



“CLIMATE WARS” ONE STEP FORWARD

Franc Stregone

As of writing, a bill placing into law Labor’s forty-three per cent emissions reduction target by 2030 has passed the lower house. The bill also places into law that the national energy market is eighty-two per cent renewables by 2030. The bill is expected to pass the Senate. However, the bill did not pass without modifications.

While the Australian Labor Party did not need crossbench support in the lower house, it understood the strategic importance of support from the Teals, and it largely needed Greens support in the Senate.

Speaking to the climate bill’s passage in the lower house prime minister Anthony Albanese stated that “I am very pleased that the climate legislation has passed the House of Representatives [...]. This is a fulfilment of a core promise that we made at the election [...].”

Independent MP Zali Steggall appreciated the government’s collaborative spirit noting that “there is a genuine desire from senior ministers in the government to work with us, they have heard the calls from our communities.”

Beyond the climate target, the bill also legislates several items, among them:

- Allows for further reductions beyond the 43 per cent target;
- Further greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets required for 2035, 2040, and 2045; and
- The Climate Change Authority will be guided by international goals to keep global warming well below two degrees.

These concrete actions in tackling our climate disaster so early into the new parliamentary term are welcomed news for many who have been waiting for Australia to take steps forward and bodes well for future action. However, not everyone was happy.

The Coalition voted against the bill despite some of its “moderates,” such as Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Birmingham, suggesting the Coalition should either vote for the bill or not oppose it (for more on the Coalition’s rhetoric, see page three).

However, one Liberal MP did break with her colleagues, Bridget Archer, who reasoned that she did not believe climate change to be a left or right issue, stating that it “transcends age, gender, political beliefs and socioeconomic circumstances” which was evident in the people she spoke to from Baptist ministers to business leaders.



Continued on page 2 Photo: Markus Spiske – Unsplash License.

While the Greens were able to get concessions into the climate bill, party leadership made it known that the fight for more climate action wasn’t over.

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PROMISING: WORKPLACE REFORMS ON THE HORIZON

In an honest assessment, the Albanese government has come out the gate with a series of important industrial reforms: an increased minimum wage, paid family, and domestic violence leave, and a move towards the abolition of the ABCC.

And, according to Labor, more positive reforms are to come.

Earlier this month, Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke indicated, in a speech to the Australian Industry Group in Canberra, that the government would be looking to axe an employer's ability to cut workers' pay by utilising the "nuclear option" of getting rid of enterprise agreements. Said Burke:

"The solution to a decade of wage stagnation cannot be a heavy-handed tactic that causes wages to go backwards. If you want wages moving, a tactic that allows for 40 per cent pay cuts is not in the national interest. On face value, I cannot see how this tactic can possibly be justified."

Qualifying the tactic as a "rort," the comments were warmly welcomed by ACTU Secretary Sally McManus who said: "After a decade of inaction and neglect under the previous Government it's encouraging to see a Government standing up for working people and doing what is needed to get wage growth moving again."

This tactic has been recently attempted to be used by Svitzer who have been refusing to come to the negotiation table to ensure that its seagoing workforce get decent pay and conditions.

Furthermore, Burke is looking to remove the "red-tape" that disincentivises multi-employer collective bargaining. While stopping short of union demands for industry-level bargaining, Burke stating that:

"Sometimes you can get a situation where the employer and the workers agree and the red tape in the system blows the whole thing up [...]. Ultimately if an employer and their workforce agree, and the union agrees, and people are going forwards in their wages, then why would we want to stand in the way of that?"

Allowing for multi-employer bargaining moves industrial relations towards a friendlier terrain for pattern bargaining, in which unions make identical pay demands of employers in the same industry.

While keeping the demand for industry bargaining, where *all* workers in an industry can have a common set of pay and conditions, giving workers' dignity in life, is the goal, this is a step forward for workers' rights in Australia.

What is important is that we continue to fight for the right to strike. Australia has Draconian laws around this fundamental, internationally recognised right. Under Australian laws, workers can only strike during bargaining, and even then under certain conditions such as giving their employer three clear days notice of the strike.

Without a fundamental restructuring of our industrial relations system, many of these well-intentioned reforms won't have an impact. Let's continue to fight for better pay and conditions!

"CLIMATE WARS" ONE STEP FORWARD

Continued from page 1

MORE TO BE DONE

While the Greens were able to get concessions into the climate bill, party leadership made it known that the fight for more climate action wasn't over. Writing on Twitter, Greens leader Adam Bandt wrote:

"Extremely disappointed that Labor made it clear during negotiations that they still back new coal and gas projects.

"Right now there are 114 new coal and gas projects in the pipeline.

"You cannot put the fire out while pouring more fuel on it.

"We will ramp up our fight to stop Labor opening coal and gas mines. Using our numbers in the parliament we will now turn to putting further limits on coal and gas."

Additionally, the Australian Conservation Foundation stated that while the new climate bill is "an important step forward" and had been "significantly improved" due to good faith negotiations that they would "continue to push to improve the climate bill as it is debated in the Senate, advocating for the inclusion of stronger language to make it easier for legislated targets to be updated when Australia strengthens its targets as part of the Paris Agreement."

A WORKING PARLIAMENT

The public should view the passage of this climate bill as an extremely promising development beyond the bill itself.

In his victory speech, Albanese stated that he wanted to "promote unity" and that he wanted to show that collaboration and working with people was a "strength" and "not [a] weakness." These were promising words, however, that almost appeared to be empty rhetoric when it came to the politics of the climate bill.

Speaking on the Greens, Albanese was hostile and dismissive at times. While stating that his party would "consider" "sensible amendments," he spoke frankly about the bill: "We'll put forward the legislation before the parliament; every member of the house and every member of the Senate should vote for it. If they don't, they'll be held accountable for it."

However, as noted above, the ALP did work with the crossbench, correcting previous mistakes. Speaking on negotiating with the Greens, Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen stated that while the government believed it had a mandate, it wanted to work across parliament with those who had the "nation's interests at heart."

It should be commended that the Greens and the ALP, whose relationship can be fraught, were able to come to the table and develop sensible policies on climate action. It is in the nation's interests that there is a united front against the Coalition and reactionary forces in parliament and that policies that can correct the near-decade of economic and social decline be implemented.

However, we should be under no illusions. Currently, there are no socialist forces inside parliament. As a result, legislation will always attempt to reform the system, not change it. While these policies can have a general ameliorating effect on the adverse nature of capitalism, it is not a substitute for a radical transformation of our society. We must continue to fight to demand more radical change through building our labour movement and getting the working class conscious of the class war that has been waged upon it. Only when we have a militant, conscious working class will we be able to enact true change. Until then, we should work to support (while providing caution) positive parliamentary developments which can improve the conditions of workers in the intermediary period. ✪

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NO SURPRISE: DODGY DUTTON CONTINUES “CLIMATE WAR”

Franc Stregone

With a new Labor government, Australia finally has some concrete plans for climate action (see page one).

Climate change was a major issue in the last federal election, and the Coalition hemorrhaged several seats because of its lack of response and inactivity. As a result, you would think the Coalition would use the next parliamentary term for reflection and start developing a serious climate action agenda.

Instead, true to form, opposition leader Peter Dutton took a more anti-climate action turn by continuing to promote nuclear energy as an alternative for Australia's energy sector, stating:

“The latest [nuclear] technology provides zero emissions, it's a cheap technology. The nonsense that Chris Bowen is carrying on with about nuclear being expensive compared to wind and solar – it's a nonsense argument. [...]”

The Coalition will show Australians that we are prepared to undertake this honest and informed debate, which has alluded our country for too long.

“The fact we can't have a discussion about nuclear in our country in the 21st century when France is investing more into nuclear, when the United Kingdom is, when Germany is, when Italy is, China, Asia – it's nonsense.”

Are these claims by Dutton true? Let's look at the facts:

CLAIM 1: Nuclear being expensive compared to wind and solar is “nonsense.”

FALSE. Economically speaking, nuclear energy costs are **rising**. According to the 2019 World Nuclear Industry Status Report (WNISR), nuclear energy cost US\$112-189/megawatt per hour (MWh) in 2018 compared to the previous year (US\$112-143/MWh). On the other hand, solar and wind costs **decreased**, with solar costing US\$36-44/MWh compared to US\$43-48 in 2017 and onshore wind costing US\$29-56/MWh down from US\$30-60/MWh in 2017.

On top of this, we are experiencing a climate emergency. Therefore, in addition to the above financial costs, the time costs to build energy solutions must also be factored. Here, nuclear energy also fails. According to the same report, “new nuclear plants take 5-17 years to build than utility-scale solar or onshore wind power, so existing fossil-fueled plants emit far more CO₂ while awaiting substitution by the nuclear option. **Stabilising the climate is urgent, nuclear power is slow**” (emphasis ours).

Furthermore, there are severe health and environmental risks with uranium mining, a mineral needed for nuclear energy. According to the peer-reviewed journal *Canadian Family Physician*, uranium has the “potential to cause a spectrum of adverse health effects ranging from renal failure and diminished bone growth to damage to the DNA.” These health problems are a reality for Aboriginal people living near the Ranger uranium mine. During the forty years of operation, the region has seen stillborn rates double those of other Aboriginal communities living elsewhere near the Top End, with cancer rates almost fifty per cent higher (*The Conversation*).

The outcomes on the environment are just as bad. Gavin Mudd, Associate Professor of Environmental Engineering at RMIT University, stated that in his twenty-four years of experience, he has not seen – among “Australia's eleven major uranium mines or



“China is now the undisputable global leader of renewable energy expansion worldwide.” Photo: Jiri Rezac – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

numerous small sites” – a successful case study of mine rehabilitation, the process by which sites are made safe and stable after mining is complete. As a result, sites like the Rum Jungle Mine “left a toxic legacy of acidic and radioactive drainage and a biologically dead Finniss River” (*The Conversation*).

With these kinds of costs is the expense of nuclear energy really “nonsense”?

CLAIM 2: Coalition is prepared to undertake an honest and informed debate.

FALSE. The Coalition had almost a decade to address climate change, and what did it do? Worse than nothing, it actively engaged in climate change denialism. Many of the same politicians who were leading the Coalition when it was in government are leading it in opposition – what has been their record?

Let's start with Dutton, who, in 2015, in what he thought was a private moment, joked about the climate crisis facing the Pacific Islands. Noting that a meeting was running long he quipped that it was running on “Cape York time,” adding that “time doesn't mean anything when you're about to have water lapping at your door.” It was not until this year – a whole seven years later – that Dutton acknowledged the “joke” was in “poor taste,” conveniently **after** he was elected opposition leader.

Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry Jonathon Duniam also doesn't have the best record when it comes to issues affecting his portfolio. In 2019, when Australia was experiencing some of its worse bushfires, Duniam voted **against** declaring the situation a climate emergency. Last year, he voted **in favour** of extending the Acland mine for another fourteen years.

This is to say nothing about Shadow

Minister for Climate Change and Energy Ted O'Brien who, in 2016, voted **in favour** of reducing funding to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, discontinuing its practice of providing grants for renewable energy research and development. He just stated that “legislating targets hands control over major infrastructure projects to green activists”.

The reality is the Coalition hasn't been honest about climate change for years. If its prepared to engage in an “honest and informed debate” it needs to start acknowledging the realities of climate change. Voting against a basic climate target signs that the Coalition isn't ready for such discussions.

CLAIM 3: Many countries are investing more in nuclear energy.

PARTIALLY TRUE. China is investing in nuclear energy, as is the United Kingdom, and France. However, according to *Politico*, Germany intends to continue phasing out nuclear energy by the end of this year. By virtue of a 2011 referendum, Italy voted overwhelmingly in favour of rejecting nuclear power (ninety-four per cent), with no new projects on the horizon.

That said, despite pursuing nuclear energy, China is still developing renewable energy projects. In fact, according to the International Energy Agency, “China is now the undisputable global leader of renewable energy expansion worldwide,” and more than one-third of solar and onshore wind capacity is located in China.

With France, known for its heavy use of nuclear energy, the future doesn't look so bright. According to the WNISR 2021:

“The impact of a changing climate on the operation of nuclear power plants is evident. Nuclear power reactors are vulnerable to an array of direct and indirect climate-linked

disruptions. This vulnerability is expected to become more pronounced as the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, and severe storms increase because of climate change.

“In France, so far, weather-related disruptions on the nuclear fleet have usually remained mild, with production loss over the past six years representing <0.5 per cent of total. However, short-term impact can reach several per cent over several weeks and the capacity loss has reached up to ten per cent of the installed nuclear capacity. **It is also worth noting that some past events caused a drop in availability large enough to have an impact on the electricity market and, in rare occasions, nuclear safety was at stake**” (emphasis ours).

Based on the above, does anyone think France should be a model for nuclear energy infrastructure?

Dutton's use of *argumentum ad populum* – or “appeal to popularity” fallacy – leaves a lot to be desired. While some countries are investing more in nuclear energy, that is not a reason for Australia to invest in this technology.

It's time for Dutton and the Coalition to stop playing games. Renewable energies are clearly the leading alternative to fossil fuels. The kinds of “honest and informed” debates about how we develop a renewables sector acknowledge the urgency of climate change as the motivating factor for this new direction. By suggesting nuclear energy as an alternative, the Coalition is unwilling to accept the urgency for climate action. ✪

“Stabilising the climate is urgent, nuclear power is slow.”

BAIL LAWS ARE NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

B Curphey

In early August, the Final Report of the Inquiry into Children Affected by Parental Incarceration was tabled in the Victorian parliament. The Report made damning findings in regard to the current system of bail in Victoria, which has implications for all states and territories.

It is estimated that around 45,000 children in Victoria will have a parent in prison at some point during their childhood, or around five per cent of the general population. Unsurprisingly given the grossly disproportionate rates of incarceration that Indigenous Australians face, Indigenous children are overrepresented in this statistic. Around twenty per cent of Indigenous children will have an incarcerated parent at some point in their childhood.

The Report found that having incarcerated parents is a significant disadvantage in a child's life. Having a parent in prison can delay childhood development, impact emotional and social wellbeing, and in general lead to poor health outcomes (mental and physical) for affected children. Thus, it can lead to intergenerational trauma and a repeating cycle of incarceration across multiple generations.

Across the past few decades, successive Victorian parliaments have strengthened bail laws to make it increasingly harder to get bail. As a result, incarceration rates in the state have steadily increased. As it stands, more Aboriginal women are on remand in Victoria (meaning they have not been convicted of a crime), than are serving a prison sentence for a crime they've been convicted for. Women and Indigenous people generally, as well as children and young people, and those living with a disability, are also disproportionately affected by the current bail laws.

Reason Party MP Fiona Patten has called Victoria's current bail system "dysfunctional." Victoria



Photo: Pinterest

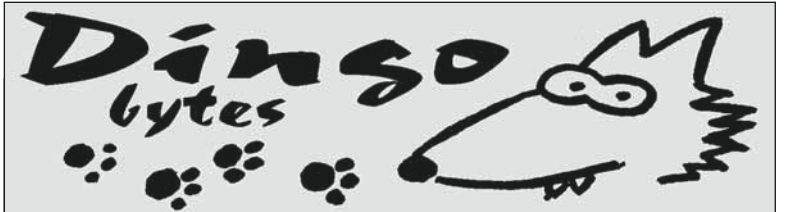
has "reverse onus" laws which require the accused to show "compelling reasons" why they should be granted bail. A judge cannot grant bail if a person does not meet this very high threshold.

Furthermore, an ever increasing laundry list of offences is captured by these harsh laws. It is no longer just serious and violent offences that are subject to the "compelling reasons" test, but repeat property crimes such as shoplifting have also made the list.

Harsh bail laws violate the most fundamental norm of our criminal justice system: that one is innocent until proven guilty of a crime. And worst of all, they are not effective to solve the problem they were designed to address. In Victoria, these harsh laws were introduced to prevent serious violence (usually by men). In reality, women are often denied bail because it is not safe for them to go home due to family violence; because they are mentally ill; or because they are experiencing homelessness.

The Report adds another damning layer to this problem. Harsher bail laws are having a detrimental impact not just on Victorian adults, but on Victoria's children too. This Report is a good opportunity for the whole country to reflect on the purpose of bail laws and whose interests they serve. There is very little evidence that incarceration is an effective antidote to crime, and ample evidence that it does much more harm than good.

A truly just outcome would recognise the social determinants of crime, as well as the vulnerabilities that make it more likely that certain people – and not necessarily the dangerous cons the bail laws are aimed at – will come into contact with the criminal justice system. We need stronger community supports for people experiencing family violence, mental illness, and homelessness, as well as programs to divert young people from the criminal justice system. Locking innocent people up is never the answer. ✨



The proposal by the Albanese government for an Indigenous Voice in parliament would be a body which makes representations to parliament on matters that affect Indigenous peoples. But only if a referendum, Albanese says will take place in this term of parliament, gives it the thumbs up. Thomas Mayor is a Torres Strait Islander man and a signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He notes the significance of the Voice and the contradictions of its critics, with former Coalition governments claiming on the one hand that it would be a third chamber in parliament and on the other that it is "virtue signalling"; just words. "We should start working for a Yes vote now," Mayor urges. "[Critics] say it won't address issues such as domestic violence and incarceration rates. This is false. Domestic violence in our communities is not a matter of our DNA as Indigenous people. It is a matter of policy failures, prejudice and harmful legislation from parliaments who refuse to listen to us on how the issue can be addressed. Domestic violence is prevalent in communities where housing is crowded. Where poverty is entrenched. Where water is undrinkable. Where traumas continue to be inflicted. Indigenous incarceration rates are so high because we have justice systems that are skewed against our people. We know this. But we are merely three per cent of the population, we don't have the means to hold parliament to account to address the root cause of these issues. Establishing a constitutionally guaranteed Voice is the most practical action we can take."

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble. Wages for Australian workers will continue to be cut in real terms until June 2024, according to projections released by the Reserve Bank of Australia. The RBA also predicts that wage growth has barely picked up: only reaching 2.6 per cent for the year to the June quarter, up from 2.4 per cent in the 22nd March quarter, despite inflation surging ahead to 6.1 per cent and expected to reach 7.75 per cent by the end of the year. Workers will also be stung with domestic retail, gas and electricity prices expected to increase by ten to fifteen per cent over the second half of 2022 according to the RBA, on top of steep rises to mortgage repayments. Big business is passing the increased costs on to consumers, while corporate profits are at record highs: all of it a recipe of explosive ingredients.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: Big oil. Shell, Chevron, Exxon Mobil, and BP posted global record profits according to half-yearly earnings, off the back of rising world energy prices. Half-yearly profits for all companies together had almost doubled to US\$55.2 billion, up from US\$28.7 billion for the same period last year. These companies have paid little or no tax in Australia. Workers employed by Shell on the Prelude offshore facility have been taking industrial action in pursuit of job security and career progression claims after eighteen months of fruitless negotiations.

Fight for the Future

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

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

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs. The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

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

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VICTORIA: IT'S FINE TO PROTEST, SO LONG AS YOU PAY FOR IT

Valentin Cartillier

Daniel Andrews' Victorian Labor government has once again proven its deep commitment and thoughtful approach to environmental sustainability by pushing a bill through parliament that nearly doubles the fines and jail sentences protesters can receive at logging sites.

The ironic name of this law is the *Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022*. The Labor and Coalition government made for cozy bedfellows in getting it passed. Under this law would see protesters who "illegally" enter timber harvesting zones to disrupt workers face twelve months jail time or \$21,000 in fines. The Andrews government pledged back in 2030 to end logging in Victoria's native forests, so perhaps they're just trying to let the industry go gangbusters, just to temporarily quell the discontent, before shutting it down?

It is undeniable that logging is an important industry for a lot of towns and workers, as pointed out by CFMEU National Secretary Michael O'Connor in 2019. It's a fine balancing act, you can't just pull the rug out from an entire industry, leaving an enormous number of workers to fend for themselves in an already precarious job market. But on the other hand, real advances need to be made to address climate change, and protect native forests. Hence there is an imperative for a just transition scheme. But the state government has fallen off the tightrope in this balancing act: they've reduced the previously promised amount for a transition scheme from \$500 million to \$150 million. Thus both workers and the environment suffer. How's that for a spectacle?

A letter to the Andrews government, signed by the United Workers Union (UWU), the Victorian branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), the Australian Service Union's (ASU) Victorian

private sector branch and its Victorian and Tasmanian authorities and services branch, stated:

"Already Australia has some of the most restrictive laws around industrial action in the world. In the context of a climate crisis, the right to protest must be advanced not diminished."

A timely reminder that if you give an inch, they'll take a mile. Even through the fog of the COVID-19 lockdowns, Victorians ought to clearly recall the Andrews government's attempts to pull a fast one like this before. Shouting from the rooftops that there'd be a significant easing of lockdown restrictions, to the jubilation of many, in practically the same breath, they muttered that the tree clearing efforts at Djab Wurrung would recommence to make way for a road.

Noble intentions don't count for much without action. The Andrews government's alleged progressive move towards environmental concerns seems empty when you look at the fact that they reduced

the industry transition fund from \$500 million to \$150 million. This reveals a very easy alliance between the capitalist class and its bureaucratic representatives in the state, the politicians. The state proclaims its environmentalist intentions by banning foresting, then makes it prohibitively expensive and dangerous to protest the ongoing deforestation. Then in a particularly wicked and ingenious move, gets to paint anti-deforestation protesters as anti-worker, while the capitalist class watches in glee from the sideline. To be truly committed to a "just transition," the government must commit to consulting with workers, not only with training in a "new" industry but also in the decision-making process of these work sites. The government cannot simply advance technology

that only benefits the capitalists; workers need secure work that goes along with it.

It's easy to use an illusion of progressivism to harm workers, like killing two birds with one stone. If a worker wants to defend their rights they can be labelled as anti-environmentalist, while, at the same time, the state government can maintain the appearance of actually implementing sustainable environmental policy.

It needs to be kept at the front of our minds that just because a Labor government is in power doesn't mean that we can let our guard down. Regardless of who's running the joint, at a state or federal level, Labor or Liberal, the State is ultimately the servant of one master, Capital. ✪

MEMORIAL HELD IN SYDNEY FOR BELOVED COMRADE

A mass memorial was held for Sydney environmental and trade union activist Ishtiaq Varlin, 28, on Saturday 6th August at Alexandria town hall following his sudden and unexpected death on 25th July. Over 200 comrades, friends, and family members of Ishtiaq from a wide range of socialist and left political parties, organisations and collectives attended. Attending organisations included members of the NSW Greens, the Jura books collective, the Australian Student Environment Network, as well as members of the Communist Party of Australia, black flag Sydney, and other socialist organisations. Ishtiaq was known to members of the CPA for some time and was a co-worker with several members of the logistics and manufacturing branch in a Sydney

warehouse. Here he collaborated with party members in the United Workers Union in developing and struggling to win the first EBA at this workplace. This struggle continues.

Ishtiaq had a rich and varied activist career. Ishtiaq had previously been a member of the NSW Greens where he had worked in the office of former NSW Senator Lee Rhiannon and served a term as NSW Greens co-convenor, had previously worked as an organiser for United Voice, had positions of responsibility in the Australian Student Environment Network where he played a key role in the organising of the 2020 Students of Sustainability conference. He was an active member of the Jura Books collective, which runs an Anarchist bookshop in the suburb of Petersham in Sydney. He had also participated in the southern cross solidarity brigade to Cuba in 2017.

Many participants at the memorial recounted the achievements that Ish made, as well as his warm character and the depth of his comradeship and friendship with so many people. Among the many people who made statements attesting to Ishtiaq's hardworking, selfless, principled and non-sectarian character were former Firefighters union secretary and NSW Greens electoral candidate Jim Casey, and former NSW Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon who sent a video message to the memorial. Ishtiaq believed in collectivism and the power of collective action of workers and the community to change the world. Ishtiaq was a friend to many, including many CPA members in Sydney, and he will be missed by the many who knew him. ✪



Are we really a "judeo-christian" society? Does our society really "empower" us? Well it depends on who you ask in this fortnight's edition of Weasel Words!

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN

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Ours is a "Judeo-Christian" civilisation, right? This term *sounds* purely historical. There were Jews. Then there were also Christians, whose religion derives from Judaism. There are churches all over the place in Australia and there are also synagogues. The most irreligious of us know about things like the ten commandments, Passover, and the golden rule: so "Judeo-Christian" is just an accurate description of how we got to where we are now, isn't it?

Not quite. "Judeo-Christian" is a relatively recent description, a Cold War one that US president Ike Eisenhower supported in 1952. As historian Richard J Evans says, "Judeo-Christian" was a way of stressing differences from the threat of "atheist communism," as well as allowing Catholic dictatorships in Spain and Portugal into the "Western Civilisation" club despite their horrendous records as far as democracy (more of a pre-Christian Ancient Greek thing) and human rights (a bit French Revolutionary) were concerned.

None of this is to say that Judaism and Christianity aren't important to our history – they are! But the "Judeo-Christian" label for civilisation can often be a way to sneak bigotry towards other faiths and peoples into how we look at our civilisation. For example, the term is really popular with Tony Abbott and the extremely racist Hungarian PM Viktor Orban.

EMPOWERING

/ɪmˈpaʊə.ɪŋ/

As long as we're talking about regular people and not Australian government security/intelligence agencies, giving someone more power than they had before seems like a step in the right direction. The CPA works tirelessly to empower working people through education and organisation, and I really like that.

Empowerment became a bit of a buzzword in the 1970s and 1980s due to the feminism of that era stressing things women could do to reclaim power taken away from them by a sexist society. Like a lot of good feminist ideas, empowerment has been reclaimed by heartless bureaucracies as a way of making callousness seem liberating. Bureaucracies do that **not** because planning things is bad, or because the public servants who run them are bad people, but because of the neoliberal pressure to save money instead of spending it on vulnerable people who need help. What sounds better – "we're leaving you without information or support" or "we're empowering you to make your own decisions"? Just ask anyone who's been forced to turn up to a JobNetwork agency for a timewasting "course," or anyone who's trying to navigate the NDIS how empowered they feel.

REPORT: FREE JULIAN/ HIROSHIMA DAY RALLY – PERTH

Richard Titelius

“One of the ways to achieve justice, is to expose injustice.” – Julian Assange

On the 6th August 2022, Perth for Assange, together with StopAUKUSWA, organised a rally calling for the charges against Wikileaks founder and Australian citizen, Julian Assange to be dropped and he be allowed to return to Australia. The rally also marked Hiroshima Day, the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, and was joined by several peace and other groups remembering Hiroshima Day.

The MC for the rally was Mitchell Duirs, spokesperson for Perth for Assange, who said the rally was urgent as the health of Julian Assange continues to deteriorate. “His life is at serious risk after he had a minor stroke which weakened the muscles in his left eye, on top of a lung condition which he has also contracted,” said Duirs, adding that the conditions which Assange has endured during four years in England’s Hindmarsh maximum security prison have been contributing to his weakening health.

The first speaker was Dr Christopher Crouch from Independent Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), who said Julian Assange is part of a community that wants truth and justice. On 6th August 1945, the first nuclear bomb was dropped by a US B-29 Bomber, on Hiroshima, Japan causing 200,000 people to die instantly and millions to suffer the effects of the radioactive fallout to this day. In that ten-second burst of energy most of the civilian infrastructure was destroyed. Three days later, a second nuclear bomb was dropped on Nagasaki with a similar tale of loss of life and destruction to civilian infrastructure. Though the US said the dropping of the bombs was to end war, the dropping of the nuclear bombs heralded the age of nuclear warfare which we have today. Dr Crouch said, “We need to counter the narrative of war and the destruction which accompanies war, with a narrative of peace [...]. We need to free Julian Assange and stop the horrors of imperialism,” many of these horrors which Wikileaks and Assange have helped to expose.

Gerry Georgatos, a human rights activist, said Wikileaks is considered one of the most remarkable organisations in history for the secrets of wars and subterfuge it has been able to expose and yet its founder Julian Assange is treated like a murderer and locked up in Hindmarsh, the United Kingdom’s most formidable maximum-security prison. Georgatos quoted Martin Luther King who said, “How long can a lie live, not long as no lie lives forever.” Wikileaks exposed the truly wretched exploitation taking place in Haiti where textile workers who were being paid twenty-four cents an hour wanted to increase that to sixty-four cents an hour and yet the garment and clothing corporations which were making millions of dollars in profits were seeking to thwart attempts by 2,000 Haitian textile workers to achieve this modest increase. Wikileaks also published



documents revealing torture and abuse in Iraq during the Iraq war in 2003 that was truly barbaric, while fifteen years earlier the US had signed on to the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and Julian Assange have all stood up to help make our world a better place. We have a duty to help others and we can do this by attending rallies like this one today. If we don’t, said Georgatos, “All that will happen is that we will fall into the abyss.”

Tiffany Venning of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) said they are speaking out for Julian Assange as he has been a card-carrying member of the MEAA since 2007 and in 2011 Wikileaks won the most prestigious award for journalism in Australia, a Walkley Award for the most outstanding contribution to journalism. Now he is locked up in England’s most notorious prison. Assange’s imprisonment as he awaits extradition on these charges is a profound threat to journalists the world over means that it is not safe to pursue public interest journalism. The MEAA calls on the PM Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong to intervene on Assange’s behalf and call on President Joe Biden to drop the charges and release Julian Assange back to Australia. Public interest journalism is more necessary than ever as we see press freedom

continuing to be eroded in Australia and around the world and increasing corruption.

Mitch Duirs of Assange for Perth reminded the rally that former CIA Director Mike Pompeo has been summonsed by a Spanish Court to testify about what he knows of an alleged plot to assassinate Julian Assange. What did our government do as a consequence? “We have only had silence from the Australian government.”

Vinnie Molina, National President of the Communist Party of Australia, said that the CPA calls for the release of Julian Assange from custody and the CPA has passed a resolution to that affect, however, resolutions are fine so long as they are not buried but are acted upon. We the people have a right to know about the atrocities committed by governments in our name and the right to be informed and not misinformed. So long as Julian Assange is locked up, the truth is being held captive and yet there are more protests overseas calling for Julian Assange to be released than in his own country. Silence is not the answer and we must speak out for Julian Assange’s release and a free press which is necessary to have a democracy.

Liz Hulm from Stop AUKUS WA said that the AUKUS trilateral security pact, which has at its core for Australia, the purpose of purchasing nuclear submarines, was negotiated in secret. However, AUKUS will make

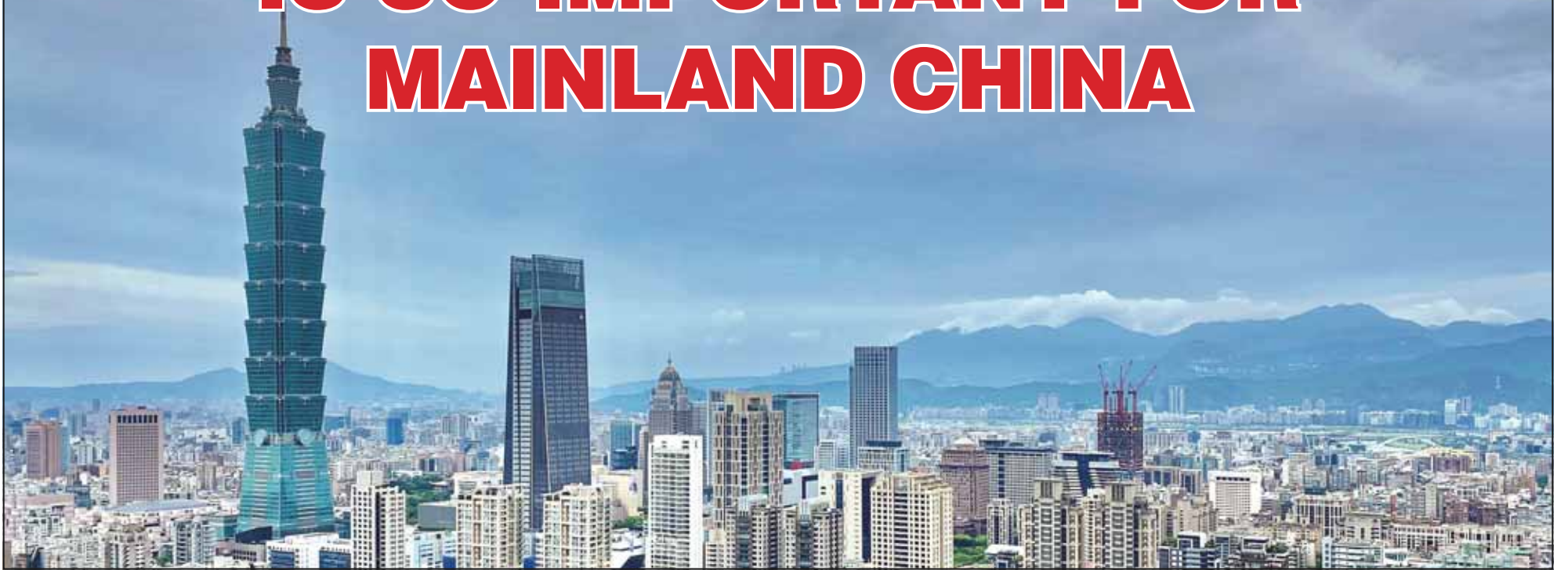
Australia less secure not more secure. Hulm said, “Climate Change is the biggest threat to peace and security today.” The military is also the world’s biggest polluter, and the continuing production of military hardware and operation of the military is a war on the environment. Today, all of us stand in solidarity with the journalist Julian Assange who reports on the truth. While those who wish to prosecute him say this is about justice the case against Assange is an injustice.

The rally which over 100 people attended then marched on to the US Consulate in St Georges Terrace to give their message to the US government. It is a curious custom that the US Consulate in Perth has adopted for many years that it does not fly its flag while it is not in the office as it doesn’t want to bring attention to itself while the Vietnamese and Greek flags, which are also in the same building fly freely 7 days a week adjacent to the one empty flagpole.

The Communist Party of Australia calls for all charges against Julian Assange to be dropped and for his release to freedom in Australia. The CPA also calls for Australia to sign on to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017) so that the world is free of the types of weapons which caused the destruction of human life and civilian infrastructure in Hiroshima on 6th August 1945 and Nagasaki three days later. 🇺🇸

Assange’s imprisonment as he awaits extradition on these charges is a profound threat to journalists the world over means that it is not safe to pursue public interest journalism.

WHY THE ISLAND OF TAIWAN IS SO IMPORTANT FOR MAINLAND CHINA



Skyline of Taipei, Taiwan viewed from Mount Elephant. Photo: 毛貓大少爺 – commons.wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Roland Boer

The Taiwan question remains unresolved to this day. To understand why the island of Taiwan is so important for the mainland, we need to understand some history, the meaning of Taiwan Island being China's "internal affair," the gradual development and deepening of ties across the Taiwan Strait, and how it can be resolved.

HISTORY OF THE ISLAND OF TAIWAN

From the third to the seventh centuries, more and more people from the mainland settled on the island. By the time of the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), administrative posts were established on the island. In 1885, the Qing Dynasty fully integrated the island as a province of China.

This was not before the Dutch, at the dawn of European colonialism, occupied the island in 1624. After bitter struggles, the Chinese were able to expel the Dutch in 1662. The leader of the Chinese forces was Zheng Chenggong, who is regarded as a national hero in China.

Next came the Japanese, who defeated a much-weakened Qing Empire in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. In one of many unequal treaties enforced upon China during the "century of humiliation," Japan forced China to hand over Taiwan island and the Penghu islands (in the Taiwan Strait). They remained Japanese colonies until the defeat of Japan in the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, from 1937 to 1945. All of the occupied and colonised territories seized by Japan since the nineteenth century were returned, including the island of Taiwan.

INVASIONS OF THE MAINLAND LAUNCHED FROM TAIWAN ISLAND

Due to its strategic importance, the island of Taiwan has been used as a base and launching point for invasions of the mainland.

Already in 1622-1624, the Dutch colonisers used both the island and the Penghu Islands to raid the mainland, trying to gain access to the ports in Fujian Province.

During the period of Japanese occupation (1895-1945), Taiwan island became a crucial base for military incursions onto the mainland. Japanese planes, ships, and troops were based on the island, due to its proximity with the mainland.

The Japanese did so during the infamous attack of the "Eight Nation Alliance."

In 1900, the US, UK (including troops from the Australian colonies), Germany, France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Imperial Russia, and Japan invaded and captured Beijing. Thousands of priceless artefacts, including irreplaceable manuscripts, were either destroyed or taken away as booty. Buildings were destroyed, indiscriminate slaughter took place, as well as the raping and bayoneting of women and children. This was a precursor to the Japanese "Rape of Nanjing" from December 1937 to January 1938, during which 300,000 Chinese civilians were massacred.

Japan was also using aircraft carriers during the 1937-1945 conflict, and the term "unsinkable aircraft carrier" began to be used for islands like Taiwan.

After Japan's defeat in 1945, Taiwan Island was returned to the mainland. However, only five years later the US stationed its 13th Air Force on the island. This took place on 27th June, 1950 – two days after the outbreak of the Korean War – and the term "unsinkable aircraft carrier" came back into use (it was still used by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s).

Clearly, China sees any foreign power's military presence on the island of Taiwan in light of this bitter history of invasion. It has experienced on too many occasions the efforts of capitalist imperialist powers to break up China.

THE MEANING OF TAIWAN ISLAND BEING CHINA'S "INTERNAL AFFAIR"

Many will have heard of the oft-repeated statement that Taiwan Island is China's "internal affair." What does this mean?

In a general sense, "internal affair" refers to the simple fact that the mainland exercises what can be called an anti-colonial or anti-hegemonic sovereignty over all of China. Thus, for any other country to meddle in the situation is an infringement of Chinese sovereignty.

There is also a more specific sense: the Taiwan question is an unresolved part of the revolutionary struggle and civil war against the counter-revolution. From 1911 to 1949, the long revolutionary struggle had many twists and turns, resulting eventually in the Liberation of China in 1949 and the founding of the People's Republic of China. However, some military and political personnel of the reactionary "National Party" (led by Jiang Jieshi, or Chiang Kai-shek) retreated to Taiwan in defeat. Supported by the US, they armed the island and planned to use it as a base for returning to the mainland. This would never come to pass.

It was internationally assumed that

Taiwan Island would soon be liberated as well. However, with the outbreak of the Korean War (known in the DPRK as the Great Fatherland Liberation War), the US blocked the Taiwan Strait. The US reneged on post-WW2 agreements and placed the island of Taiwan under its "protection."

Thus, the revolutionary struggle and civil war are not yet over, and it is in this sense that the Taiwan question is China's internal affair.

THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER TIES BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND TAIWAN ISLAND

The basis for peaceful reunification is the long-term development of deeper economic, social, and cultural ties. Outsiders are usually not made aware of the fact that since 1979, the two sides have drawn ever closer.

It began with simple acts, such as direct postage and telephone connections. Most of the restrictions had been on the Taiwanese side, but gradually these restrictions were lifted. In the 1980s, journalists from both sides began to travel, report, and set up offices for their news outlets. By the 1990s, flights were operating via Hong Kong, although these became direct in the 2000s. Businesses and banks began to open on either side of the Taiwan Strait, families could visit relatives, and high level talks began.

In the 1990s, the Wang-Koo talks were held, initially in Singapore and then in Shanghai. Wang Daohan and Koo Chen-fu, leaders of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) signed historic agreements for economic and people-to-people exchange. Many practical consultations followed, and the two associations met once again, under new chairs, in 2008 on Taiwan Island.

In November of 2015, Xi Jinping (CPC) and Ma Ying-jeou (Guomindang) met in Singapore. This was the first meeting between the top leaders of the two sides since 1949.

Clearly, there has been a gradual and ever-deeper development of relations as a foundation for reunification – despite US-led efforts to disrupt the process. It is in this light that we should understand the last-ditch effort by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to promote separatism. Since it managed to become the main force of the Taiwanese authorities in 2016, it has tried to disrupt the trend towards reunification.

RESOLUTION OF THE TAIWAN QUESTION

While simple on paper, the resolution of the Taiwan situation has proven immensely difficult. The following are the key points:

1. Capitalist countries need to abide by their agreements. Already in 1943, the "Cairo Declaration" observed that "all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Taiwan and Penghu Islands, shall be restored" to China. The "Cairo Declaration" included the US, UK, and China. In 1945, the "Potsdam Declaration" stated that "the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out."

In 1972, 1979, and 1982, China and the US signed three communiques, observing that "The United States acknowledges that all Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait agree that there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China." The later communiques also agreed to keep contact with Taiwan Island at an unofficial level and reduce arms sales to the point of abolishing sales altogether. Unfortunately, as the Chinese side – among many others – knows very well, the US cannot be trusted. It may be forced to do so due to declining global influence.

2. The Taiwan question should be resolved by the Chinese people on both sides of the strait. The current unstable situation is the result of an incomplete process of revolutionary struggle and civil war, as well as the ever more desperate measures by imperialist powers to use Taiwan Island as a lever to destabilise the mainland. In order to resolve this problem, it is up to the sole legitimate government of China in Beijing and the Taiwan authorities.

3. Peaceful reunification and one country, two systems. Deng Xiaoping's innovative and dialectical materialist proposal of "one country, two systems" was developed with Taiwan Island very much in mind. Contrary to the way it is sometimes depicted, the "system" refers to the socialist economic system in China and the capitalist economic system in Taiwan Island. The "one country" refers to China as a whole. The proposal has immense flexibility, so much that initially Taiwan Island would be able to keep its economic, political, and even military structures. This would be a "high degree of autonomy," but not complete autonomy. And the overwhelming desire among common people on both sides is for eventual peaceful reunification. This was in fact the trend until 2016, with even the Guomindang (National Party) on Taiwan Island coming to see the need and benefits. All that is blocking the way is the rearguard action of the island's DPP. ★

THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (ZENROREN) ON 27TH JULY HELD ITS 31ST CONVENTION IN TOKYO

Delivering the opening speech, Zenroren President Obata Masako said that under a new action program which incorporates the issue of gender equality, Zenroren will demand the establishment of a nationwide across-the-board minimum wage system, a minimum hourly wage increase to 1,500 yen, a substantial wage hike for care workers (most of whom are women), and equal treatment of non-regular workers.

Obata pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed contradictions emanating from neoliberal policies, and said, "The need is for us to unite to put an end to neoliberalism and realise our demands. It is also necessary to further develop the Zenroren movement and build up a peaceful and just society." She also said that Zenroren has protested against the Kishida Cabinet decision to hold a state funeral for former Prime Minister Abe and urged the government to cancel the planned funeral.

Japanese Communist Party Secretariat Head Koike Akira delivered a speech in solidarity, and said that amid the pandemic, Zenroren has been playing a vital role in protecting workers' rights and livelihoods.

Recalling the latest House of Councilors election, Koike said that during the election campaign, the JCP promised to work to end neoliberal policies which caused long-term wage stagnation in Japan and create a strong and people-oriented economy. He said that at a time when the impact of the price surge has become more serious, the JCP will work even harder to help workers and the general public survive this situation and turn Japan into a nation where workers can realise wage gains.

Koike said that the Upper House election results proved that the teaming up of opposition parties is important to replace the Liberal Democratic Party politics with a new political direction. He said that

the JCP will use its wisdom and strength to further develop opposition parties' joint struggles.

Zenroren Secretary General Kurosawa Koichi presented a new action program for the next two years and explained three goals that the new action program seeks to achieve: win higher wages and shorter working hours for all workers and better social welfare services; return privatised services, which play a highly public role in communities, to public ownership; and change the government to one utilising the pacifist Constitution. Kurosawa called for increasing Zenroren membership to 1.5 million in order to achieve these goals.

Furthermore, the Zenroren secretary general proposed a Zenroren declaration on gender equality. He said that the declaration calls for realising wages, labour laws, and social welfare services that enable workers to balance work life and family responsibilities and putting into practice the principle of gender equality in the labour movement.

Japan Press Weekly 🌱



Zenroren President Obata Masako. Photo: ueunion.org

The declaration calls for realising wages, labour laws, and social welfare services that enable workers to balance work life and family responsibilities and putting into practice the principle of gender equality in the labour movement.

Adelaide

Cuba ...



Long live the revolution!

Against the Blockade?

Australia Cuba Friendship Society South Australia
Communist Party of Australia

Fiesta for Cuba (fundraiser)
20th of August @ Fidel's
66 Wattle Av, Royal Park 5109
music food poetry raffle
4-7 PM

CHILE IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA

Chile will be a guarantor of the peace process that the government of Gustavo Petro will resume with the guerrilla of the National Liberation Army (ELN), President Gabriel Boric announced Monday in Bogota, after a meeting with the recently inaugurated president of Colombia at the Casa de Nariño.

"We have expressed all our willingness to continue collaborating in the terms that the Colombian government deems most useful to its cause," Boric said at a press conference.

For now, he added, "this is limited [...] to being one of the guarantor countries of the process to the extent that this is resumed, which was at a standstill." The proposal to facilitate the talks was made by Boric to the now Colombian vice-president, Francia Márquez, during a meeting in Santiago, before the swearing-in of the new Colombian government.

Petro recalled that in the talks with the extinct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), which culminated in an agreement in 2016, as well as in the interrupted dialogue with the ELN, Chile served as a guarantor. "We hope to continue to be a guarantor country in those peace processes that are about to restart," Petro said.

Petro held Monday the first bilateral meeting with his Chilean counterpart, thus inaugurating his agenda as Head of State after being sworn in on Sunday.

"We have had a pleasant and deep conversation, in which I am infinitely happy to see how the Latin American heart begins to beat together again," said the Chilean president in a joint statement to the press after the meeting.

Regarding this negotiation process, the Colombian president added that it is also pending to be defined if Havana will host the negotiations again.

Petro, in his first appearance before the media after being sworn in as president, said that he will resume the dialogues with the ELN at the point where they were left when the administration of Iván Duque stopped them four years ago.

Now they are looking to see if the guarantor countries of the process, among which are Chile, Ecuador, and Norway, want to continue being guarantors and "revitalize the protocols" that were signed.

And it will also be known "in the weeks that are to follow if these dialogues continue in Cuba," said Petro, who recalled that the ELN negotiators are still there, so if the geographic site changes, "it does not depend exclusively on us [...] it depends on the conditions of those who want to negotiate with us."

teleSUR 🌱

A GOVERNMENT THAT CONTROLS EVERYTHING

People's Democracy Editorial

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, spoke recently about how a strong government should be. Addressing a university convocation in Chennai on 29th July, Modi said: "A strong government does not control everything or everyone. It controls the system's impulse to interfere [...]. A strong government does not move into every domain". He further said: "A strong government's strength lies in its humility to accept that it cannot know or do everything".

Fine words, indeed! The only catch is that the government, under Modi, is doing exactly the opposite of what has been pronounced by him. The Modi government seeks to control everything and everyone; his government has moved into every domain, including curtailing the rights of citizens assured under the constitution.

What is actually happening is a single-minded pursuit by a "strong government" of total control in all spheres of society. Electoral democracy is fast becoming an electoral autocracy. The way parliament has been denigrated and the opposition muzzled has been illustrated by the current monsoon session of parliament that saw the suspension of twenty-seven opposition members of parliament.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has become the political instrument to target opposition leaders and incarcerate them. The impunity with which the ED operates is going to further heighten after the Supreme Court verdict last week, which has legitimised the draconian powers vested in the ED under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Arbitrary arrests, detention without bail and attachment of properties will now be the norm.

The legal instruments to suppress the opposition and dissent and tame civil society have only grown, as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the National Security Advisor (NSA) and other "national security" laws are routinely employed with the higher judiciary refusing to even acknowledge the trampling of the citizens' right to life and liberty.

From 1st August, the linking of voter identity cards (unique and, so far, voluntary, identity number for Indian citizens)



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Photo: MEA – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

with Aadhaar has begun as per the amended election law. This amended bill was rammed through parliament in the winter session of December 2021 without any proper scrutiny or discussion. Though the linkage to Aadhaar is supposed to be voluntary, in practice, the failure to do so can lead to the elimination of a voter's name from the electoral rolls as the linkage is being done "with a view to establish identity of electors and authentication of entries in the electoral roll". There are serious fears that a large number of genuine voters would be eliminated through the process of linkage with Aadhaar as it is meant to eliminate duplicate voter ID cards. A project conducted in Telangana to eliminate multiple voter ID cards has led to the removal of some voter ID cards. How many of them are genuine voters has yet to be ascertained.

The linkage with Aadhaar will also lay the basis for voter profiling and the surveillance of the electoral preferences of voters as there is no guarantee about the confidentiality of the data collected.

Given the predilection of the prime minister to say something and do the opposite, every statement needs to be parsed to understand what he actually means. Take the instance of an earlier speech he made on 25th July, in which he cautioned the opposition against the practice of putting ideological and political interests over the well-being of the society and the country. He said: "There is a place for ideology and political aspirations but country and society always come first". What he intended to say must be understood by reading between the lines. The only ideology and politics which

serves the country's interests is Hindutva. All other ideologies are not in the interests of the country and society.

It is this outlook which is driving the BJP government at the centre and in the states to install Hindutva as the official ideology. It involves the government remoulding the educational system and the curriculum on Hindutva lines. The rewriting of history and textbooks are proceeding apace.

Here is the strong government which wants to exercise control over all domains, including education and culture. That is why it is important to see through the double-speak and the convoluted manner in which Modi speaks. 🌟

CUBA PREPARES FOR REFERENDUM ON NEW FAMILY CODE

Last week, the National Assembly of People's Power decided to put the 25th version of the legal text for the new Family Code, to a democratic vote. The National Electoral Council and its subsidiaries will carry out training and preparation.

Electoral councils have been put together for the purpose of; training authorities and officials, updating voter lists, identifying and preparing voting places, and carrying out pilot tests of computer systems.

The directors announced that the formation of auxiliary groups for the processing of information, supervisors and collaborators has also begun, with the purpose of guaranteeing the speed, quality and transparency of the whole process.

In this opportunity, the more than 21 thousand polling stations already identified will be joined by others located outside the country,

as well as local polling stations to attend those who for certain reasons are outside their place of residence.

The publication and verification of the voter lists will take place from 15th-30th August, while on 11th-18th September a dynamic test will be carried out abroad and in Cuba.

Last week the deputies agreed that the Family Code will be considered approved if it receives the majority affirmative vote (YES) of valid ballots cast by the voters.

Citizens over 16 years of age who participate in the referendum must answer the question: "Do you agree with the Family Code?"

According to the 2019 Electoral Law for referenda, citizens with electoral rights can vote to ratify, approve, modify, or repeal legal provisions by means of a free, equal, direct, and secret vote

Granma 🌟



Photo: Collin Key – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

WORKERS IN IRELAND NEED A SUBSTANTIAL PAY RISE TO MATCH CEOS PAY RISES AND PROFITS

Eugene McCartan

As every worker knows, the cost of living is spiralling far beyond pay increases. More and more working families have their backs against the wall, trying to survive. In particular, the cost of energy has been rising for the last eighteen months or more, which has been added to from illegal US sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Massive profit-gouging has been carried on by the global energy corporations, at the expense of working people, while grocery prices have risen by 7.75 per cent against what they were a year ago.

The latest figures from Eurostat show that Ireland has the fourth-highest residential electricity prices in the EU. Electric Ireland announced an increase in its unit rate of 11.35 per cent and for gas of 32 per cent. Its standing charges also increased by the same amounts. These changes came into effect for more than a million customers from August.

The following energy companies have already implemented price increases, with more to follow.

Prepay Power increased electricity by 9.9 per cent and gas by 19.9 per cent from April.

Bord Gáis Energy raised electricity and gas prices in April 2022. Gas will go up by thirty-nine per cent and electricity by twenty-seven per cent.

Energia increased its prices by fifteen per cent from April.

Electric Ireland introduced a price increase of twenty-three per cent on electricity and twenty-five per cent on gas in May.

SSE Airtricity increased its standard household gas and electricity unit prices by twenty-four and thirty-two per cent, respectively, from May.

Panda Power increased electricity by 14.75 per cent and gas bills by fifteen per cent from May.

Flogas raised electricity prices by

twenty-seven per cent and natural gas prices by twenty-nine per cent from May.

The cost of household energy is spiralling, with more than thirty different price increases announced over the past year. According to the Government's most recent strategy for tackling energy poverty, up to twenty-eight per cent of households are in or at risk of "energy poverty," equivalent to some 475,000 households.

It is very likely that energy poverty will increase considerably in 2022, as the annual inflation rate for energy products was 43.5 per cent by March. The Society of St Vincent de Paul experienced a 49 per cent increase in the number of requests for help with energy costs in February 2022 compared with the same period last year. The Electricity Supply Board announced a pre-tax profit of €670 million in March, paying a dividend of €126 million to the government, while the Irish arm of the company that operates the Corrib gas field, Vermillion Energy, recorded a profit of more than €760 million last year.

Bord Gáis Energy's operating profits rose by seventy-four per cent in the first half of the year, as its British parent company, Centrica, also reported a massive jump in earnings. It had an adjusted profit of £33 million (£39.5 million) in the first six months of 2022, compared with a profit of £19 million (£22.7 million) in the same period last year.

Bord Gáis Energy raised prices three times in the past twelve months, with significant increases in August and October 2021 and again in April 2022. Centrica, the owners of Bord Gáis Energy, announced a group profit of £1.34 billion for the six-month period — more than five times the amount it earned a year before.

Bord Gáis Éireann was once a state company. Under EU competition rules it was broken into two separate companies and privatised as a condition of the EU-IMF "bail-out," which required the government to sell off some state-owned assets to help pay off loans and reduce Ireland's debt burden. The

state was too willing, and servile, to oppose such a strategy. In 2012 it announced that it would sell Bord Gáis Energy, its customer supply arm, as required under the terms. Then, in 2014, it was sold to a consortium of Icon Infrastructure, Centrica and Brookfield for €1.1 billion.

GLOBAL ENERGY CORPORATIONS HAVE THE PEOPLE BY THE THROAT

At the global level, the largest oil and gas producers made close to \$100 billion in the first quarter of 2022, with Shell making \$9.1 billion in profit, almost three times what it made in the same period last year, while Exxon made \$8.8 billion. Twenty-eight of the largest producers made close to \$100 billion in combined profits in the first three months of 2022; in 2021 the same companies made a combined profit of \$183.9 billion.

WAR IS VERY PROFITABLE FOR GLOBAL OIL CORPORATIONS

While the media have been blaming the Russian invasion of Ukraine for rising energy costs, they ignore the fact that it is the illegal sanctions imposed on Russia that contributed to the increase in energy prices and thereby the huge increase in profits for the global energy corporations.

WARS ARE GOOD FOR PROFITS, AND NOT ONLY FOR THE ARMS MANUFACTURERS

For all the talk of sanctions, from April to June this year Saudi Arabia imported 647,000 tonnes (48,000 barrels per day) of fuel oil from Russia by way of Russian and

Estonian ports. That was up from 320,000 tonnes in the same period a year ago. Estonia is a member of the European Union.

The Russians are selling their fuel oil at knock-down prices. This benefits the Saudi regime during a period of peak summer demand, at a time when the Biden government has been trying to twist the arms of the Saudi regime to increase oil production.

Saudi Arabia is in a bind. It and Russia are two of the largest oil exporters. It has to maintain its co-operation with Russia in the alliance of global producers known as OPEC+. The two are the *de facto* leaders of OPEC and non-OPEC producers, respectively, in that group. The Saudi regime has been importing Russian fuel oil, which can reduce its need to refine crude oil for products and cut the amount of oil it needs to burn for power generation, thereby leaving it with more unrefined crude to sell on international markets, at higher prices.

The oil sanctions are having an impact not on Russia but on working people and the poor around the world. The sanctions have provided a great cover for massive profit-gouging by the global energy corporations.

The Irish government is in effect supporting the NATO proxy war in Ukraine when it should be pursuing a peace strategy and demanding a ceasefire and peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, the ending of all arms shipments to Ukraine, and the lifting of sanctions.

Irish workers need to be demanding the public ownership of all energy companies and all natural resources, including energy sources such as oil and gas, both on land and in our territorial waters, regardless of what EU rules demand.

Irish workers need a pay increase to match inflation, as do those on state benefits. Working people must come first, not EU rules, which are only there to protect and advance the interests of European and global monopoly capitalist corporations.

Socialist Voice ✪



Healthy Food for All: Ireland. Photo: Food Ethics Council – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

SOUTH KOREA NATURALLY WINS RESPECT WHEN IT ADHERES TO INDEPENDENT DIPLOMACY

Global Times Editorial

South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin landed in Qingdao, Shandong Province, on Monday afternoon, kick-starting his first visit to China since taking office. This is also the first high-level South Korean delegation to visit China since the new administration of President Yoon Suk-yeol assumed office. Both China and South Korea attach great importance to the visit, and there are many topics worthy of in-depth communication between the two sides. In addition, the visit comes right after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan island, which has caused a serious impact on the situation in East Asia and attracted great attention as well as complicated interpretations from the international society.

Many people have noticed that during Pelosi's visit to South Korea after the Taiwan island visit, Yoon and Park did not meet her. South Korean officials also deliberately avoided discussing the Taiwan question with Pelosi. In terms of such arrangement, South Korea has considerations for its special geographical position, which cannot be viewed in a simplistic way. Still, the Chinese society generally regards it as a demonstration of South Korea's independent diplomacy and rationality toward China, especially in sharp contrast with Japan. As a result, South Korea

has won recognition and respect from Chinese society. To a certain extent, this has created a constructive and positive atmosphere for Park's China visit.

But obviously, some countries do not want to see China-South Korea relations maintain a healthy and stable momentum of development. When China and South Korea make efforts to meet each other halfway, cold water is often poured toward them, mixed with sinister questioning and provocation. This time too. Major media outlets in the US and the West, including South Korea's conservative public opinion, are accustomed to highlighting and amplifying the negative aspect of China-South Korea relations, creating differences, contradictions and even confrontations.

Some realities are indeed worrying. The voices advocating mutual benefit and friendly cooperation between China and South Korea have been weakened, while the radical attitude full of emotional shortsightedness has been strengthened. If China-South Korea ties are to move forward, the practical resistance they face is increasing. China and South Korea must step over the pits dug by those people and break through the barriers they set up.

We noticed that the Yoon administration has always intentionally made efforts to avoid being kidnapped by populism in the three months since taking office. While strengthening its alliance with the US and

de-escalating tensions with Japan, it has also paid relatively much attention to its relations with China, maintaining a generally stable trend in China-South Korea relations. It is important to emphasise that such a dynamic relationship should be further consolidated and carried on, which is in the interest of both China and South Korea.

The issue of Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) deployment is a major hidden danger that cannot be avoided in China-South Korea ties. We are not against South Korea taking necessary measures to maintain its own security, but they cannot be based on compromising the security interests of China, South Korea's friendly neighbour. THAAD is a wedge Washington is trying to drive into Northeast Asia, to disturb the region so it can profit from the conflicts. We hope Seoul will not interpret its due respect toward Beijing's strategic interests as "yielding to China." On the contrary, it should see that it is precisely "yielding to US interests" by deploying THAAD under Washington's pressure. China has never told South Korea how to make "friends," but South Korea should never accept a knife handed by its "friends."

In addition, another urgent issue for South Korea is that the US will hold a working-level meeting of the so-called Chip 4, an envisioned alliance of chip-making powerhouses – the US, Japan, South Korea, and China's Taiwan

– at the end of August. Recently, South Korean media have been debating whether the country should participate in the meeting and how it should be done. According to the latest reports from South Korean media, South Korean government recently expressed intent to join preliminary "Chip 4" meeting, and to reason with the other participants to "respect the one-China policy and avoid mentioning about any export barriers to China." In short, they should not "provoke China." If South Korea has to join small cliques pieced together by the US, the global community will expect to see South Korea truly play a balancing and corrective role. This also manifests Seoul's unique value.

South Korea is an important regional country in a sensitive and special geopolitical location. As mentioned earlier, the country's interests and policy orientation are distinctly different from those of the US and Japan on the Taiwan question, the semiconductor supply chain, and the various US moves that contain China in the Asia-Pacific region. There is enough room for China-South Korea cooperation, as long as Seoul insists on considering issues from the perspective of reality and its long-term interests. It is believed that Park's ongoing trip to China will become an opportunity to promote further development of China-South Korea relations. ☺

COST-OF-LIVING CAMPAIGN

Matt Trinder

Unions, food bank volunteers, community organisations, and socialist Labour MPs united to say "enough is enough" today, as they launched a nationwide fightback against the crippling cost-of-living crisis.

The grassroots campaign, backed by rank-and-file workers and key labour movement figures – including RMT general secretary Mick Lynch and Coventry South MP Zarah Sultana – comes as a toxic mix of Tory austerity, stagnating wages and soaring inflation pushes millions of families to the brink of catastrophe.

Enough is Enough is demanding a "huge slash in energy bill prices, a real pay rise for all, an end to food poverty, decent homes for all, and

greater taxes on the super-wealthy" to address the crisis, as Britain teeters on the edge of yet another recession.

Lynch said: "For thirty years, living standards have been falling in this country.

"We've seen our council housing sold off, our education system commodified, our NHS privatised, work terms and conditions torn up, wages put back, and pensions robbed.

"It doesn't have to be like this – things could be so much better for working-class people across this country. It's time to say enough is enough."

The initiative, also endorsed by Communication Workers Union leader Dave Ward, Liverpool West Derby MP Ian Byrne, and socialist publication Tribune, has already

established more than fifty branches in villages, towns and cities nationwide, organisers confirmed.

Large-scale rallies will be held across the country in the coming weeks, they said, while branches will be organising to assist workers taking industrial action during the "summer of discontent" by encouraging support for picket lines and strike funds.

Campaigners will also be collecting food for those in need, building community groups to help the most vulnerable, and encouraging mistreated tenants to "channel anger into action," organisers stressed.

In a campaign launch video, Ward said: "There's always another crisis, and workers always pay the price.

"We've suffered the biggest pay squeeze in history, and work has

become all about working harder and faster for less.

"Now they want workers to pay for it all over again – we think it's time someone else paid the price. Workers always make the sacrifices, yet the CEOs always reap the rewards.

"Fair pay, affordable bills, enough to eat, and a decent place to live – these things aren't luxuries, they're your rights."

Sultana warned of "record profits for big business and billionaires as life gets harder for everybody else.

"It's all about one political choice – your need or their greed," she said. "It's time to channel anger into action."

Dave Kelly, organiser at Merseyside-based Fans Supporting Foodbanks, said: "Working-class communities face the worst

humanitarian crisis in our lifetime.

"With record levels of fuel and utility charges and food prices rocketing we know that Britain isn't eating.

"The time is now to stand as one – things must change."

The country is "set up to protect the profits of the rich and make the rest of us pay through the nose," Nick Ballard of tenant union Acorn charged.

"The only people we can rely on are ourselves and the only organisations that will support and fight for us are our own," he stressed.

"Our communities deserve safe, secure and affordable housing, well-paid jobs and well-resourced cities and towns.

"Our communities deserve better, enough is enough."

Morning Star ☺

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GREEN COLONIALISM: EUROPE HUNTS FOR AFRICAN NATURAL GAS, BREAKING CLIMATE PROMISES

Criticism of the major European powers by African nations has flared up in recent weeks as the former have been scouring the continent for natural gas supplies since the start of the Ukraine war, breaking climate change promises. They are all concerned with escaping their dependence on Russian natural gas, which is considered necessary in order to be able to boycott and sanction Russia even more severely.

The backstory to the criticism is the unfulfilled resolutions that were passed at the Glasgow climate conference (COP26) last year. In particular, it is about the promise by a number of wealthy industrialised countries to stop financing projects for oil and gas production by 2023 at the latest – but only outside their own borders.

All G7 countries have now joined in the pledge. The announcement provoked resentment on the African continent at the time because it amounts to no longer promoting natural gas projects in Africa, even though these are considered a realistic means of improving energy supplies for populations there. To date, 600 million people in African countries do not have access to electricity.

A direct jump from fossil fuels to solar and wind energy is expensive and considered unrealistic for most developing nations on the African continent. The unaffordability problem is compounded by the fact that wealthy industrialised countries refuse to supply the necessary funds they previously promised. The sum of 100 billion US dollars a year that was once pledged to assist developing countries transition to renewable energies has not been paid to this day.

So it is no wonder that, time

and again in Africa, there is talk of “green colonialism” by the West.

As Europe desperately searches for substitutes for Russian gas, the money is once more flowing for production projects outside the EU – but only for the EU’s own consumption. Italy wants to obtain liquid gas from a production project in Congo-Brazzaville, which is currently being expanded. France, on the other hand, has taken a look at a funding project in northern Mozambique that the Total corporation stopped a year ago because of local uprisings. The EU took the riots in the natural gas area as an opportunity to start a military training mission in Mozambique.

Germany is also trying to get natural gas in Africa. During a visit to Senegal at the end of May, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that Berlin would support natural gas production in the country. According to one report, Senegal could then “contribute to replacing Russian gas.” Meanwhile, the G7 have officially approved their change of course from their COP26 pledge to funding gas production on the African continent.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has also sparked resentment in Africa. Last year, the IEA declared that, in order to achieve global climate goals, it was urgently necessary to stop financing any projects to generate energy from fossil fuels. In June of this year, the agency, which is under strong US influence, made a U-turn. It now claims that Africa will have to expand its gas production at a rapid pace in order to be able to deliver up to 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Europe by the end of the decade at the latest.

This is, again, aimed at ending the dependence of European countries on Russian natural gas. At the



Energy Africa Infographic. Photo: DFID – UK Department for International Development (CC BY 2.0)

same time, the IEA pointed out that in a relatively short period of time it would be necessary to stop producing natural gas again, to become carbon neutral by mid-century as planned. It is therefore important to implement the funding projects on the African continent as quickly as possible. Otherwise, it is uncertain whether they can still be fully amortised.

A number of leading African politicians have since commented on the double standards of the European powers.

“We need long-term partnerships, not inconsistency and contradiction,” said Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari. “They can’t just come and say, ‘We need your gas, I’ll buy your gas and we’ll bring

it to Europe,’” Equatorial Guinean Energy Minister Gabriel Obiang Lima was quoted as saying.

Instrumentalising Africa for short-term gas supplies is “paternalistic” and “hypocritical,” said Carlos Lopes, a former head of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. It is “absolutely outrageous to tell Africans not to examine the options before them, and at the same time, because of the Russo-Ukrainian war, to accelerate the demand for gas for Europe.”

Critics also point out that the natural gas that is now being delivered to Europe from African countries is not being used to improve energy supplies for the African population, which are urgently needed.

In the hunt for liquefied gas, European countries continue to buy supplies from poorer countries in South Asia. Two weeks ago, Pakistani Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik announced that his country was no longer able to buy much-needed liquefied gas on the spot market because “every single molecule that was available in our region” was being bought by the countries of Europe.

For some time now, due to the shortage of liquid gas, Pakistan’s power supply has had to be reduced and plants temporarily shut down. Now, at times, even a quarter of all power plants have been taken off the grid because there were not enough energy sources.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, has not been able to pay for the necessary additional purchases of liquid gas on the spot market since the beginning of the month due to the rapid rise in natural gas prices. The government says it will not be able to do so for at least two months. Electricity rationing, reduced working hours, and regular power outages are also the result there. An improvement in the situation, which is mainly caused by the sanctions and boycott policies of the Western powers, is not in sight.

Article from *Unsere Zeit* via *People’s World* 🇺🇸

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