



NO TO NUCLEAR SUBMARINE MADNESS!

Denis Doherty

We condemn unreservedly the new tripartite agreement, AUKUS, between Australia, the UK, and the US and the announcement that Australia will have nuclear powered submarines. The deal will cost billions and it will put our country into the hands of the US and the UK. Canberra will have to rely completely on them to build its new submarines and sustain them over their lifetime.

Australia will become the only non-nuclear country in the world to have a maritime nuclear capability.

The fleet will be the first initiative of a newly formed and highly dangerous trilateral security partnership called AUKUS. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the enhanced alliance was a response to rapidly developing circumstances in the region that were not envisaged even five years ago. That of course is the spin for containing China.

The move is not in the national interest. It is aimed at China, and China will recognise this development for what it is – a blatant step towards trying to limit that nation's development.

China has responded saying countries "should not build exclusionary blocs targeting or harming the interests of third parties." China's embassy in Washington said the US, UK and Australia needed to "shake off their Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice."

THE PRICE TO BE PAID

While US and UK arms corporations rejoice at this atrocious decision ordinary Australians will be condemned to living in one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Nuclear submarines will be so expensive that other government departments will have to be raided such as welfare, the environment, education, and now the all-important health budget.

With the purchase of these submarines goes the end of poverty eradication. Over 13.6 per cent of our people live below the poverty line, and homelessness is a growing problem, yet the Morrison government continues to spend like a drunken sailor on nuclear submarines which will not make Australia more secure or prosperous but insecure and poor.

The working class will bear the burden of this exorbitant expenditure by the Morrison



government as it manoeuvres prior to a coming federal election to make it appear that it is protecting the Australian people when in fact it is doing the opposite.

Added to the cost will be the \$2 billion already wasted on the French submarine contract, as well as many millions more in compensation for cancelling it.

Morrison has already said that Australia will need to spend more on the military as a requirement of the new partnership.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT

Former submariner and senator, Rex Patrick, is calling for an urgent inquiry before the deal is finalised.

"If it's a US submarine, they have highly enriched uranium in their reactors and that creates a proliferation issue in terms of Australia standing up saying, 'No-one should have this sort of fuel available to them'," Patrick said.

Nuclear powered submarines do have accidents and do sink. There are already nine nuclear reactors on the seafloor from sunken nuclear subs.

A Royal Navy nuclear submarine collided with a French nuclear submarine in the middle of the Atlantic on 6th February this year in what the UK-based Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament described as a nuclear nightmare of the highest order.

The risk of nuclear contamination for our people and environment is too grave a risk for Australians.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

While Morrison claims that Australia will not purchase or use nuclear weapons now and will not introduce a domestic nuclear industry, the possibility still exists for a future government to introduce both these items. Now that there is a platform from which to launch sea-based missiles the next step to nuclearise them will be easy.

NEW ARMS RACE

Prime Minister Morrison claims that nuclear submarines will bring peace and stability to our region. This is pure nonsense.

The last time Australia embarked on a major investment in attack weaponry it

sparked an increase in submarine purchases by our near neighbours such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

It is a step backwards towards a new Cold War in our region, a rekindling of tensions that will not produce security but will instead increase tensions, suspicion and hostility – or worst-case scenario nuclear war.

SAY NO

We must fight this decision with determination for the good of all.

Send letters to Prime Minister Morrison and get as many friends and neighbours to do the same. Put up posters (during your exercise if you are in lockdown). Send protests to the newspapers. Ring radio programs. Get your union and community groups involved.

An arms exhibition of maritime weapons in Sydney next May will be an occasion for protests.

MAKE A NOISE! HELP BUILD A MASSIVE PROTEST MOVEMENT! SAY NO TO AUKUS AND NO TO NUCLEAR SUBMARINES! ✳

3  People at high risk in lockdown

5  Women's Safety Summit – a responsibility for all

8  Afghanistan: what's next?

10  The Labourinth

Guardian

Issue 1979

20th September, 2021

MUA TAKES ON LOGISTICS GIANT QUBE FOR BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS

Even before COVID-19, working on the ports could be a dangerous business, so when workers for Qube at Fremantle Ports asked their employer to implement health and safety provisions fifteen months ago they expected their uncontroversial demands to be met – they weren't. As a result of Qube's inaction, workers went on strike in what has now been a near two-month long struggle with the logistics provider giant.

However, health and safety claims aren't the only grievances on the table. The MUA has been trying to get Qube to improve shift and fatigue management practices at the port. The MUA claims that all workers – including permanents – are told by text message if they have to work the next day and on which shift. They are the last port workers at Qube not to have an agreement. "Not one worker employed by Qube in Fremantle Ports has a roster," said MUA WA secretary Will Tracey, further stating that "[t]his is no way for a company to treat its workforce."

In response to the workers standing firm in its demands, Qube has brought in scab labour which, according to the MUA, is taking approximately four times as long as union labour to do the job, wreaking havoc on the wharves. In August, Qube Management was caught working without personal protective equipment leaving the MUA to ask the government to suspend the company's stevedoring licence.

The lack of union labour is hitting Qube where it hurts – their pockets. In retaliation, Qube has pulled in their friends in the mainstream media to pressure the MUA. Through the *Financial Review*, Qube has made claims that the union has been contacting its clients "via its union network in Europe and Japan and threatening them with black bans and an international backlash if they continue to work with the stevedoring company." The MUA has rejected the claims, describing them as "garbage" and nothing more than retribution as indications suggest that Qube may lose its largest customer Wallenius Wilhelmsen – a major shipping company.

The claim, of course, makes zero sense with MUA WA secretary Will Tracey stating that such an idea would be "working against our own interests."

However, the workers and the MUA are not alone in their struggle. They've been receiving financial assistance from the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), Electrical Trade Union (ETU), Transport Workers' Union, and the Construction Division of the CFMEU.

At a Rally, WA AWU branch secretary Andy Hacking spoke to the solidarity the MUA showed during its 2018 strike with Alcoa. Those workers have returned the support by contributing \$10,000 to assist Qube workers.

Likewise, ETU branch organiser Adam Leech delivered a \$5000 cheque to the Qube workers.

Qube, like a lot of major corporations during this pandemic, have made massive profits, having made \$17.5 million. On top of this, Qube also received \$30 million in JobKeeper, returning \$17 million after public pressure.

We must stand in solidarity with Qube workers against their employer's anti-worker practices. If you can, donate to the strike fundraiser by contacting your local MUA branch via www.mua.org.au.

GETTING FULLY VACCINATED

Vinnie Molina

Despite the COVID-19 vaccination not being a panacea against the pandemic, currently it is the best option people have to protect themselves, their families, friends and comrades.

I recently had my second COVID-19 shot, not in response to an employer pushing for compulsory vaccination but because it is a matter of public health responsibility.

I remember many moons ago how we all got vaccinated at school against polio, mumps, measles and other preventable diseases. I still remember some of my little school friends who suffered from polio and the difficulties associated with that disease.

Since the COVID-19 became a pandemic, we have witnessed clearly the incapacity of capitalism for dealing with it. The public health systems mostly privatised by capitalist governments are unable to cope with the number of people falling sick from COVID. Hospitals are facing the prospect of being overwhelmed by patients needing medical attention, ventilators and oxygen.

The United States, Europe, Asia and Latin American countries have all experienced the legacy of neoliberal policies in a pandemic from a system that has profited from people's health. In some countries where hospitals and laboratories are completely run by the private sector and often managed by the same multinational corporations many have died on the streets unable to find adequate medical attention.

Vaccine development is just another example of how profit before people left millions behind. Pharmaceutical corporations or big pharma saw the opportunity of making billions in profit which has been out there for all to see.

The campaign to freeze patents so developing countries could produce enough vaccines at an accessible price was opposed by the Australian government until very recently. This position was evident that the shambolic vaccine rollout needed the production of vaccines



locally. Only the CSL was licenced to locally produce the AstraZeneca vaccines in Australia. If it wasn't for the bad publicity campaign more people could have been vaccinated by now.

The options for Australian people were limited by bad government decisions. The Morrison government was selective on vaccines ignoring vaccine development from countries such as Cuba, Russia and China all were willing to share and allow for local production. Morrison put ideology before health by relying only on Pfizer and AZ vaccines while the rest of the world had access to many other vaccines that have proved effective.

Australia has enormous capacity to locally manufacture medical supplies including medicines and vaccines but the fire sale of public assets and the reliance on the private sector for research and development all contribute to shortages and lack of supplies.

As communists we must look at the example set by socialist countries where Communist Parties are in power. For example, the health systems are in public hands, are freely and universally available to their people. They have developed or are developing their own vaccines, sharing technology and helping each other. Now more

than ever it is a time for solidarity and cooperation to defeat the pandemic. The same approach will be needed in future crises including climate change.

In contrast, during this same period, we see how the capitalist system operates. The US has used this time to ramp up economic and financial blockades against countries like Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, DPRK & China.

The peoples of the world are demanding a new post pandemic world, one in which workers are part of the decision-making process and one in which a better world, where people are prioritised before profit, is possible.

We must continue to campaign for a better world for all and a socialist future. I encourage all Party members to get vaccinated with whatever vaccine is available and be protected. At the same time, we will contribute to the protection of society as a whole, in particular Party members of all ages across the Australian continent.

A statement from the Central Committee of the Party on vaccines can be found at: cpa.org.au/statement/2021-2/cpa-central-committee-statement-for-covid-safe-community/ 🇺🇦

CORRECTION

Issue #1978, article "DISABLED AND NEURODIVERSE (NEURODIVERGENT) WORKERS' ALLIANCE GAINS MOMENTUM."

The *Guardian* needs to correct the name of "Disabled and Neurodiverse Workers' Alliance" to "Disabled and **Neurodivergent** Workers Alliance" (DNWA). The article also claimed that DNWA successfully called for an end to wage assessment tools. Wage assessment tools still exist and DNWA is one of the many organisations that calls for the abolition of these tools. Abolishing wage assessment tools is still an ongoing campaign.

Find out more about the

Communist Party of Australia

web www.cpa.org.au

email cpa@cpa.org.au

phone **02 9699 8844**

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

GETTING LEFT BEHIND: PEOPLE AT HIGH RISK AND LOCKDOWN

Valentin Cartillier

As many Australians eagerly await the seventy per cent vaccination rate so we can finally begin “opening up” and start easing the lockdowns, there is an enormous group of Australians who are being left out of the conversation: people who are immunocompromised and have comorbidities (for example heart disease, diabetes etc). These two groups will henceforth be referred to as “people at high risk.” As we are well aware, even people who are fully vaccinated can still get COVID-19 and transmit it, and this poses a enormous danger, for even if a person at high risk is fully vaccinated, they can still die from it. Herein lies the heart of the problem.

Given how deadly and easily transmissible the Delta strain has proven itself to be, for those who are at high risk, the easing of lockdown restrictions does not mean the same as for people who aren't. They have a much greater chance of contracting and dying from the disease, especially as more and more people are once again back out in public. This effectively means they will have to live in a state of “unofficial lockdown” as the official lockdowns ease. Undoubtedly, lockdown has been extremely difficult for a lot of people. It has put an enormous strain on our frontline and essential service workers, our healthcare system, and those working from home.

The isolation during lockdown has caused rates of mental illness to skyrocket, as people struggle with depression, anxiety and uncertainty about the future, problems which are compounded for people at high risk. These are very visceral realities for a lot of people. For people at high risk who

suffer from chronic illnesses, and/or have disabilities, their ability to be out in public safely exists on a different timeline. This is what we need to bear in mind when we think about the easing of restrictions.

The lockdown raises the further problem of accessibility that disabled people face. Some people are totally unable to be vaccinated due to their health conditions. For those who can, getting to the vaccination sites can be extremely difficult, a problem compounded by the usually very long wait times. It also is quite difficult to book in to be vaccinated at home.

We must also not forget that for many of the aforementioned groups, the pandemic isn't their first experience of isolation. Many have lived for years under these conditions and have been forced to learn how to cope with it. This is by no means a call for everyone else to “suck it up” but rather a call for empathy, understanding, and solidarity.

So while the prospect of opening up again is certainly a cause for celebration and relief it is imperative to remember that it is also a time of great terror for tens of thousands of Australians who face a greater risk of dying over the coming months and years. While vaccinations are extremely important, they do not represent the magic ticket to freedom for many Australians. The government needs to prioritise booster shots for those most in need. When we think about the conditions of the pandemic and what the easing of lockdown means, no one should be left behind or forgotten.

This article was written in conversation with a friend who is at high risk and I'm extremely grateful to them for not only bringing this topic to our attention, but also the clarity, intelligence, time, and the conviction of their explanation. ✪



EXPLAINER: CAN EMPLOYERS MANDATE VACCINATIONS?

B Curphey

Editorial note: This article does not purport to give legal advice. It is for general informational purposes only

With the national COVID-19 vaccine rollout well underway, questions have arisen about whether employers have the power to mandate vaccines for workers. This article seeks to provide some useful general information, while outlining the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) stance on this issue.

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) states that in most circumstances, employers will not be able to require their employees to get vaccinated. There are three circumstances in which an employer can mandate vaccination. The first is where the law specifically requires that a particular class of employees, e.g. healthcare workers, must be vaccinated. The second is where the requirement to get vaccinated is included in the employee's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA).

The third requirement is the most controversial. It is where, in the circumstances, the direction

to get vaccinated is a “lawful and reasonable instruction”. Section 1.07(3)(c) of the *Fair Work Regulations* imposes a duty on employees to “carry out a lawful and reasonable instruction that is consistent with the employee's contract of employment.”

Whether a direction is lawful and reasonable depends on the circumstances. The direction must not be inconsistent with the employee's contract, EBA, award, or the law. This is the “lawful” aspect. In terms of reasonability, the type of work an employee does, who they have contact with and the employee's individual circumstances like health and access to vaccines may be relevant among other factors.

FWO advises that “the coronavirus pandemic doesn't automatically make it reasonable for employers to direct employees to be vaccinated against the virus.” It is more likely that it is reasonable and lawful for an employer to require employees to be vaccinated if they work in high risk jobs or with vulnerable people like the elderly or those with disabilities.

It is the CPA's position that, while everyone should get vaccinated if it is safe for them to do so, employers should not be able to

require employees to get vaccinated. This does not mean the Party is anti-vaccine. In many industries, it is the safe and responsible thing for employees to get vaccinated, but this should not be at the behest of their employer. Any vaccine mandate must be enforced by the state or national governments and should include provisions to make vaccination accessible across all sectors of the community.

The Central Committee recently released this statement outlining the Party's position on mandatory vaccination:

“The best and most effective outcomes [for overcoming COVID-19] should be mandated across the community and enforced through national and state safety regulators ... The Communist Party of Australia strongly opposes the employer drive for compulsory vaccination as an industrial weapon. We condemn the attempt to distract from the need for vaccine choice and immediate vaccination rights for all with more choice of vaccines made available from the international market.”

For more information about vaccine directions at work, visit the FWO website, coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au. ✪



Perth

“FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE”

**23rd September
6pm**

**43 Below Bar & Restaurant,
43 Barrack St. Perth**

Speakers:

**Jo Valentine, former Greens Senator
Prof Dora Marinova, Curtin Univ
Elizabeth Hulm, CPA**

Free Event

**For more info: 0419 812 872
cpaperth@gmail.com**

WA PREMIER MARK MCGOWAN ANNOUNCES LOGGING BAN OF NATIVE FORESTS AS PART OF STATE BUDGET

Richard Titelius

On the 8th September 2021, in the lead-up to the presentation of the Western Australian State Budget, WA Premier and Treasurer Mark McGowan announced plans to end logging of native forests by mid-2024. As part of the plan, softwood timber plantations would be planted to replace logging previously carried out in native forests and a \$50 million transition plan for people who work in forestry in native forests. The announcement was made in the eastern hills of Perth at Chidlow where native forests were logged in the early part of the 20th Century for native timbers. Accompanying the Premier at the announcement were Climate Change Minister Amber Jade Sanderson and Forestry Minister Dave Kelly. Premier McGowan announced there would be a saving of 400,000 hectares of forests from logging; 1,000 Kings Parks that would have been logged will be preserved for future generations.

The Australian Forest Products Association condemned the announcement, with chief executive Ross Hampton claiming it already engaged in “certified environmentally careful forestry in WA.” Others in the forest protection campaign said this sentiment merely echoed an outdated belief in an entitlement to continue logging as had always done since the mid-19th Century. Another spokesperson for the forestry industries, Melisa Haslam slammed the ban on logging in native forests as “a rushed and bizarre decision which came without any consultation,” despite the government having a survey open to the entire WA community for several months.

WA Forests Alliance Community organiser Paddy Cullen said he welcomed the WA government’s announcement, but the people of WA would need to hold the government to its plans. Cullen’s remarks pointed to a similar announcement by an Australian Labor Party government twenty years ago when then-Premier Dr Geoff Gallop announced an end to logging in old-growth forests in March 2001. That announcement to end logging in old-growth forests was the culmination of a campaign that began in earnest in the

mid-1990s and included semi-permanent camps of forest activists in those areas to protect specific forest coups from logging for months at a time. However, once Gallop made the announcement in March of 2001, it was not long before the pressure from logging interests came. What followed was a muddying of the definitions about what constituted old-growth, and thus regrowth logging of native forests slowly took off again.

This time, said Cullen, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. Cullen added it was the nearly 17,000 people who responded to the government’s forestry survey that helped push the McGowan government towards the native forestry logging ban. The overwhelming number of submissions were in favour of stopping further logging in native forests.

However, it is not yet a total ban on logging as the new regime or agreement from 2024 allows timber to be taken from native forests for forest management activities that improve forest health. Still taking place is tree thinning and clearing for approved mining operations, such as the large-scale forest stripping for approved mining operations, including bauxite mining by Alcoa near Pinjarra and the Boddington Gold Mine nearby.

FORESTRY V TOURISM JOBS

Though the move to ban logging in native forests will mean the loss of up to 400 timber industry jobs, the decision will ensure the maintenance of sustainable jobs in the tourism sector and those in the public sector and non-government organisations dedicated to the ongoing maintenance and care of forests and woodland. A Native Forestry Transition Group will be established, to assist in the development and implementation of the plan, and will be comprised of local industry, trade union, and government stakeholders. With the growing awareness of the increasing effects of climate change, preserving native forests and creating additional softwood forests for industrial use is an important step towards sustainability. One long term benefit of this is to help maintain rainfall patterns that can be significantly affected by the degradation of forests. The impacts of the large-scale removal of forests can be seen in Brazil and Peru with the dryness being observed within the Amazon rainforest.



Photo: Nancye Miles-Tweedie

Cullen also added, “The decision to ban logging in native forests was also a win for the Noongar Aboriginal people of the south-west who have long sought forest preserved as it was bound to their culture and world view.”

The Communist Party of Australia supports the decision to ban logging in the native forests of the south-west of WA and hopes that the Just Transition Plan for workers

affected by the decision will create sustainable and well-paying jobs and that communities which depend on the forests will continue to survive and prosper from them as well as the benefits to ecosystems and the planet itself to be realised by preserving the environment. ✪

CAMPUS ACTION AS REPORT REVEALS UNIVERSITY JOB DEVASTATION

National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) Statement

Uni staff will launch a week of action as a new report lays bare the devastation of COVID in tertiary education, with close to one in five staff losing their jobs in 2021.

The Centre for Future Work analysis, *An Avoidable Catastrophe: Pandemic Job Losses in Higher Education and their Consequences*, shows that universities and the broader tertiary sector have lost more jobs in the last twelve months than any other non-agricultural sector in the economy.

In that period, over 40,000

tertiary education workers lost their jobs across the country. Over sixty percent of the jobs lost were held by women.

University job losses have been much worse this year than in the first year of the pandemic. An estimated 35,000 job losses were lost at public universities. More jobs disappeared at TAFEs and other public vocational education institutions.

“This report details the wholesale job destruction at our nation’s universities and the future consequences of the Federal Government

just letting this sector drift,” said NTEU National President, Dr Alison Barnes.

“It is now incumbent on vice chancellors to step up and secure jobs and careers. The pandemic must not be an excuse for further casualisation and wage theft.

“The Federal Government must also finally play its part. AU\$3.75 billion support package would allow universities to recover those lost jobs. Compared to other Commonwealth expenses during the pandemic (including the \$70 billion JobKeeper program, which

arbitrarily excluded universities), this is a modest and necessary investment.

“Every day I talk to early career academics in their 20s who rely on marking and tutoring work to supplement their PhD stipends so they can become the medical and engineering researchers of tomorrow.

“We are losing a generation of researchers and teachers. It’s an incredible brain drain.

“But worst of all, future students will miss out on A gold standard education system in which to thrive. That’s despite politicians telling us

again and again that high-quality education and research is the most important human resource we have in this country.

“How can Australian Universities drive a national economic recovery if they are being drained of expertise and talent?

“This report finds job losses are getting worse, not better, as we go further into the epidemic.

“People forget universities were deliberately excluded from last year’s JobKeeper package – so this year’s layoffs are like getting kicked when you’re down.” ✪

WOMEN'S SAFETY SUMMIT – A RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL

Matthew Hole

The National Summit on Women's Safety was held over two days earlier this month, bringing together a range of experts, advocates, service providers and people with lived experience to explore issues faced by women and their children experiencing domestic and sexual violence in Australia. Critics, however, have highlighted that given the government's recent record on the issue of women's safety, the summit may be yet another talkfest and risks missing the opportunity to create a platform for meaningful change.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison was correct in his keynote address that the statistics on violence against women in Australia are "a national shame." One woman a week is murdered by their current or former partner. One in three women have experienced physical violence since the age of fifteen. One in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of fifteen. Everyone – particularly men, given they are in the large majority the perpetrators – are responsible for changing the culture around how women and children are treated in society to ensure everyone can both "feel" and "be" safe.

GROUNDWELL FOR CHANGE

The summit was launched on two grounds: A widespread public outcry for change that broke out earlier this year when two separate sexual misconduct allegations involving members of the Australian Parliament came to light – the historical rape allegation against then Attorney General Christian Porter, and the 2019 rape allegation by Brittany Higgins against an unnamed male colleague. Current Australian of the Year Grace Tame, lauded for her bravery in speaking out and providing a platform of support to other survivors, has been a central figure in agitating for change. This activity has coincided with the current "National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022" nearing its conclusion, which requires a renewed plan to take its place – this summit was to collate the content of this new plan.

A range of areas were focused on in separate panel discussions: (1) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence, (2) Financial freedom – creating economic security and escaping financial abuse, (3) Roadmap to Respect@Work, (4) Alter the course – perpetrator interventions, coercive control and early intervention, (5) Violence against women is everybody's business, (6) Police and justice responses, (7) Preventing and responding to sexual violence, (8) Safety and security for older women, and



lastly, (9) Stop it at the start – prevention through advertising.

"THIS IS AN EPIDEMIC, AND OUR CHILDREN ARE AT THE FOREFRONT"

For the upcoming national plan to have greater success than the one it replaces, much more emphasis needs to be applied to prevention measures according to Tame, speaking on *RN Breakfast* on day two of the summit. When asked if enough is being done with respect to prevention, Tame offers that, "children have not been prioritised. One in ten children will experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday. The way that we address attitudes is through education, education is our primary means of prevention."

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

The government recently appointed Lorraine Finlay – without an open selection process to boot – to the position of Human Rights Commissioner, and her record on a range of issues show she is firmly in the camp of big business. She has spoken out

against quotas for more female representation in politics, has argued for her right to offend during the Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act debate in 2016, has pushed back against an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, and most worryingly when it comes to women's safety, has spoken out against enhancing consent reforms.

Also, within the last few weeks the government passed the Your Rights@Work legislation, but concerningly adopted only six of the twelve recommendations that required changes to federal legislation that were made within the Respect@Work report. Missed opportunities within the recommendations not yet taken up include a positive duty on all employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, as far as possible. The government has commented that it hasn't rejected these other recommendations, but that more consultation is required. Given the report was published over eighteen months ago, it's hard to take them at their word.

GLASS HOUSES

Australia has a shameful record when it comes to both domestic and sexual violence

against women and children. When viewed along with the gap in living standards between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the treatment of refugees locked up in offshore detention centres, and the abandonment of truth-telling journalists such as Julian Assange, the Australian government has no moral high ground when it comes to matters of human rights in the international arena. Yet that doesn't stop both our media and politicians from waxing lyrical about alleged human rights abuses in other countries, whether real or imagined. Australia would garner far more respect in the international community if we were to spend more time on earnestly resolving our own problems rather than pointing the finger at others.

The struggle to improve the safety for women and children in Australia is everyone's responsibility, and the government must play a leading role in ensuring meaningful change. We are all too often reminded that their interests lie not with the people, but with big business; that any small wins will need to be continually struggled for. It is crucial that this struggle continues. ✪

HEALTH AND SAFETY IS IN OUR HANDS

B A Ford

In May 2021, a Megaphone article titled "Knowledge is Power In Fight Against Gendered Violence" was published. This article details the history of union members campaigning to have gendered violence officially recognised as a workplace hazard.

Because of the hard campaign work starting in 2017, workers can now train in gendered violence hazard identification, risk management, and safe work cultures. The Victorian Trades Hall Council is currently providing Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

refresher courses that focus on these issues. Best part is it's recognised by the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Authority, WorkSafe, so your boss has to pay you while you train!

This win by Victorian unionists shows why it's so important for workers to lead their own destiny. We are all aware of how lacking our education system and the legislation around gendered violence is. Union members in Victoria took action and developed their own plan to stop gendered violence since the government seemed so unenthusiastic about stepping up.

But how can union members decide what the Victorian OHS Act

does and does not cover? It came down to interpretation of a significant clause in the OHS Act most of us will be familiar with: "duties of employers to employees."

Employers' duties to employees are detailed in s21 of the Victorian OHS Act and is very similar to health and safety legislation in other states. This section states:

"An employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for employees of the employer a working environment that is safe and without risks to health."

Across the country, there is increasing concern around what are known as "psychosocial" hazards.

For NSW comrades, they can look at the NSW SafeWork Code of Practice on psychosocial hazards, and they will see a variety of scenarios detailing occupational violence and trauma as a workplace hazard. Does gendered violence not fall under this category?

Taking inspiration from the work of Victorian unionists as well as the increased recognition of psychosocial hazards and mental injuries at work, we now have new avenues opening before us.

My particular interest is to see similar campaigning for accessibility as an OHS issue. Not only can inaccessibility cause physical and ergonomic hazards, but it is also a

significant cause of psychosocial hazards. Rather than individual disabled and neurodivergent workers having to rely on negotiating with bosses on individual access requirements, framing accessibility as an OHS issue opens it up as a collective problem to solve.

Framing accessibility as an OHS issue does not require any new legislation either – it's all there in our OHS Act! We know from the experience of the Victorian union members, all we have to do is campaign hard and educate each other. We know we can't wait for our governments to take action – we have to be willing to work to secure our futures. ✪

COALITION PRESSES THE UK TO REMOVE CLIMATE TARGETS FROM TRADE DEAL

N Stallon

Scott Morrison has confirmed that the Coalition government pressed the UK to remove climate targets from the post-Brexit Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement announced in principle on 17th June.

This comes after the once-again leader of the Nationals Barnaby Joyce doubled-down last week on the minor Coalition party's opposition to climate change policy. Joyce refused to say whether he accepts key findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This has left critics speculating that the move was a bid by Morrison to appease Joyce and other Nationals MPs.

Confirming that the government opposed the inclusion of Paris Agreement temperature goals, Morrison argued that "it wasn't a climate agreement, it was a trade agreement."

"In trade agreements I deal with trade issues. In climate agreements I deal with climate issues," he explained, although an example of Morrison dealing with climate issues is yet to be seen.

It is understood that while the UK government pushed for stronger climate commitments, this was a point of conflict with Australia, who demanded the exclusion of any concrete climate targets.

In comparison, the 2020 EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement recognised the "importance of taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts," as well as containing an explicit commitment to the temperature goals set by the Paris Agreement.

Although Australia is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which calls for action to keep temperatures "well below" two degrees of pre-industrial levels and preferably to 1.5 degrees, it has no real legislative commitment to net zero emissions.

Similarly, Morrison refused to sign the 2021 G7 final communiqué, which was signed by the six other nations. He refused to sign because the G7's statement commits to net-zero emissions by 2050, the ending of direct government support for new coal-fired power facilities by the end of 2021, and all other "inefficient" fossil fuel subsidies by 2025.

Despite claims from Trade Minister Dan Tehan that Australia should get to net-zero emissions "as soon as possible, preferably by 2050," these moves demonstrate a refusal to be legislatively bound to the target.

There is no plan, or even desire to achieve net-emissions at any point, and certainly not by 2050. In fact, the government's latest emissions projections, released last December, indicate that Australia is not set to reach net-zero emissions until the year 2167.

Climate change is not a national emergency, but an international one. That Boris Johnson, set to host the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow in November, is willing to remove climate commitments to secure a free trade agreement with Australia demonstrates that even among those capitalist countries who have committed themselves to action by legislature, economics and politics always comes before the environment.

However, Australia remains one of the world's largest per capita carbon emitters, doubling down on its intent to both mine and burn coal beyond 2030, whilst refusing to commit itself to any form of binding climate target.

The Coalition government is increasingly isolating Australia from international cooperation, not only among its Pacific neighbours most threatened by the adverse effects of climate change, but increasingly amongst its allies, including the US under Joe Biden.

While the climate crisis will not be resolved under capitalism, in face of the UN Climate Summit this November, the Morrison government must reunite with the international community and commit itself to serious and ambitious climate targets. ✪



Australia remains one of the world's largest per capita carbon emitters, doubling down on its intent to both mine and burn coal beyond 2030, whilst refusing to commit itself to any form of binding climate target.

COVID-19 VACCINES: COMMUNITY GROUPS URGE TRADE MINISTER TO DELIVER ON WAIVING MONOPOLIES AT WTO

ACTU Statement

Following months of campaigning, Australian civil society organisations last week welcomed the comments from Trade Minister Dan Tehan that the Australian government now supports the temporary waiver of monopoly rules on COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and related products proposed by India and South Africa at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The waiver is key

to supporting equitable and affordable access to vaccines for developing countries and has the potential to save millions of lives.

The Australian government must now put words into action by working with other supportive countries to promote the passage of the waiver at the WTO TRIPS Council meeting.

The waiver is needed urgently because WTO rules give

pharmaceutical companies 20-year monopolies, meaning the supply and price of vaccines is controlled by a few companies who have already made billions from vaccines largely developed with public funds. Australia has felt the impact of these monopolies too, with both Pfizer and Moderna refusing to share intellectual property to allow local production in Australia. If pharmaceutical companies continue to control vaccine access,

millions more will die and more dangerous virus variants like Delta will develop.

The waiver was first proposed in October 2020 to enable increased manufacturing of affordable COVID-19 vaccines in countries like India and South Africa that already produce generic medicines. Since then, support for the waiver has grown, with Australia just one of a handful of countries not in support.

There is widespread support

in the Australian community for the waiver. More than 50,000 Australians signed petitions in support, and an Essential Media poll found 62 per cent support for the waiver across Coalition, Labor and Greens voters.

We call on Minister Tehan to make a formal public statement of Australia's support of the waiver and actively promote the waiver proposal to the few countries which are still blocking it. ✪

OP-ED: A SURVEY OF FASCISM IN AUSTRALIA

Peter Wills

It's 1919. Germany is in chaos after four years of war that ended in a humiliating defeat and surrender. The German economy was crippled by a heavy-handed armistice requiring punishing reparation payments to the allies. The German soldiers were dumbfounded how they were defeated when they weren't even fighting on German soil. Feeling angry and betrayed, the returning soldiers were looking for someone to blame. Amongst them a young Adolf Hitler, bitter about the armistice and Germany's humiliating surrender. In the name of patriotic nationalism, the Nazi party was born. The young Hitler joins the Nazi party and, by 1933, with his rise to power, Hitler, then Chancellor, arranges for the Reichstag building to be burned in a false flag attack so that blame could be laid against the enemies of the Reich: the communists. However, it isn't just the communists that Hitler fingers as anti-German; it's also the Jews.

The persecution of the Jewish people began in 1933 with attacks on the civil rights of the Jewish population in Germany, forcing many out of jobs such as civil service. The assassination of Ernst vom Rath by Jewish teenager Herschel Grynszpan served as the pretext for the *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of Broken Glass"), where thousands of Jewish businesses were attacked and destroyed. Over a hundred Jewish people were killed, and over 600 committed suicide, setting the stage for millions more to die unthinkable deaths in concentration camps all across Europe during WW2.

When General Dwight Eisenhower first saw the death camps at the end of the war, he ordered every soldier to find, and a camera crew to film, the camp inmates. It was his belief at the time that people would try to deny the Holocaust ever happened, thus, in his mind making documentation urgent.

The Nuremberg trials ran from late 1945 till 1949 to prosecute Nazis for war crimes. During his trial, Hermann Göring was asked how they coerced the German people into another war, he answered: "The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country."

In closing arguments, the lead prosecutor said that we must be ever vigilant that we never let this happen again. Assigned to watching the defendants at the Nuremberg trials Captain G M Gilbert, a US Army psychologist, reflected that "evil is the complete lack of empathy."

But what has all this talk of fascism got to do with Australia? We've never had fascism in Australia, right? Wrong!



AUSTRALIA'S FASCIST HISTORY

Fascism is a direct result of the failure of capitalism. Thus, it is no surprise that fascism has been part of the political landscape in Australia since the Great Depression. From 1931-32, 130,000 (out of a population of 6 million) were members of far right-wing paramilitary groups, such as the New Guard, composed primarily of people who had the most to lose when the capitalist system collapsed: the wealthy elite.

Formed in 1931, The New Guard had approximately 50,000 members at its peak and it attacked union and communist meetings alike. Eric Campbell, founder of the New Guard, visited fascist Italy and Germany, establishing fraternal relations with fascists in Europe.

Australia's admiration for European fascism didn't end with outwardly open fascists such as Campbell. Then-prime minister Robert Menzies open praise for Nazi Germany is also well-known and whose obsessive anti-communist behaviour mirrored many fascist leaders of the day.

FASCISM IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Today, we are seeing a rise of right-wing fascist groups in Australia. It should alarm everyone. Frighteningly, there has been no objection from the federal government as these hate groups multiply and grow like a

virus. Groups such as Antipodean Resistance, National Socialist Network, True Blue Crew, Australian Defence League, etc., are made up of white supremacists calling for discrimination against anyone that isn't of white European descent.

Some of the Nazi-inspired bigots openly display Nazi symbols and tattoos. However, these white supremacists aren't just involved in race politics. Many of them are actively involved in the recent anti-lockdown protests, sensing a golden opportunity for recruitment to their ranks, particularly disaffected youth looking for a cause to follow, how successful they are remains to be seen.

FASCISTIC TENDENCIES IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Many might be eager to dismiss this resurgence as a small group of extremists whose influence is contained but this would be an error. The rise of Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party has re-entered Australian politics off the back of many of the same disenfranchised peoples who see the parliamentary duopoly representing the wealthy elite, leaving the everyday Australian behind.

On immigration and ethnic minorities, Hanson's racist rhetoric would make any fascist grin – but she isn't the only one. Many members of the Coalition have made equally disgusting comments. Perhaps the most egregious in contemporary Australian politics

was the Abbott government. Tony Abbott led the Coalition with an election promise to repeal 18c of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* on the grounds that it limited free speech, with then Attorney General George Brandis stating people have "right to be a bigot." After his ousting as prime minister, writing on Islam in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, Abbott wrote that "cultures are not all equal" and that Australians should be "ready to proclaim the clear superiority of our culture to one that justifies killing people in the name of God."

This is to speak nothing of the countless policies that have resulted in Indigenous genocide, the mistreatment of refugees, and imperialist wars that have stained our nation's history.

SOME REMARKS

I would like to say that I am confident Australia will not slide into the abyss of murdering those deemed undesirable as Germany did in the Thirties. However, I am becoming more and more concerned with the increasing violence against anyone that isn't white while the government remains silent on the issue and continues fear campaigns. Australia of 2021 is starting to look eerily familiar to Germany in the 1930s.

It's up to the decent people of Australia to stand up and say enough is enough, that we don't tolerate hate, fear and discrimination here.

We must turn back the tide of fascism before it's too late. 🇺🇸

It's up to the decent people of Australia to stand up and say enough is enough, that we don't tolerate hate, fear and discrimination here.

AFGHANISTAN:

Anna Pha

The commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York focused on the close to 3000 people who lost their lives. Little was said about the horrendous consequences of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the tens of thousands of Afghan lives that were lost, and the wreckage and chaos that was left behind following the hasty withdrawal by US and allied troops, including Australian forces, at the end of August.

The US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 claiming the aim was to fight a war on terrorism. It exited after twenty years, leaving the country facing economic collapse and a social crisis of potentially catastrophic proportions due to COVID-19, lack of food resulting from drought, and the return of the Taliban to power. The UN World Food Program has made an urgent appeal to raise US\$200 million to fund its work there.

In a speech attempting to counter criticisms of the bungled military withdrawal 31st August, US President Joe Biden claimed, "The terror threat has metastasised across the world, well beyond Afghanistan. We face threats from al-Shabaab in Somalia; al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula; and ISIS attempting to create a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, and establishing affiliates across Africa and Asia." The US's "war on terror" has spurred terrorism. The original "war on terrorism" against al-Qaeda saw the number of terrorist organisations surge from single digit to more than twenty.

"But I also know that the threat from terrorism continues in its pernicious and evil nature. But it's changed, expanded to other countries. Our strategy has to change too," Biden said.

"We will maintain the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and other countries. We just don't need to fight a ground war to do it. We have what's called over-the-horizon capabilities, which means we can strike terrorists and targets without American boots on the ground – or very few, if needed."

When George W Bush launched the war, he trumpeted that the Taliban would "pay a price" for harbouring al-Qaeda terrorists and promised that "the oppressed people of Afghanistan" under Taliban rule "will know the generosity of America and our allies."

That "generosity" turned out to be twenty years of war; at least 47,000 civilians killed; with the fighting over but unexploded ordnance continuing to kill and maim civilians, in many cases children. An already poor country has been left even more destitute, lacking clean drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, and almost half the population facing starvation due to drought.

Almost six million Afghans have been displaced internally or have fled the country since the outbreak of the war.

Ding Long, writing in the *Global Times* aptly summed up the situation: "The US has been a destroyer instead of a builder. They occupied the country, not to rebuild it, but purely for hegemony and geopolitical ambitions. The US occupation did nothing to help Afghanistan with infrastructure, agriculture and industry, but increased its economic dependence, fostering a dysfunctional



Taliban celebrate victory after US troops withdraw from Afghanistan.

economy reliant on external aid and rife with clientelism, nepotism and corruption."

LEGACY

The war has also come at a huge cost to the American people, as well as its allies. The number of US soldiers who lost their lives is 2,461. A further 20,589 among the more than 775,000 US troops deployed there were injured. Today thousands of them are suffering from post-traumatic stress, their lives destroyed, and on average eighteen veterans die by suicide every day in the US. In Australia veterans are also suiciding and having difficulties coping with civilian life.

In cold dollar terms the US administration has spent an estimated US\$2.3 trillion (AU\$3.13 trillion) – money that could have been better spent on healthcare, housing, education, and foreign aid.

The US's parting gift to the Taliban, left behind as it made its hurried exit, was 75,000 vehicles, more than 200 airplanes and helicopters, 699,000 small arms and light weapons, as well as night vision goggles and body armour. The arsenal includes Black Hawks, ScanEagles, Humvees, and carbines. Value: an estimated US\$85 billion (AU\$116 billion). (Congressman Jim Banks R-Indiana). In other words, one of the legacies of the US is a well-equipped, Islamic fundamentalist military force with a history of terrorism as the new government, and a war-torn country in chaos on the verge of economic collapse and mass starvation.

WINNERS

But the Taliban weren't the only victors. The military industrial complex in the US made a killing, both figuratively and literally.

The inflated profits of armament manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, and General Dynamics saw the share prices of these companies increase by a factor of ten times or more during the war. And no doubt are set to soar even higher as the US continues its attempts to impose "human rights" and "democracy" in pursuit of global domination.

With the Taliban in possession of more materiel than many nations, the Pentagon will surely be looking to make more orders to replace what it has lost in the fighting and left to the Taliban.

The drug cartels also had a win. The UN estimated Afghanistan's opium production at 6,300 tons in 2020, restoring its position as the world's leading source of opium poppies. Prior to the US' invasion, under Taliban rule, the crop had almost been wiped out. With the economy in such a parlous state, so many people living in poverty and struggling for survival, there is an incentive to continue the production of opium if international aid is not forthcoming.

THE "NEW" TALIBAN

The Taliban are known for their oppressive rule and violent methods. They ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 until the US occupation. Under Taliban rule, religious minorities and other Muslims who did not share their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam were not tolerated. The Taliban severely restricted the rights of women and girls, and punishment for such crimes as adultery or theft was brutal.

Following its takeover of the country culminating in the rapid seizure of Kabul last month, the Taliban declared that it had

changed, that it would be more moderate and inclusive of different ethnic groups. That it would not harbour terrorists. That it would rebuild the country for the benefit of its people. At the same time, it made clear that its interpretation of Sunni Islam, based on the strict fundamentalist Deobandi school, would be enforced across the country. This is the same interpretation that it adhered to between 1996 and 2001.

It has already indicated that women and girls will not be allowed to play sport. While it says girls will be allowed to go to school and receive an education, just what this education will be has not been indicated. Segregation of girls and boys will remain. Likewise strict rules will remain for women outside and inside the home.

Just how moderate and inclusive it will be remains to be seen.

EMIRATE

The Taliban declared the country to be the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." The term "emirate" is highly significant. It means that a religious leader or an emir will be the top authority and governance will be based on the Taliban's strict ideological interpretation of Islam – in this instance the Deobandi school. These teachings impact on almost everything in daily life from the home, how people should dress, to the segregation of men and women in public spaces, the treatment of women and girls, daily prayer requirements, and dietary laws.

The Taliban quickly set about appointing an interim government of thirty-three men, with all but three coming from one ethnic group – the Pashtuns. Two are Tajik, and one is Uzbek. There are no representatives

In cold dollar terms the US administration has spent an estimated US\$2.3 trillion (AU\$3.13 trillion) – money that could have been better spent on healthcare, housing, education, and foreign aid.

WHAT'S NEXT?

of the Hazara community or any other ethnic groups, or women.

In line with its declaration of being an emirate, it anointed Mullah Hasan Akhund as acting Prime Minister. He presently remains on a UN sanctions list which may create problems when it comes to Afghanistan being recognised by the international community. Akhund is a longstanding head of the Taliban's powerful decision-making body Rehbari Shura (Supreme Council). He previously served as Foreign Minister and then Deputy Prime Minister during the Taliban's rule from 1996-2001 and was a leading commander.

Four of the acting leaders were held by the US in Guantánamo Bay until they were traded for captured US soldier Bowe Bergdahl in 2014 by the Obama administration: Abdul Haq Wasiq is acting director of intelligence; Mullah Noorullah Noori is acting minister of borders and tribal affairs; Mullah Mohammad Fazil is deputy defence minister; and Mullah Khairullah Khairkhan is acting minister of information and culture. They all participated in the talks with the US held in Doha last year.

According to the Guantánamo Files, published by WikiLeaks, Wasiq "arranged for Al-Qaeda personnel to train Taliban intelligence staff in intelligence methods." He was also reported to be "an Al-Qaeda intelligence member." WikiLeaks also revealed that Noori was wanted "for possible war crimes including the murder of thousands of Shiite Muslims."

Acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani is wanted by the FBI, with a US\$5 million bounty on this head. "We also are concerned by the affiliations and track records of some of the individuals," a US State Department spokesperson said following the naming of the interim government. US imperialism does, as far as its strategic and economic interests are concerned have a lot to be worried about but not just the US.

The Taliban government needs international recognition and economic support to prevent a complete collapse of the economy. It may well adopt a moderate stance to gain that support and develop international relations with the West as well as its neighbours. As for the longer term, will it rule the country differently? That remains to be seen.

In an exclusive interview, Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen told *Global Times* that there is no place for anyone to use Afghanistan against other countries, including its neighbouring countries.

REFUGEES

The UN has warned that up to half a million Afghans could flee by the end of the year. The number will in part depend on the Taliban and neighbouring countries being able to securely close borders.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees have already fled the country in search of safety, and many continue to do so. They include minority groups; interpreters and support personnel (collaborators) previously employed by the US and its allies; former government officials installed by the US; and many others who fear for their safety

under the Taliban. There are also economic refugees, fleeing poverty.

This new flood of refugees creates problems for Afghanistan's neighbours and beyond. Many of those fleeing are currently exiting via Pakistan with a view to venturing beyond. Turkey is one such destination. It already harbours close to five million refugees, including around 3.7 million Syrians. It was actively involved in the training and arming of Uygur and other mercenaries to fight in Syria against the government there. It does not want any more refugees. The EU is another destination. It is already attempting to deal with an influx of refugees.

US STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Pakistan has very close links with the Taliban, to the point where it could be said their victory is in part owed to Pakistan's role in training and equipping the terrorist group's forces. Pakistan has harboured Taliban members, it largely shares the same Islamic ideology, and reportedly still acts as a patron of the "new" Taliban. It has a long, relatively porous border with Afghanistan, considered to be dangerous with disputed demarcation lines between the two countries.

The border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan is tightly guarded by Uzbekistan whose government has installed fortifications along it. The Tajikistan-Afghanistan border is notorious for drug running.

Afghanistan's borders with Iran and China are of strategic interest to US imperialism. The US sees Iran, Syria, Russia, and China as barriers to its global domination.

THREAT TO CHINA

The border with China runs alongside China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region which has a large Muslim population of ethnic Uygurs. China now keeps the border tightly closed. The US has made efforts to spread religious extremism among the Uygur. A previous period of upheaval had been settled with huge investments in education and jobs to bring employment and stability to the region.

Officials from China's foreign ministry told a press conference as recently as July that China still faces the threat of terrorism, especially from the separatist East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) terrorist organisation. The ministry said that ETIM releases terrorist audios and videos online abroad, propagates terrorist ideology, teaches the use of weapons and explosives, and constantly sends its trainees into China to plan and carry out terrorist activities. The group has been responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks since it was founded and still poses a threat to China.

The UN Security Council has listed ETIM as a terrorist organisation and imposed sanctions against it. But it is worrying that late last year the then US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, announced the revocation of a previous decision by the US that designated ETIM as a terrorist organisation.

Wu Xin from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security's counterterrorism bureau described ETIM as an international terrorist

organisation with the capability of conducting transnational terrorist activities, which seriously threatens the security and stability of China and relevant countries and regions.

The Taliban has said there is no place for anyone to use Afghanistan against other countries, including its neighbouring countries.

RARE EARTHS

Apart from Afghanistan's strategic location, the US has an interest in the country's resources – copper, gold, oil, natural gas, uranium, bauxite, coal, iron ore, rare earths, chromium, lead, zinc, gemstones, talc, sulphur, travertine, gypsum, marble, and most importantly lithium. It may have the largest ever discovered deposits of lithium. Its rare earth metals alone are estimated to be worth between one and three trillion US dollars.

Lithium is a key ingredient in the transition to renewable energy. It is used in rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras, and electric vehicles, and in some non-rechargeable batteries for things like heart pacemakers, toys and clocks. It is integral to so many technologies, and thus in high demand but limited known reserves.

The US's defeat and subsequent withdrawal from Afghanistan has the potential to cost US corporations billions of dollars as they shut shop, no longer enjoying the protection of US military forces. The US now hungers after Afghanistan's lithium, but it may have left its run too late.

China has had a memorandum of understanding with the Taliban on mining industry cooperation dating back to 2009. It has a number of current projects in mining and oil, and other investments in communications and road construction. It already has established trade relations and the capacity to assist with agriculture and infrastructure development. China's non-interference in internal affairs in dealings with developing countries stands it in good stead for future participation in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Russia is also well placed to do business with the Taliban.

The US and its allies have a moral responsibility to make an urgent and major contribution to the rebuilding of Afghanistan and to do so in the interests of the Afghan people.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Foreign ministers from the six countries bordering Afghanistan – Pakistan, China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – held an important meeting to discuss Afghanistan on 8th September at the initiative of Pakistan. They issued a joint statement noting that with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan must determine their own future, which should be an "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" process for national peace and reconciliation.

They said that events had proven a military solution was not possible and emphasised the importance of an inclusive political structure in Afghanistan with the participation of all ethnic groups.

They called for the relevant members of

the UN Security Council to take responsibility for peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan by supporting Afghanistan in developing its social and economic infrastructure and providing the people of Afghanistan with vital economic and humanitarian assistance. "The international community should not abandon the people of Afghanistan," the statement said.

It also expressed support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and non-interference in its internal affairs, and noted that the future of Afghanistan should be determined by its people, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter.

The meeting stressed the necessity of forming an open, inclusive governmental structure; which practices moderate and sound internal and external policies; adopts friendly policies towards neighbours of Afghanistan; achieves the shared goals of durable peace, security, safety, and long-term prosperity; and respects the fundamental human rights including those of ethnic groups, women, and children.

On the question of terrorist organisations, it said that they should not be allowed to maintain a foothold on Afghanistan's territory.

They made a commitment to provide medical supplies as well as technical and other assistance to the people of Afghanistan's efforts to fight COVID-19.

Importantly they stressed the need to stop narcotic drugs production in Afghanistan which had increased over the past twenty years causing serious harm to the people of Afghanistan and the international community.

The question of economic integration into the world economy and socio-economic development was also discussed along with the necessity of international organisations to provide the necessary support for their practical implementation.

AFTERMATH

The US has not only caused death, devastation, and destruction on a massive scale but experienced humiliating defeat in the eyes of the international community. It has not given up on Afghanistan which remains of strategic and economic interest. It is now looking at other means of achieving its goals.

As Biden said following the US's official departure from Afghanistan, the "war on terror" will continue in Afghanistan and elsewhere, but by other means. It should also be noted that the US has not completely withdrawn all its operatives.

Afghanistan remains of particular interest with its border with Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region of China. In line with former President Obama's pivot to Asia, the US is also focused on the South China Sea and Taiwan as another point of attack.

The stability of Afghanistan and the willingness and ability of the Taliban to remove all terrorist groups from its territory will be critical to the future stability of the region and of great importance to China in particular. ☼



THE LABOURINTH PROVIDES A RELATABLE AND ELOQUENT METAPHOR FOR CLASS SOLIDARITY

Ky Rees

Part of the HOLD FAST contemporary art festival in St. John's, the one-night exhibition of *The Labourinth* by drag troupe The Phlegm Fatales had me never wanting to clock-out. This exhibition of interactive performance art saw "Phlegmcorp" established inside a closed office building which was rather perfect for their purposes: imagined as a horrific office, where participants were "new hires", walking through a queer version of a fairground haunted house.

Upon entering at Reception, participants received nametags reading "Gary" and then wandered counterclockwise past the Human Resources department, a lewd Customer Service department, followed by an eerie Fabrication display, before finally conducting their exit interviews as they passed the final cubicle. Each setting was staffed with a drag artist from the Phlegm Fatale troupe: Irma Gerd as the manic receptionist toggling between four keyboards; Madame Daddy as the HR rep with an ironically unorganised desk; Wych Hazel as the sadomasochist applying X-rated "service" to customers complaints; Eda Kumquat as the soused senior agent nursing her burn-out; Violet Drake as the warden for \garbagefile (*sic*) who was cast as the "Special Product" on display; and finally the deadpan Liezel Hues for our exit interview. Each room was delightfully campy while maintaining the omnipresent moodscape of disorientation and malaise you would expect for from a (queer) haunted house.

I sat down afterwards with Irma, Eda and \garbagefile (hereafter "Backslash" for ease of reading) for an interview to unpack this riveting work of performance art. Funnily enough, *The Labourinth's* genesis arrived by a happy accident. While brainstorming, the group was already married to a haunted house format; however, it was when one member mispronounced "let's make it like a labyrinth" that inspiration struck! From there the group was sold on the thematic potential of an "office haunted house" setting. Backslash tells us, "We began our discussions with the question of 'how do we as trans people exist within workforces?' And so, we just allowed ourselves to spiral in conversation about our lived experiences." These experiences are characterised by bureaucracy, transphobia, survival sex work, as well as the balm of substance use.

Bringing Phlegmcorp from concept to reality in just six weeks meant many busy double shifts. Moreover, the troupe's aspirations were "limited by the amount we're going to be paid for this artistic labour from a nonprofit arts organisation, which itself has precarious funding." Eda Kumquat offers their own heartfelt story: "I just finished working on a major studio film and worked



20 consecutive days, some of the most stressful of my career. I experienced and am still experiencing burn out. In film and television, there is not a true work-life balance [...] [the job] robbed me of valuable time that I wanted to devote to [*Labourinth*], and it made me really angry and depressed ... working all those days, it took *this joy* from me."

Given the modest availability of festival funding, particularly when split six ways, the troupe scavenged the materials for decoration, innovating from plastic bags and junk donations. However, as all good artists do, they transmuted these ordinary materials into an astounding grand illusion, greater than the sum of its parts.

Backslash notes that "working within the context of non-profits and festivals etcetera, actually forcibly replicates the torturous structures within [wage jobs]." Eda Kumquat adds, "There is a greater conversation that could be had about film and television and how it consumes the workers. And how it truly robs people of experiences that they will never get back." This insight into the relations of production within arts & entertainment under capitalism was painfully clear that night, as Backslash remarks that if they had seriously been injured as a contortionist during their performance, "I would lose my drag gigs and income for the foreseeable future," with no recourse.

In their scripting process, Irma says the group "didn't have one single message" but shared Eda's sentiments that in our society we often "scold each other for doing things wrong that you *can't* do wrong." Backslash interjects that "concepts like gender or money are inventions that have no innate value whatsoever. If we threw the rulebook out, we could go full green and sustainable technology right now! We could just do it, but it'll never happen, because it's agreed there's this system we absolutely have to adhere to,

or the social fabric of the world would fall apart." Backslash, after their perhaps accidental allusion to Marx's *superstructure*, ends with a salient materialist argument that "we're sacrificing the actual *material* fabric of the world for this imaginary *social* fabric."

"We want people to feel kinda frustrated, in a comical campy way, the futility of what they're doing here," says Irma. The Phlegms wanted the audience to share their frustrations with labour, gender and capitalism while walking through Phlegmcorp. Irma elaborates: "You walk in, you're immediately told that you're late. You're asked to sign forms with pens that don't have ink. You're asked to proceed yet hindered from proceeding. Rushed through then told to backtrack to another department."

Nestled in complex layers of criticism, *Labourinth* took direct aim at the bedfellows of neoliberal capitalism, including: *alienation of the worker* (we were all "hired" but left aimless), *commodification of worker's bodies* (the "Special Product" was a contorted and distressed naked body on display behind a plastic enclosure), *manufactured scarcity* (some participants were given required items, paperclips, that others did not have), *carceral capitalism* (the space imposed a feeling of entrapment, including CCTV and signs reminding us "you're here forever"), and the absurdity in the *immutability of both gender and money* which they identified as both being social constructs. These concepts and elements were clear to me as a participant, and bravo to the performers for communicating these themes entirely through ad-libbing and improv!

The setting complimented the actors' efforts well. Curated soundscapes meant to evoke emotional responses changed from room to room, with great attention to props and other small details. Some noteworthy examples were the use of distorted audio files

from corporate worker orientation videos, which made me shudder with my own orientation nightmares. Another that hit even closer to home was a garbled track playing a *real-life* transphobic altercation Eda had with two coworkers concerning their gender identity. These intense moments were always carefully tempered, like when I passed by a damp, quarter-metre crawlspace leading into the building's plumbing – not much larger than the lamp illuminating it was a cheeky sign saying "Gary's Office" – which made one lust for a drab cubicle instead.

One of the most powerful moments involved the metaphor of the coveted red paper clip. The most innocuous object within the exhibit, a red paper clip, was a deeply relatable and eloquent metaphor for class solidarity.

"Early on, you're reminded to leave a gift for Marge, whose birthday it is today," recounts Backslash. "But you couldn't care enough to remember that or get her a gift. Luckily, you are told one of her favourite things are red paper clips." You are given a paper clip at Reception when you fill out your hiring forms with Irma and are told it is your "Welcome Bonus." Immediately participants are given a choice: show solidarity and give away their "Bonus" to Marge or keep it for themselves. Irma explains, "The reason why it was a red paper clip is that urban legend of a man who traded a red paper clip for a sparkly pen, then the pen for a notebook ... he kept trading up and trading up until eventually he traded for a house." Irma says the red paper clip was meant as a commentary on meritocracy, the myth that someday we might all be wealthy if we simply made smarter financial decisions than giving \$5 to Marge's birthday fund.

People's Voice

This insight into the relations of production within arts & entertainment under capitalism was painfully clear that night.

CAN UNIONS TURN THE COVID CRISIS INTO A “1945 MOMENT”?

Ben Chacko

For [Communications Workers Union] (CWU) leader Dave Ward, the crises Britain faces as it emerges from the Covid nightmare must be a “1945 moment.”

This is not just an analogy for far-reaching change. As the communications union's motion Building Collectivism points out, we not only need to “rebuild from a crisis but to tackle the very same issues we face today that the Beveridge report highlighted then.”

Eight decades after the Attlee Labour government laid the foundations of the welfare state, Britain is stalked by poverty, hunger, a shredded social security system, public services hollowed out by underfunding and outsourcing. It's time for a “new social settlement.”

Only he's not looking to the Labour Party to deliver it. “This [Trade Union Congress] (TUC) Congress is a focal point to relaunch, to bring people together, to emphasise across the trade union movement that there is no other game in town here.

“We have a new generation of trade union leaders coming forward and I'm quite excited by a lot of what I'm hearing from them.

“There is a determined emphasis on rebuilding trade union power and a recognition that if we can't deliver change no-one will — the Labour Party isn't going to do it for us.

“At the same time I would appeal to every trade union leader in this country to recognise that we can't change things on our own.

“We need to bring the trade union movement together to build a coalition across race, gender and class, to combine all the causes we fight for into an overarching campaign.”

Morning Star readers will be familiar with the campaign Ward has in mind — the New Deal for Workers. In Britain employers have too much power and workers too little.

This has led to a prolonged squeeze on wages, driving down workers' expectations on everything from holiday and sick pay entitlement to pensions or safety at work.

The very same culture has seen a progressive deterioration of the “social wage” — the quality and range of public services, the support we have a right to expect from society when old, sick or out of work.

These developments are

inextricably interlinked, which is why the CWU is calling for co-ordinated, joint action by unions in pursuit of shared industrial and political demands.

“There are a number of reasons why we should be upping the ante on pay right now,” he says. “Labour shortages in some sectors are putting pressure on employers to raise pay, while the whole key worker debate thrown up by the pandemic provides opportunities for the movement to lead the national conversation — to make pay, rights at work, proper contracts and better public services the main political issues of the day.”

The New Deal for Workers has been TUC policy for some years, but Ward thinks there has never been a better time to engage workers to fight for it.

The union is calling for the existing TUC New Deal Charter to be sharpened to focus on key overarching demands and for unions to work towards a national rally next spring.

But a big demo won't change anything unless it is the culmination of a longer process of organising work. Ward wants to bring as many trade unions as possible on board with a national tour to promote the New Deal demands, with union leaders addressing town hall and high street meetings up and down the country.

“Let's take the New Deal campaign to the people. And let's take it to the members.

“Each union needs to work out: what are our key battles at the moment, and how do these fit into the wider strategy of winning a new social settlement?”

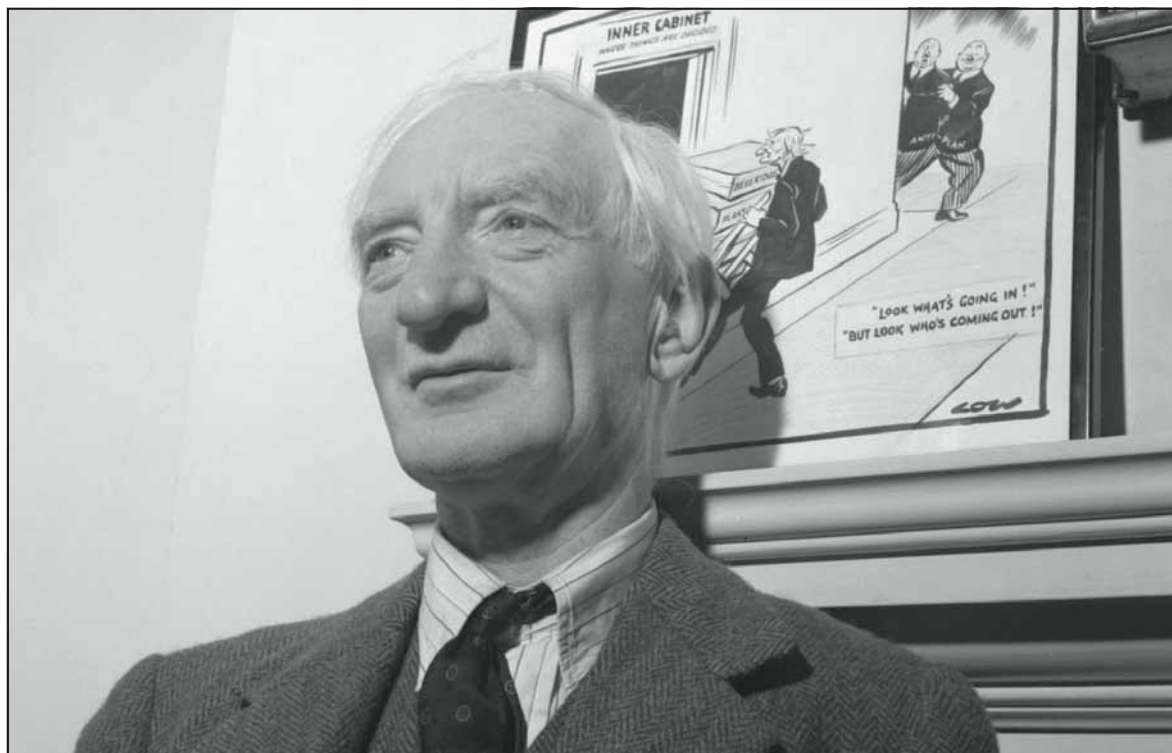
The union has followed this approach when dealing with Royal Mail. “We fight for members' interests by working actively to help shape the future of the service.

“That means looking with management at ways to stem the decline in letters when that can be done. It means ensuring growth sectors like parcel delivery remain part of the core business and aren't hived off — that's a battle we've won in Royal Mail.

“And it means looking at the social role of the postal worker, the potential of post offices as community hubs. And we're working with some of the metro mayors and councils to develop this.”

Identifying allies to build labour movement power in localities is a key part of making the New Deal a success.

“Who can we work with to build



The Beveridge Report, officially entitled Social Insurance and Allied Services (Cmd. 6404), is a government report, published in November 1942, influential in the founding of the welfare state in the United Kingdom.

collectivism and rebuild our movement from the ground up, renewing our connections with working people? We need to reach out to everyone who runs an organisation modelled on collectivism — foodbanks, renters' associations.

“I'll be making clear at Congress to every union that supports our motions — we're asking you to engage branches now. Win members to the idea that for the first time in recent history the trade union movement is coming together to campaign around these demands.

“We're asking you to look at what you can do with local forces, trades councils, community groups, some of the better Labour politicians out in the regions who are achieving things on the ground.”

For Ward this is a far more productive approach than focusing on the Labour Party nationally, even though the CWU was one of the staunchest supporters of the Jeremy Corbyn leadership and Labour's leftward shift from 2015-20.

“What Jeremy had were the policies — policies in my view that were exactly right in terms of shifting power and wealth to ordinary people.

“What we didn't have, and clearly this was partly because of the media demonisation and the relentless attacks from his own party, was the ability to cut through to people.

“That's what we need to address. Often we seem to be talking to the wrong people. We have excellent left campaigning organisations that hold excellent rallies, but are the manual workers, the council workers, the low-paid gig economy workers at these rallies?”

“We need to be talking to the workers in the red wall seats who voted for Boris Johnson.”

Part of doing so means developing a united labour movement narrative for change, one that builds working-class unity across race and sex but does not devolve into a checklist of apparently unrelated “progressive causes.”

Ward has argued before that building workers' consciousness of ourselves as a class with common class interests is key to defeating racism and sexism.

“And people will join our movement if they see we are winning things in the workplace, and making a difference at local level.

“I can't get excited when I hear people say: ‘Oh, there could be an election in two years' time and then things might change.’ Unless we are already winning on industrial and political fronts when an election comes, it isn't going to mean change.

“Let the trade union movement come together and the politics of the Labour Party can follow from that. Clearly Keir Starmer doesn't

have a winning strategy and some of what's happening in Labour is wrong.

“But what we must learn from some of the recent union elections is how disorientating a focus on the Labour Party is for trade unionists.

“If you throw your whole union into the middle of internal Labour Party differences, frankly, you are not going to bring the members with you in the fight for a new deal.”

Ward's view of that fight is ambitious and all-encompassing: the CWU motions call for union branches and trades councils to get to work building a social movement in support of the New Deal by “engaging community and appropriate national membership organisations” and ask the TUC general council to agree a plan before the year is out for “cross-union action ... to stop and reverse the privatisation of the Nation Health Service (NHS), defend public services, guarantee everyone a living income through the welfare system, establish a fully funded national care service and promote a national mission to abolish in-work poverty.”

But he insists that there has never been a better time for unions to seize the initiative and leave the “predictable, run-of-the-mill politics at Westminster” to catch up, or not, when it can.

Morning Star ☺

Subscription to **The Guardian**

12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc/\$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc/\$80 solidarity)

Special offer: 10 issues for \$10 (new subscriptions only)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order (Payable to “Guardian Publications”)

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

or by credit card: Mastercard Visa *\$20 minimum on cards

Card# _____

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Franc Stregone

Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by
Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
is taken by **T Pearson**,
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

September 21

MOVING TO RENEWABLES

• David Shoebridge, MLC, Greens NSW

6:30 PM Tuesdays – Hotel Harry – Wentworth Avenue Surry Hills

Sarat Chandran 02 9674 9179 psaratchandran@gmail.com

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

CHINA ISSUES GUIDELINE ON DEEPENING REFORM OF ECO-COMPENSATION MECHANISM

China has released a guideline on deepening the reform of the country's ecological compensation mechanism to speed up the building of ecological civilisation.

The guideline, jointly released by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, details measures for the country to realise long-term ecological compensation goals set for 2025 and 2035.

By 2025, an ecological compensation mechanism that is aligned with economic and social development should be basically built up. The classified compensation system targeting ecological elements such as rivers, natural forests and wetlands, and the comprehensive compensation system that features fiscal support will be improved.

In the meantime, a market-oriented and diversified compensation pattern will be formed with the whole society more actively participating in ecological protection.

By 2035, the country will form an ecological compensation mechanism that meets the requirements of ecological civilisation in the new era, according to the document.

The classified compensation system

will take into account factors including the economic and social development of the ecological protection areas, and the protection costs of diverse ecological elements.

Efforts will be made to explore a protection mode that facilitates local governments to strengthen coordination in practising ecological protection measures, said the document.

While focusing on national ecological security priorities, the country will enhance the comprehensive compensation system with policies that conform to the financial capacity and promote equal access to basic public services.

Efforts will be made to give full play to the role of market mechanism to promote diversified compensation and help regions that conduct ecological protection measures obtain benefits, so as to encourage the whole society to participate in ecological protection.

According to the document, the country will accelerate the building of a national market for trading energy use rights and carbon emission rights, which is to involve voluntary emission reduction projects on greenhouse gases in the fields of forestry,



renewable energy and methane utilisation.

To expand market-oriented financing channels, financial institutions, qualified non-financial firms and insurers are encouraged to provide green services and products, the document added.

Supporting policies regarding the rule of law, ecological environment monitoring, and fiscal and taxation will also be introduced to

deepen reform of the country's ecological compensation mechanism.

Related parties should take their responsibilities to protect ecological environment, and mechanisms to evaluate and supervise the implementation of the policies regarding ecological protection will be further improved, the document said.

People's Daily ★

VIETNAM APPROVES HAYAT-VAX COVID-19 VACCINE FOR EMERGENCY USE

The Ministry of Health has just conditionally approved a COVID-19 vaccine called Hayat-Vax for urgent use in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it the seventh COVID-19 vaccine urgently approved in Vietnam.

Hayat-Vax vaccine is a suspension injection. Each 0.5 ml dose contains 6.5 units of inactivated SARS-CoV-2 antigen (vero cells).

The vaccine has been semi-finished by

the Beijing Institute of Biological Products Co., Ltd. Of the China National Biotech Group Company Limited and packaged and delivered from Julphar (Gulf Pharmaceutical Industries) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Drug Administration of Vietnam was asked to license the import of the vaccine while the Administration of Science Technology and Training was assigned to select and guide the qualified units to assess the

vaccine's safety and efficiency based on consultancy from the Health Ministry's advisory council on use of vaccines and biologicals.

Hayat-Vax is the seventh COVID-19 vaccine urgently approved by the Ministry of Health. Previously, the Ministry of Health had approved six other COVID-19 vaccines, including: AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson (Janssen vaccine), Sinopharm's Vero Cell, and Sputnik V.

Vietnam currently has five vaccines

against COVID-19 being injected, including: AstraZeneca, Sputnik V, Pfizer, Moderna and Vero Cell. The manufacturers of these vaccines all recommend two shots.

As of the 10th of September, Vietnam has injected more than 26 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, of which about 4.3 million people have received two doses.

Nhân Dân ★

CUBA INITIATES WHO PREQUALIFICATION OF ITS VACCINES

Laura Mercedes Giráldez

False information reported on CNN, regarding Cuban vaccines and the World Health Organisation, was debunked by Dr Eduardo Martínez Díaz, and WHO representative Dr José Moya

Cuba is the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop its own vaccines to combat COVID-19, with five candidates, three already approved

for emergency use by the national regulatory authority, and has now begun the process of prequalification of its immunogens before the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The information was announced in a meeting held September 2 between BioCubaFarma's president, Dr Eduardo Martínez Díaz, and the PAHO/WHO representative in Cuba, Dr José Moya, who described the meeting as cordial, welcoming

the interest expressed by our country to begin the prequalification of its vaccines, and noted that international media reports citing an alleged WHO disqualification of Cuban drugs are based on the manipulation of statements made by one of the organisation's officials.

A recent CNN report alleged that the Cuban government did not receive an emergency use license for its vaccine against COVID-19 from the WHO and,

therefore, it cannot be purchased through the PAHO Revolving Fund.

BioCubaFarma responded on its Twitter account, stating, "Once again information is manipulated to affect Cuba and its image."

"This is false information, our vaccine has already been authorised for emergency use by Cecmed, a regulatory authority of reference in the region and rec-

ognised by the WHO itself," the post continued.

"The process for its recognition by the WHO has not yet begun, so it is impossible that an evaluation has been issued. Considering the respect which WHO/PAHO deserves, its history of cooperation with Cuba and the many lives that Abdala can save, let the truth be told," BioCubaFarma insisted.

Granma ★



Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au

cpa@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

Media
guardian@cpa.org.au
amr@cpa.org.au

Adelaide Sally Mitchell sa@cpa.org.au 0413 762 435
PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014

Brisbane 0499 476 540 bris@cpa.org.au
PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179

Canberra act@cpa.org.au

Darwin Vinnie Molina darwin@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872

Melbourne Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au
Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053

Head Office (Sydney)

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle newcastle@cpa.org.au

Perth Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872
PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906

Western NSW Allan Hamilton western.nsw@cpa.org.au
121 McKay St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590

Sydney District syd.dist.comm@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844 Surry Hills (head office)

Tasmania Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550

Wollongong wollongong@cpa.org.au