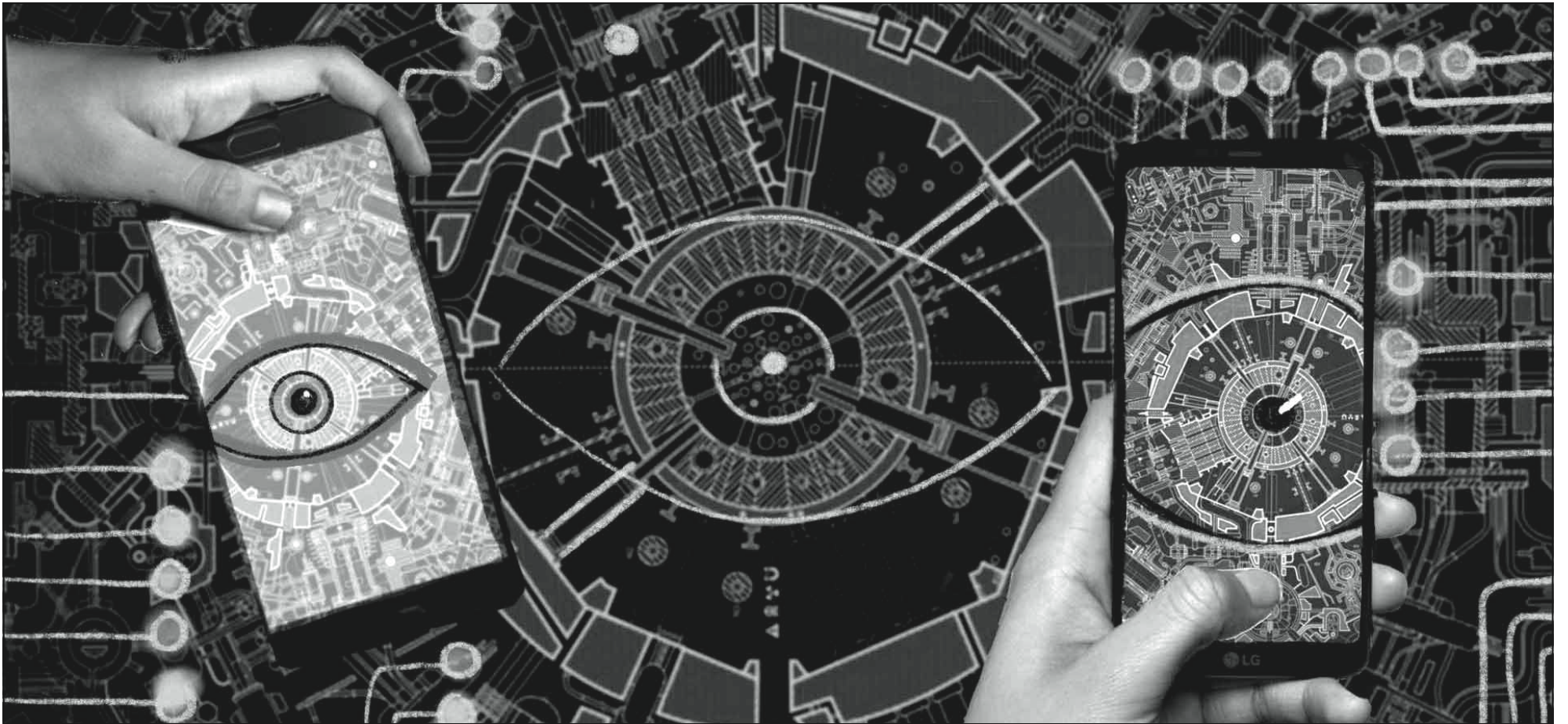
**EE:** As we speak, the economic situation is worse than before the December 2018 Revolution. The neoliberal strategies and policies implemented by the transitional government (military and civilian components), under pressure from the WB and IMF and despite the demands of the masses, have resulted in high inflationary prices of basic commodities and medicine and a devalued currency. The standards of living are miserable, and more than ninety-five percent of the people are under the poverty line.

The SCP is in the heart of the forces resisting many policies and laws that are not in line with the signed Constitutional Document. The workers and trade unions are fighting to pass a new trade union law that ensures they are independent and democratic. A new oppressive security law has been put forward by the transitional government, as well as a new privatisation law which liquidates public sector entities under the disguise of a partnership between the private and public sector.

Given the actual several breach of the Constitutional Document, the SCP has recently announced a slogan for "toppling the current transitional government" and started to build up a front that will continue the momentum of the revolution. The political forces which agree to topple the transitional government and move forward to complete the demands of the Revolution include the Sudanese Communist Party and a few other parties, the forces of the Resistance Committees that are formed in all cities, one section of the Professionals' Assembly (which split), the Martyrs Families groups and some mainly youth members of the two main traditional parties.

*People's Voice* ☘

# CYBERSECURITY – WHO’S SECURE? REVELATIONS BY THE PEGASUS PROJECT



Eileen Whitehead

**Since 2016, Amnesty International’s Security Lab has been involved with a group known as the Pegasus Project to investigate the abuse of more than 50,000 phone numbers, in more than fifty countries, selected for surveillance by customers of the Israeli cybersecurity company, NSO Group – described as a hacker for hire, using Pegasus spyware as a tool for monitoring targeted people.**

Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, stated that “The Pegasus Project lays bare how NSO’s spyware is a weapon of choice for repressive governments seeking to silence journalists, attack activists, and crush dissent, placing countless lives in peril.” She insists that “it’s clear its technology facilitates systemic abuse. They paint a picture of legitimacy while profiting from widespread human rights violations.”

A massive data leak revealed how this company’s spyware has been used to target activists, journalists, and political leaders globally.

The Pegasus Project is a ground-breaking consortium of more than eighty journalists from seventeen media organisations in ten countries. With the technical support of Amnesty International, they conducted extensive forensic tests on mobile phones to identify traces of the spyware.

Their investigation has revealed how once the NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware is installed on a target’s phone, it vacuums up personal and location data and seizes control of the device’s microphones and cameras.

NSO has vigorously denied these accusations and claims its spyware is only sold to “vetted government agencies” and only used for legitimate criminal and terror investigations.

However, Amnesty International maintains the Pegasus malware is so effective it can even hack into the latest versions of Apple’s iPhone operating system. Many well-informed sources are concerned about the countless vulnerabilities linked to Apple’s messaging service iMessage, which they say are worsening.

From the 1,000 phone numbers able to be identified, it has been shown that French President Emmanuel Macron, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and Moroccan King Mohammed VI are on the list along with hundreds of journalists, politicians, and government officials, as well as at least sixty-five business executives and eighty-five human rights activists.

The leaked data also revealed that some 180 journalists in countries as varied as India, Mexico, Hungary, Morocco, and France had been targeted.

Evidence has emerged that Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi and his family were targeted with Pegasus software before and after his murder by Saudi operatives on the 2nd October 2018, and Amnesty International’s Security Lab has established that Pegasus spyware was installed on his fiancée’s phone four days after his murder.

Such unlawful surveillance is a serious threat to our human rights. How can we ever find out what those in power are doing when investigative journalists are targeted?

In Mexico, journalist Cecilio Pineda’s phone was selected for targeting just weeks before his killing in 2017. The Pegasus Project identified at least twenty-five Mexican journalists were selected for targeting over a two-year period. NSO claimed that even if Pineda’s phone had been targeted, the data collected from his phone would not have contributed to his death.

More than forty Azerbaijani journalists were selected as potential targets according to the investigation. Amnesty International’s Security Lab found the phone of Sevinc Vaqifqizi, a freelance journalist for independent media outlet Meydan TV, was infected over a two-year period until May 2021.

In India, at least forty journalists from nearly every major media outlet in the country were selected as potential targets between 2017-2021. Forensic tests revealed the phones of Siddharth Varadarajan and MK Venu, co-founders of independent online outlet The Wire, were infected with Pegasus spyware as recently as June 2021.

The investigation also identified journalists working for major international media including the Associated Press, CNN, The New York Times, and Reuters as potential targets. One of the highest profile journalists was Roula Khalaf, the editor of the *Financial Times*.

“The number of journalists identified as targets vividly illustrates how Pegasus is used as a tool to intimidate critical media. It is about controlling public narrative, resisting scrutiny, and suppressing any dissenting voice,” said Agnès Callamard.

“These revelations must act as a catalyst for change. The surveillance industry

must no longer be afforded a laissez-faire approach from governments with a vested interest in using this technology to commit human rights violations.”

So where to now? According to The Committee to Protect Journalists, few effective barriers exist to prevent autocratic governments from using sophisticated surveillance technology in an attempt to intimidate or silence a free press.

Following first reports by consortium members in July, the Paris prosecutor’s office is investigating the suspected widespread use of Pegasus to target journalists, human rights activists, and politicians in multiple countries.

Amnesty International Security Lab technologist, Etienne Maynier, now has irrefutable evidence that NSO’s claim that its spyware is undetectable and only used for criminal investigations, is a complete falsehood. He stated that:

“The widespread violations Pegasus facilitates must stop. Our hope is the damning evidence published over the next week will lead governments to overhaul a surveillance industry that is out of control.”

I’m not holding my breath.

Last word to Agnès Callamard – “Until this company and the industry, as a whole, can show it is capable of respecting human rights, there must be an immediate moratorium on the export, sale, transfer and use of surveillance technology.”

**A massive data leak revealed how this company’s spyware has been used to target activists, journalists, and political leaders globally.**

# DON'T BELIEVE ALL THAT YOU HEAR — HERE'S WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON IN CUBA

Wendy Holm

The emails kept coming in ... from farmers and students and chefs and academics whom I'd taken to that tiny island country over the past two decades to learn about her leadership in sustainable agriculture, cooperatives, and growing food in cities: What's REALLY going on in Cuba?" they asked.

Yes, Cubans are feeling frustrated. Sixty years of an economic blockade by Washington, over 200 additional measures of economic strangulation by Trump, and now — for the past seventeen months — a tourism economy shut down by COVID (now raging, thanks to the Delta variant) have plunged Cuba back to the dark days of the Special Period, when the Soviet Union collapsed and so too did Cuba's economy. Except this time, Cubans who left government jobs for the hard currency lure of the tourism sector are out of work. People are feeling desperate.

Thanks to policy measures led by Raul Castro in 2011 that opened the country to small enterprise and cooperatives, Cuba's economy pre-Trump and pre-COVID was flourishing, despite the punishing impact of the US embargo.



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society rally against the blockade outside the US consulate in Perth, Monday 19th July 2021.

Then came Trump. Then came COVID. Like a triple witching hour, investors long agitating to open socialist Cuba to capitalism began jingling in their pockets the coins of influence and paying very close attention.

Could Cuba's current financial woes finally be the crack that lets the "capitalist light" come in?

Could they get rid of this pesky and tenacious socialist government on their doorstep and open Cuba to investment? Well worth the cost of throwing some extra pesos to Cuban dissidents to go to the streets. Playing to international TV cameras with chants of "Down with the Dictator."

Seriously? Anyone following

Cuban politics knows why calling Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez a dictator is absurd. His address to the nation (carried by BBC but not CBC) spoke eloquently to the false narrative being fed by global media.

Yes, in this difficult economy there are line ups for food. Are Cubans starving? No. Despite economic hardships, Cuba continues to look after her people and — through their Henry Reeves medical brigades — those of other nations.

The CNN reporter interviews protesters, then turns his camera to another group of Cubans, standing quietly on a corner with Cuban flags raised in defence of their country. They tell a different story, putting the blame for today's hard times squarely on Washington.

"Yo soy Fidel (I am Fidel)," one man exclaims, a phrase embraced by Cubans on Fidel's death in 2016 to express solidarity and respect for the ideals of the Cuban Revolution by saying Fidel lives within them. Shaking his head, the reporter closes with the comment: "One man even kept insisting to me that he was Fidel. 'I am Fidel' he kept saying. But (with a half-smirk) everyone knows Fidel died in 2016. This is so-and-so for CNN in Havana ..."

Tone deaf?

The Cubans I am speaking to on a weekly basis — although frustrated by a long lockdown and even tighter

sanctions — know very well who is responsible for their country's economic crisis. From Washington, US president Joe Biden called Cuba a "failed state". Ironical that.

Let's be very clear: this battle has little to do with the Cuban people and all to do with how to run the economy. In the US, capitalism has a stranglehold on markets and communities. Rugged individualism is preached like a religion. We see how well that is working. In Cuba, state socialism charts a different course.

Choosing a socio-economic order is a sovereign matter between a nation and her people. Not investors from abroad.

It is time, Justin Trudeau, for Canada to show support for our friend Cuba, to stand shoulder to shoulder with this tiny Caribbean nation with whom we have shared strong diplomatic ties since 1946 and provide the important economic aid they so desperately need and so deeply deserve.

Shame on us if we do not ...

Wendy Holm is an award-winning Canadian agrologist, economist, farm journalist, and author living in British Columbia. She has been working in Cuba for twenty-three years.

Granma ☺

## CHINA, RUSSIA JOINTLY DEFEND TRUTH OF HISTORY, HUMAN DIGNITY, WW2 ACHIEVEMENTS

China and Russia should jointly defend the truth of history, human dignity and WW2 achievements, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday in a phone talk with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

Wang said that the 15th of August marked the day in history that Japan was defeated and unconditionally surrendered in World War II. It should also be the moment for the Japanese side to thoroughly reflect on its history of aggression, he added.

However, some Japanese politicians moved against the historic trend by overtly worshipping the Yasukuni Shrine which honours World War II Class-A war criminals, Wang said, calling the act a challenge to human conscience and international justice.

As the major victorious nations of World War II, China and Russia should join hands to defend the truth of history, oppose acts to whitewash or glorify militarism, check attempts to

falsify history, and never tolerate overturning the verdict on the history of aggression, said Wang.

For his part, Lavrov said that as the anniversary of the end of World War II is approaching, Russia and China have launched important cooperation in defending historical truth and opposing attempts to tamper with WW2 achievements.

Global Times ☺

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# SUPREME COURT LETS TEXAS KILL ROE V. WADE AND ABORTION RIGHTS

CJ Atkins

**Women banned from accessing abortions before they even know they're pregnant. Bounties of \$10,000 paid out of public money for anyone who takes court action to stop an abortion. Those are just a couple of details of a draconian new law attacking women's reproductive health in Texas which the Supreme Court allowed to take effect late Wednesday night, first September.**

In a 5-4 vote, the right-wing reactionary majority on the nation's highest court opted not to hear an emergency appeal from abortion providers in the state. Doctors and women's rights advocates were desperate to block measures passed by the Republican state legislature that essentially kill a woman's right to choose and make the historic *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalised abortion non-existent in the Lone Star State.

Proposed by Christian extremists at the statehouse in Austin, the restrictive measures were signed into law by GOP Gov. Greg Abbott in May. It was one of 666 new pieces of legislation taking effect Wednesday that were passed as part of a hard-right agenda ahead of the 2022 mid-term elections.

The Republican Party has its eyes set on energising its voter base and locking in control of Texas in a bid to outrun political and demographic changes that could see the state switch to the Democratic column in the near future. Fresh restrictions on voting rights are another key component of GOP strategy.

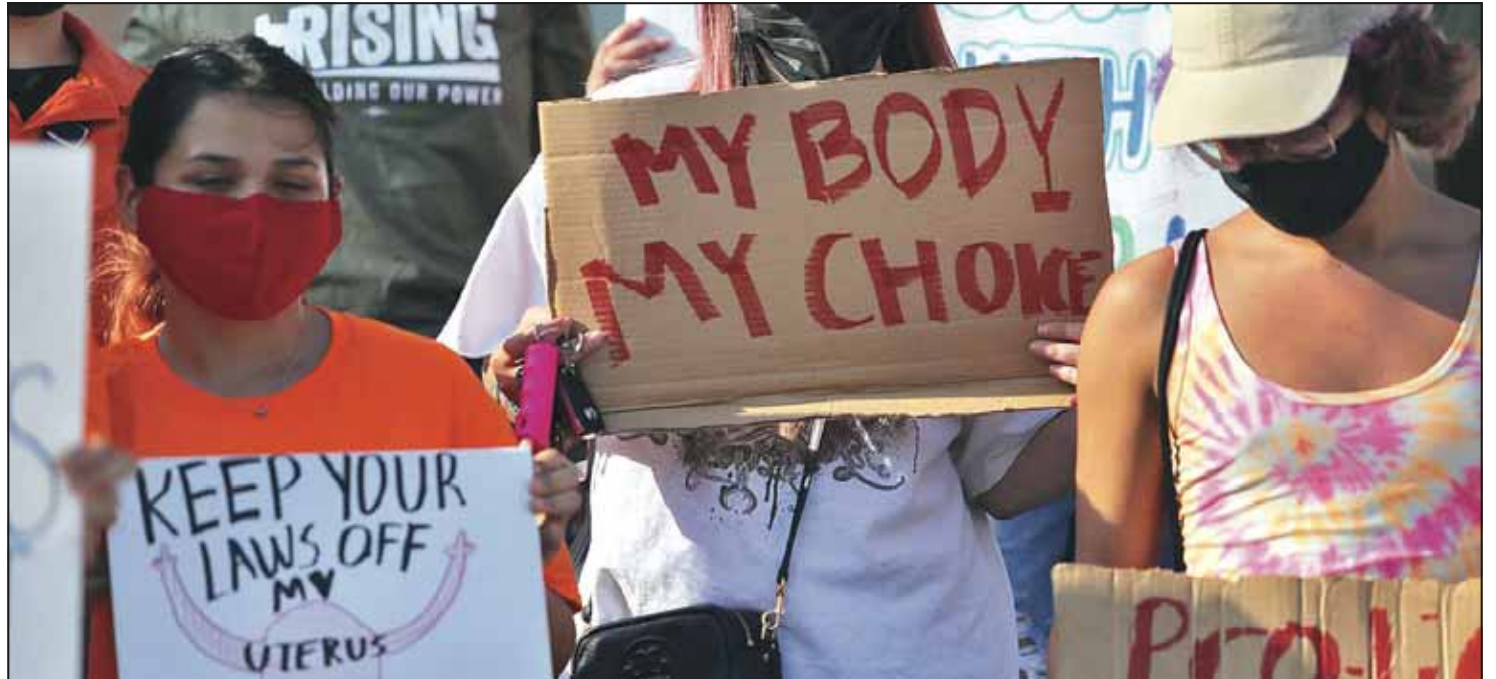
Other measures that became law Wednesday include killing off licensing and training requirements for carrying guns in public, banning the teaching of Critical Race Theory in classrooms, making protesting on roads a crime, and more.

It is the abortion restrictions, however, which have garnered the most attention because of the extent to which they go in denying women access to health care and the devious manner in which they are to be enforced.

The law takes off from the "detectable foetal heartbeat" concept that has been employed by Republican lawmakers in several states when crafting anti-abortion measures. The Texas GOP's law blocks women from getting an abortion once an ultrasound is able to detect cardiac activity; this typically happens around six weeks – before most women even know they are pregnant.

Most medical professionals reject the supposed "heartbeat" standard because at six weeks an embryo is not yet a foetus and a heart doesn't yet exist. According to Dr Michael Cackovic, a maternal foetal medicine specialist at Ohio State University, the cardiac activity termed a "heartbeat" by Republicans is a faint flutter only detectable by advanced machinery and not a beating heart.

The cruelly innovative part of the Texas law, however, is its enforcement mechanism. Its authors wrote it in a way that intentionally evades federal courts by making private citizens, rather than the state government, responsible for taking legal action to stop



abortions. The gate is thrown open for individuals to file lawsuits against any person they deem to be participating in providing or helping a person access an abortion.

It exposes not just doctors but also health information providers and advisors, family members of women, friends who drive a woman to a clinic – essentially anyone connected to facilitating a woman's right to make decisions about her reproductive health – to legal liability. Any anti-woman vigilante who succeeds in their lawsuit will be rewarded with a cash prize of \$10,000, to be paid from taxpayer money.

The incentive has religious fundamentalist groups like Texas Right to Life eyeballing the potential financial windfall; it has already set up a hotline-style website where people can leave tips about anyone allegedly helping a woman get an abortion.

Four Republican-named justices on the Supreme Court banded together in rejecting the appeal by Texas health providers just before midnight Wednesday. Chief Justice John Roberts, who has crafted a reputation as somewhat of a centre-right jurist, joined the three Democratic-named justices in dissenting from the majority.

The right-wing justices claimed their decision was based on the appellants' failure to meet the burden of proof that a stay – a block – on the Texas law was merited. Their unsigned order left open the likelihood that the issue will be revisited, however, as they said it was "not based on any conclusion about the constitutionality of Texas's law."

In a dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor called the decision "stunning," saying the Texas law was "a flagrantly unconstitutional attempt engineered to prohibit women from exercising their constitutional rights and evade judicial scrutiny." She accused her conservative colleagues of "bury[ing] their heads in the sand" by refusing to acknowledge that reality.

Justice Elena Kagan denounced the law as

"patently unconstitutional." She went further, though, accusing the state of outsourcing its own functions. Kagan said it was wrong to allow "private parties to carry out unconstitutional restrictions on the State's behalf."

The vote of Trump-named Justice Amy Coney Barrett, the third woman on the high court, to open the door to such an attack on women draws attention to the impact that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death had on the court's ideological tilt. If RBG was still on the court, the 5-4 tally would have been flipped against Texas.

Nancy Northup, head of the Center for Reproductive Rights, the legal group representing the Texas health professionals challenging the law, told the press early Thursday that the Texas law "blatantly violates *Roe v. Wade*" – the 1973 Supreme Court decision that recognised a woman's constitutional right to an abortion.

"Texas politicians have succeeded for the moment in making a mockery of the rule of law, upending abortion care in Texas, and forcing patients to leave the state – if they have the means – to get constitutionally protected healthcare. This should send chills down the spine of everyone in this country who cares about the constitution," Northup said.

Dr Gerald E Harmon of the American Medical Association – the nation's top organisation of doctors – called the Texas law and the Supreme Court's inaction "egregious." He denounced the law for its ban on abortions but also for its interference "in the patient-physician relationship." He said the law "places bounties on physicians and health care workers simply for delivering care."

The impact of the law will be felt most harshly among lower-income women and women of colour in communities that already face major barriers in accessing health care of every kind. Abortion services will now have to be sought in other states, requiring extra money and long drives. It is estimated that

the average round-trip driving distance for a Texas woman to an abortion clinic will now increase from twenty-four miles (39 km) to nearly 500 miles (805 km).

On social media, commenters were comparing Texas's attacks on women to the Taliban, the religious fundamentalist group that has just retaken control of Afghanistan. "When does the airlift start for getting women and girls out of Texas?" Twitter user @AjoHms1956 asked in a post that went viral Wednesday evening.

But nearby states offer little refuge; Republican governments in states like Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and others have also been hard at work making abortion access more and more difficult.

Meanwhile, as the clock counted down to midnight Wednesday, clinics across Texas were in a mad rush to provide services to women seeking help before the deadline. Amy Hagstrom Miller, who runs a clinic in Fort Worth, told the Associated Press that the last service was provided at 11:56 pm. Right-wing anti-abortion activists were already in the parking lot shining flashlights and looking for evidence for a lawsuit.

Back in Austin, Abbott and lawmakers now have their targets set on hemming in abortion medication – aiming to destroy another reproductive health option available to women. But activists and advocates aren't giving up on resisting the current round of prohibitions either, especially as the Supreme Court left open a door for further review. Northrup of the Center for Reproductive Rights has pledged to "keep fighting this ban until abortion access is restored in Texas."

In Washington, meanwhile, the next women's rights case before the Supreme Court is scheduled for fall when Mississippi's latest abortion restrictions come before the justices.

People's World ✪



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