



YES TO THE VOICE

Why we support the YES campaign!

Vinnie Molina

On 19th June 2023, Parliament passed a bill for a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution, and to give them a Voice to Parliament. The bill sets the question for a referendum to be held later this year.

Labor, the Greens, some Liberals, David Pocock, and the Jacqui Lambie Network supported the bill.

"We've had 122 years of decisions being made about Aboriginal people, without Aboriginal people," Prime Minister Albanese said. "With the best of intentions, we have presided over an expensive, well-intentioned failure".

"One hundred and twenty-two years of doing things for Indigenous Australians – this is our chance to do things with Indigenous Australians."

Opposition leader Peter Dutton and his anti-Voice colleagues have set out to make the debate as divisive and misleading as possible, while Dutton argues that to go ahead with the referendum would be "divisive."

He described the Voice as an "overcorrection" for disadvantage and a "reckless roll of the dice."

Adding salt to the wound, Dutton argued "Changing our constitution to enshrine a voice will take our country backwards, not forwards." He then went on to say a successful Voice would have an effect where, "All Australians are equal, but some Australians are more equal than others."

Does he mean that is not the case now?

It also begs the question: How many mining corporations that take the land and destroy Aboriginal heritage have a voice in the ears of politicians!

To give Indigenous Australians a Voice over matters that affect them does not usurp parliamentary powers.

A Voice on its own will not deliver land rights, protect Indigenous culture, and heritage, or overcome poverty, and the many other injustices faced by Indigenous Australians. Nor will systemic racism in state structures and society at large be eradicated by a Voice alone.

The struggle for a Voice to Parliament, Treaty and Truth Telling has unfortunately been wedged between those who see Voice to Parliament as a vehicle and those who see it as the end. This has also been an opportunity for a minority to express their racist sentiments. Some opponents to the Voice are misinformed, confused or alienated from the process. Others seek Treaty first and stronger reforms.

In the debate we have also heard those who, forgetting Australia is a capitalist state, expect the state will just give the land back and pay reparations for all the injustices committed against Indigenous Australians by an action of a Parliament. The current Australian state doesn't represent the interests of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous working-class people. But the Voice has the potential

to right some past wrongs if it is listened to and acted on.

Closing the Gap, the achievement of land rights, and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples require strong organisation at the grass roots level in unity with the working class and other progressive forces.

DISPOSSESSION

The invasion of the Australian continent and the dispossession of the land is the main cause of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This has inflicted ongoing pain and harm to generations of Indigenous people, and that can't be fixed overnight.

Closing the Gap efforts haven't been enough. Deaths in custody continue, despite Royal Commissions and inquiries. Land continues to be taken, and cultural sites and heritage destroyed. This is a direct result of the colonisation process, and the capitalist pursuit of profits.

The dispossession of Indigenous Australians of land, their main means of production, more than 200 years ago, will only be resolved with the political will of a new type of government in Australia which will give the land back to its original owners, and Close the Gap.

The longest living culture in the world has survived despite attempts at genocide, assimilation, and the dispossession itself. It is time to take the first step towards rectifying those wrongs by giving the First peoples a Voice.

The referendum of 1967 saw unity and bipartisan support which

returned as a result the most successful referendum outcome in our recent history. It is regrettable that this is not the case in relation to the Voice.

The Communist Party of Australia believes that the struggle for a reform such as a Voice to Parliament for Indigenous Australians is part of the broader class struggle and the struggle to Close the Gap.

If the Voice is defeated it would be a huge demoralising setback for Indigenous Australians and their supporters.

The Communist Party of Australia has always fought alongside Indigenous Australians and pledges to continue to do so.

UNITY

To achieve the restoration of land and other rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples requires strong organisation in unity with working class people. The struggle for Land Rights should be seen as part of the struggle for a new type of society, a fairer and more democratic one, a socialist society.

The CPA sees winning this reform as a very important step along the path of the long struggle for justice, Treaty, Truth Telling, and eventually land rights.

It is only with unity of the people that this can be achieved. It is unfortunate that there is not bipartisan support for the Referendum. In this case the class position of the Liberal-National Coalition benefits those who dispossessed Indigenous people of land rights over 200 years ago.

Supporting the No vote is to stand on the wrong side of history. It doesn't matter from what perspective or arguments anyone stands there; the result will be exactly the same if the referendum isn't successful.

Convincing every one of the just nature of the Yes vote in the referendum is a class position we want all party members and supporters to campaign for. We say stand for Indigenous rights, **Vote Yes.**

ACTION

The CPA calls on all Party members and supporters to work hard in the months ahead for the YES vote. To go out and do your utmost to ensure those who currently support the NO vote or sit on the fence change their minds and support Indigenous Australians to have a voice that can't be taken away.

Once the Voice is achieved, the struggle will continue for Treaty and Truth Telling. The CPA will continue to struggle alongside Indigenous Australians for Land Rights and self-determination in the united struggle for working class power as part of the broader struggle for a just and fair Australian republic, a socialist Australia.

The CPA calls for a week of action in support of the YES campaign from Monday 17 July requiring all party members to go out and do their best in the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ✪

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Guardian

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What the surplus tells us

Australian budget surpluses are funny things. Sometimes we pay a lot of attention to a budget surplus or a budget deficit, sometimes we ignore them completely. For the last Liberal-National Coalition government, the deficit was so important when they were in opposition that they painted a slogan about it on a bus and drove it around various electorates to draw attention to the “debt and deficit disaster.” Then the Coalition got into power and started adding to the debt and deficit as fast as they could, so it became unimportant again. When Josh Frydenberg thought he was about to have a budget surplus, he had special “Back in Black” mugs made to commemorate a surplus that never turned up. The anticipated surplus didn’t appear and became unimportant again.

Now a government budget surplus is with us. First thought to be \$4.5 billion, it’s now more likely to be \$19 billion. Is this an important thing? How much should this matter to working people and their families?

Labor quietly thinks the surplus is important, with Prime Minister Albanese describing the surplus as “a result of this government’s responsible economic management.” If approving 100 more fossil-fuel projects in the face of a climate-change-caused catastrophe is “responsible,” that’s news to us, but Albanese is talking about the economy. Like a lot of the Australian media, Albanese somehow thinks the economy exists in a different world to the environment.

Many commentators just assume that a surplus is a good thing, presumably because a surplus for an individual is a very good thing. Government surpluses are more complicated than that.

Surpluses come and go, and it’s true that a lot of what causes them is outside the government’s control. Albanese can’t control what people in China are prepared to pay for iron ore, or how much the Japanese need our gas.

We do not need to worry about government surplus, debts and deficits the way we worry about our personal finances.

We should care about the surplus because of what it says about the government’s priorities. Albanese *can* control how much he taxes the iron ore and gas producer profits (not much). He can control how much the government spends on subsidising fossil fuel producers (far too much). Or how much the government spends on keeping the “independent” school lobby happy (again, far too much).

This surplus shows that the government values looking “responsible” more than it cares about housing Australians. Our supposedly progressive government cares more about being “back in the black” than it does about keeping unemployed people out of grinding poverty.

The surplus would be larger in the future if the government hadn’t committed to the Stage 3 tax cuts, gifting over \$330 billion dollars in tax cuts to people already on more than \$200,000 a year.

We care about the surplus because that’s the workers’ money they’re holding on to when they talk about being “responsible.” That’s workers’ money they spend on tax cuts and nuclear-powered submarines.

The size of the surplus tells us what is and isn’t important to our ruling class. Our bourgeois parliament is headed by a party that spent \$200 million on the federal Disaster Relief Fund, and (with the states) \$11.1 billion on the fossil fuels that made the largest bushfires in Australia’s history possible.

Bourgeois governments of all stripes make nice noises about what’s important to them. A look at how we got to this surplus shows that what’s important to them isn’t Australian working people.

Public Sector Union campaigns for The Voice

Statement from the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)

The CPSU has joined the union-wide “Unions for Yes” campaign with the support of the CPSU’s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Caucus and our Governing Council, the 48 nationally elected leaders from our workplaces.

The origins of this referendum are in the decades-long push for genuine constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Research shows most Australians support constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament, and more than 80 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also support it. Among that 80 per cent are a majority of CPSU members who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are asking us to support a modest change that will make a practical difference so we can move forward together.

Constitutional recognition in the form of a Voice will mean fewer wasted resources, less party politics and real results. This is an opportunity for all Australians to come together and contribute to building a stronger, fairer nation.

In 2015, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and the Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten, appointed a Referendum Council to advise on progress toward a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the constitution. Between December 2016 and May 2017 there were 13 regional dialogues (or meetings) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to discuss, understand and prioritise options for recognition – including on how to formally “recognise” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution.

After those meetings, in May 2017, there was a conference from all around Australia at Uluru, that’s when the *The Statement from the Heart* was signed. The Voice to Parliament is the first action from that Statement.

Our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Caucus previously endorsed the Uluru Statement from the Heart and this year reinforced their commitment to the first practical step in that by supporting a Voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ✪

Migrant worker protections

Unions have welcomed the Albanese government’s announcement of new measures to protect migrant workers from exploitation.

The government’s proposed package of measures includes new criminal offences for employers who coerce temporary migrant workers to breach their visa conditions or to accept exploitative workplace practices. It also includes measures to prevent employers who have engaged in serious, repeated or deliberate non-compliance from employing additional temporary migrant workers for a period of time.

The government also announced that it will work with unions, industry and key stakeholders to design a system that will enhance protections and safeguards for migrant workers.

This includes protections against visa cancellation for workers reporting exploitation, a

visa to enable temporary migrant workers to remain in the country while they pursue their workplace entitlements, and the creation of a “firewall” between the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Department of Home Affairs to encourage exploited workers to report exploitation without suffering adverse immigration outcomes.

ACTU President Michele O’Neil said that the government’s announcement was an important step forward in tackling the systemic and widespread exploitation of migrant workers in Australia.

“Migrant worker exploitation is a national shame,” said O’Neil. “We welcome the Albanese government taking action to protect migrant workers from exploitation and to implement key recommendations of the Migrant Worker Taskforce – after years of inaction by the Coalition government.

“The exploitation of workers in Australia on short term visas hurts

all workers and exposes the impact of a migration system that has shifted away from permanent migration towards a guest worker, individual employer driven approach.”

O’Neil said that more needed to be done to protect migrant workers, and that the ACTU would continue to work with the government and other stakeholders on further proposals to engineer exploitation out of the migration system.

“Migrant workers should be able to enforce their workplace rights without jeopardising their ability to stay in the country.

“The government’s announcement is a welcome development, and it is important that the government follows through on its commitments to protect migrant workers from exploitation.”

The Communist Party of Australia stands against exploitation of migrant labour. ✪



\$56 BILLION – NO TAX

Anna Pha

Who pays taxes, who doesn't, and how they are spent are matters that affect all working people. Taxation is a class question. Multinational corporations are syphoning off billions of dollars by shifting profits to tax havens where they pay little or no tax.

While the Australian Tax Office (ATO) chases small fry like teachers, tradies, and nurses, multinationals and the rich have sophisticated tax avoidance schemes designed by companies such as the now-discredited PwC, and pay nothing or next to nothing.

If you earn \$56,000 a year as a PAYG taxpayer, you can expect to pay 15.2 per cent tax on that income. Yet, US oil major Exxon made a staggering \$56 billion selling oil and gas – drilled from seabeds around Australia – and has not paid a single cent in tax here in eight years.

Chevron, Virgin, Amcor, and numerous other multinationals have paid zero income tax in Australia for years despite raking in billions of dollars in profits. Others such as Santos (marginal tax rate of 2.36 per cent), have paid peanuts. Chevron, however, has turned over a new leaf paying \$30 in tax last year – \$30!

Japanese-owned logistics company the Toll Group made \$44.3 billion in Australian revenue over the last eight years. They've paid tax at a margin of 0.84 per cent.

These multinationals claim profit margins on capital invested are zero or close to zero. Yet they keep operating in Australia. They would not do that if they weren't making huge profits.

TAX AVOIDANCE

In its *State of Tax Justice 2021* report the Tax Justice Network estimates that governments globally lost income tax of US\$312 billion (AU\$470b) in just one year.

This is money that could have been spent on people's services, on education, health care, public infrastructure, pensions, housing, or the NDIS.

Multinationals use tricks like "transfer pricing"; borrowing from a foreign party such as a subsidiary of the same parent company, and then paying exorbitantly high interest rates. The interest is untaxed and siphoned offshore to a tax haven like the British Virgin Islands, Switzerland, or Hong Kong.

LEGISLATION

Trade unions, tax justice groups and other organisations have campaigned hard and long for strong measures to curb tax avoidance by multinationals. The Albanese government promised to take action during its 2022 election campaign, and again at the time of its October budget.

In April 2023 the Albanese government released draft legislation "Making

Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency" that was seen as ground-breaking by advocates of tax reform.

The draft bill requires large multinationals to publicly report on how much profit they make and what taxes they pay in every country where they operate instead of publishing the information as a total sum. This would include details of interest on loans and other expenses paid to related operations such as in tax havens.

It also requires multinationals to publicly divulge corporate structures such as subsidiaries and trusts. An estimated 2500 companies with an income of more than \$1 billion that have operations in Australia, regardless of where their headquarters are based, would be affected.

Companies such as Exxon, Apple, BP, Coca-Cola, and McDonalds are among those that would be held to account.

Known as "public country by country reporting" or PCbCR, the public and governments in Australia and around the world would gain greater corporate transparency on how and where these companies make their profits and avoid taxes.

PCbCR has the potential to expose profit transferring and equip campaigns for tax reforms – a vital first step towards countering tax avoidance.

"GLOBAL LEADERSHIP"

Jason Ward, Principal Analyst, at the Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability & Research said: "The Australian government is showing global leadership by introducing public country-by-country reporting for multinationals. This move will increase transparency and accountability and shine a bright light on where and how multinationals shift profits to avoid the obligation to help fund essential public services and infrastructure around the world."

Welcoming the legislation, Public Services International (PSI) said, "With this information we can continue to campaign to make corporations pay a fairer amount. It will be particularly important for government revenue in low income countries that rely more heavily on corporate taxes for revenue. Importantly it will now set a precedent for other countries to introduce robust standards and paves the way to normalise the practice."

The Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT), who work towards a fairer international tax system, said "Understanding where multinational corporations are doing business and paying – or not paying – taxes is a vital step towards ending the era of corporate tax avoidance that has robbed governments worldwide of much-needed revenues and exacerbated global inequality. FACT applauds the Australian government for its leadership on this important initiative."

"The introduction of this legislation in Australia is a game-changer in the fight for



Photo: Gusztáv Galló – publicdomainpictures.net (CC0 Public Domain).

a fairer, more transparent international tax system," said Ian Gary, executive director of FACT.

NOBBLED

The legislation was due to come into effect on 1 July this year. This date has been pushed back a year and the draft bill gone to a Senate Committee to report back by 31st August.

The government said it would "continue to engage with stakeholders on our commitment to introduce a public country-by-country reporting regime."

Labor appears to have succumbed to pressure from heavy lobbying on behalf of alarmed multinationals.

The *Australian Financial Review (AFR)* reports that a coalition of ten fund management associations representing members around the world with more than \$120 trillion in investments, sent a letter to Treasurer Jim Chalmers. In it they warn that the bill "would be inconsistent with the international consensus as it would require every multinational entity with any Australian activities to disclose publicly extensive information regarding every country in which it operates."

For "international consensus" read "consensus by multinational corporations."

They said the plan violated tax base erosion and profit shifting co-operation around the world, "and may undermine future global

co-ordination" the *AFR* says, unintentionally confirming the necessity for the bill.

The Business Council of Australia, the resources sector and other corporate lobby groups have joined the chorus of protesting multinationals.

It is also believed that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) under the leadership of Australia's former Coalition Finance Minister Mathias Cormann has intervened. The OECD, known as the rich countries' club, is strongly opposed to transparency and accountability and has a sordid record on the question of tax avoidance.

REFORM LONG OVERDUE

Ordinary workers do the heavy lifting when it comes to funding government services and millions of Australians will be hit by a tax hike as the low-and middle-income tax offset of up to \$1500 is removed this year. At the same time the wealthy will benefit from the forthcoming stage three tax cuts, and the multinationals continue to ship out Australia's resources and billions of dollars in profits.

The more you make, the less the tax take. That's capitalism.

The government stands by as price gouging by these corporations continues to deliver record profits. The worst offenders are to be found in the heavily polluting, greenhouse gas emitting corporations.

Labor's important tax initiative is now threatened. Labor MUST stand its ground, stand up for the working people of Australia and around the world.

Write to your MP and Senators demanding that the original draft bill be passed. Remind them of Labor's commitment and that it was elected to serve the people of Australia, not foreign corporations. ✪

The more you make, the less the tax take. That's capitalism.

Farm workers' strike

On 28th June, United Workers Union (UWU) members at Hussey Farms in Victoria walked off the job, marking the first farm strike in decades.

In the lead up to protected industrial action, bosses from Hussey Farms in Victoria have issued threats to workers and attempted to intimidate them in to not taking action.

In response, UWU filed an application in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia last

week for alleged breaches of the general protections provisions of the Fair Work Act, seeking declarations and the imposition of penalties on Hussey.

Hussey workers are fighting for a wage increase that keeps pace with inflation and same job, same pay protections for labour hire workers.

Since 2017, UWU has caught Hussey using labour hire companies that have paid workers through illegal cash-in-hand arrangements,

as little as \$12-per-hour. The company also failed to pay casual workers night shift loading during the pandemic.

Hussey has rebuffed proposals to protect labour hire workers from exploitation and guarantee them the same pay and conditions as other workers

At the same time, the company has offered workers a wage increase of six cents above the minimum.

Hussey Farms' main operations

include the picking and packing of baby leaf salads for Aldi and Coles and for export.

UWU National Secretary Tim Kennedy said it was commendable that workers at the site were willing to fight to lift the standards for everyone in spite of management's threats.

"The workers who keep Australians fed and nourished are rightfully fighting to be respected for their work," Kennedy said.

"These are the folks who work

24/7 in the freezing cold to keep Aldi and Coles' shelves stocked.

"The least Hussey can do is back off from the threats and intimidation, make sure their workers are rewarded with a wage offer that is aligned with inflation, and pay casuals above the bare minimum."

Workers at Hussey are resolved to continue the strike until the company returned with a more equitable offer. ✪

Electric vehicles

Part of a sustainable future

Ron Hall

Individually, Australians hold the dubious distinction of being the world's biggest polluters, on a per capita basis, among nations of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), even ahead of the US, Canada, and the UK. Although in comparison to larger nations Australian greenhouse emissions in total may seem relatively low, their impact significantly rises when fossil fuel exports are taken into account, without considering the associated profiteering that also occurs.

Without doubt Australia can do much better, both collectively and individually, if not simply by analysing and applying policy developments that have been proven to make a difference elsewhere.

One choice that a very small minority of Australians have made so far has been the purchase of an electric vehicle, but an uptake at less than one per cent of the new vehicle market means that Australia trails far behind Norway, and China, just to choose two much more progressive examples.

In 2022 an encouraging 20 per cent of Norwegian vehicles (electric and hydrogen) had zero emissions as will the total of all new cars sold in Norway in 2025.

With the local free market approach obviously failing the environment, if not the nation, in the transport area alone, strong government policy intervention is paramount. Models and proven experience are readily available indicating the need for a much more far-sighted, socialistic interventionist approach.

Norwegian successes have resulted from direct, multipronged market place intervention into vehicle sales, while at the same time Chinese citizens who want to breathe fresh air have welcomed government subsidies to facilitate purchases of more expensive but



Photo: Anna Pha

more environmentally friendly electric vehicles. As the cost of subsidies has grown, the Chinese government now plans to use mandates instead. These will involve penalties for car manufacturers who fail to meet much lower or zero emission standards in their production vehicles.

The Japanese have made vast improvements to their public transport system, particularly in Tokyo, to achieve significant gains in their reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time they are purchasing electric vehicle batteries from China to facilitate the production of economical and environmentally friendly battery electrical vehicles.

India, now with the world's largest population, offers with government assistance, \$10,000 electric motor cars to complement an abundance of two and three wheelers, such as e-rickshaws.

In the same way, Australia's larger cities need to accelerate their progress by making train, tram, and

bus services free and more user friendly, especially for the more elderly. Although not the whole answer, electric vehicles certainly can contribute immeasurably to a more sustainable way of life.

While the vast majority of Australians continue to be wedded to using their own motor transport because of the convenience involved, the public sector could well set an example by introducing battery electric vehicles into community bus fleets, for example. The approach on a national scale would serve as a much wiser investment than nuclear polluting submarines.

Without doubt, green electricity will play a mammoth role in powering humanity's future, just as electrification accompanied by literacy secured the success of the Russian Revolution under Lenin's guidance. It is hoped the leadership of today can grasp a similar vision to propel us into a greener and safer socialist future of peaceful and genuine progress. ✪

Union welcomes renewable zone

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) last month welcomed the announcement by the Federal Labor government of public consultation for a new renewable energy zone – the Southern Ocean Renewables Zone – off the coastline near the Victorian and South Australian borders that will add hundreds more new seafaring and port services jobs from Warrnambool in Victoria to Port MacDonnell in South Australia.

The union says Australian maritime workers will continue to benefit from the fast pace of investment and expansion of offshore renewable energy projects around our coastline.

"These new jobs are a direct result of the growing investment in sustainable, reliable and clean renewable energy being unlocked by regulatory and legislative reforms which the MUA has been campaigning for over many years," said the union's Assistant National Secretary, Adrian Evans.

Evans has been working with MUA branches around the country to promote the opportunities for workers in the seafaring, port services and waterfront sectors that will come from massive new renewable energy projects.

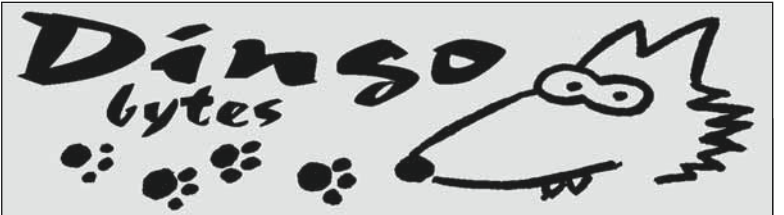
The 5100 square kilometre area subject to consultation will take in the Victorian city of Portland, which is home to one of Australia's largest smelters and draws

up to 10 per cent of Victoria's electricity. According to Federal government analysis, the offshore wind projects in this region will generate up to 3000 jobs during construction and 3000 ongoing jobs, many of which will be new jobs in the maritime sector.

"It is members of the MUA who built and delivered some of the world's largest offshore oil and gas infrastructure over the last fifty years, and our members now stand ready to put their skills towards building these huge, incredible wind turbines out at sea so that we can decarbonise our economy," said the MUA's Dave Ball.

"Cheaper and more reliable renewable energy will keep manufacturing towns like Portland working, which is good for the economy and good for our own industry, so we are excited to play such an important role in building the infrastructure that will make that possible."

The announcement comes after many years of advocacy and policy leadership by the Maritime Union of Australia calling for new clean energy jobs, a just transition for workers employed in hydrocarbon industries, and for a comprehensive plan to decommission and clean up disused offshore oil and gas infrastructure from the sea floor around our coast using the skill and experience of Australian seafaring workers to get the job done. ✪



The Queensland Palaszczuk government's refusal to back down over its deeply unpopular approval of Blue Energy's Central Queensland gasfield shows it cares neither for communities, nor climate. The government last week announced minor variations to the company's proposal, but upheld its approval. While the government first approved Blue Energy's 530 gaswell project west of Glenden in March this year, groups such as Lock the Gate Alliance, Environmental Advocacy for Central Queensland (EnvA-CQ), and even the Isaac Regional Council wrote scathing responses, demanding the decision be revoked. The council's submission noted the threat it posed to the social fabric of the community, and also raised concerns about how the project would impact the local housing market, road network, and existing workforce.

Lock the Gate Alliance national coordinator Ellen Roberts said, "Sadly, this is what we've come to expect from a government that is totally captured by the fossil gas industry. If built, Blue Energy's gasfield will drain more than 19 billion litres of water. Fifty-three water bores lie within 10 kilometres of this project that farmers rely on for stock and home use." Roberts warned gas projects fracture more than just coal seams – they fracture communities and families as big petroleum companies strong-arm landholders into signing access agreements, with complicit support from the government. Annastacia Palaszczuk paints herself as a premier for the regions, but when the regions say no to gas, her government sides with big fossil fuel companies, not locals.

EnvA-CQ director Dr Coral Rowston said it was disappointing the Palaszczuk government had ignored the pleas of the local community. "Gas from this project will drive dangerous climate change, which is already leading to more severe weather in Central Queensland like unprecedented droughts, cyclones, and floods," Rowston said. "Blue Energy is in for a fight. Just like locals turfed it out of the Wide Bay-Burnett in 2019, so too will Central Queenslanders send this gas company packing." The government's latest approval comes after it allocated \$21 million to subsidise gas companies' exploration in new areas of the state, including the northern Bowen Basin, where Blue's gasfield would be located. It followed a \$5 million joint state and federally-funded feasibility study for a pipeline that would link the north Bowen Basin to the existing gas network further south, and lobbying by both the Queensland government and Blue Energy for greater gas subsidies from the federal government and other states.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is criminal state Israel: The World Health Organisation in the West Bank and Gaza has condemned Israel's latest crimes against humanity as "deplorable", including the "ongoing attacks against health care, including the prevention of access to persons critically injured."

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Survivors take on big coal

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action have praised environmental justice groups for launching a fresh Federal Court challenge, arguing that the Environment Minister can and must consider the impacts of climate change in assessing new coal and gas projects.

Environmental Justice Australia and the Environment Council of Central Queensland are challenging the decision of the Environment Minister to not reconsider the assessment criteria of three new coal projects, one of which is Whitehaven's Narrabri extension, in central west NSW.

Bushfire survivor and BSCA spokesperson Fiona Lee said, "It is disappointing that the Environment Minister has stated that she will not consider the climate impacts of Whitehaven coal's Narrabri coal expansion on Australia's iconic environments and species.

"The mining and burning of coal and gas is warming our climate, pushing species and environments to extinction and worsening bushfires that have already devastated Australian communities. We must stop adding fuel to the fire and so we urge the Environment Minister to fulfil her responsibility and assess the climate impacts of new coal and gas projects."

WHITEHAVEN'S COURT BATTLES

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action are also in a separate legal fight in New South Wales against Whitehaven's coal expansion in Narrabri. The organisation is currently waiting on the outcome of a case before the state's Land and Environment Court.

In this NSW action BSCA, represented by the Environmental Defenders Office, is seeking a judicial review of the April 2022 approval of the Whitehaven Coal project in Narrabri by the Independent Planning Commission.

"Although these court cases are in completely different court jurisdictions, they share the same goal," said BSCA's Fiona Lee.

"People are turning to the courts to force decision makers to consider the impacts new coal and gas projects have in fuelling climate change, and increasing the likelihood of homes and lives lost in bushfires."

Last February bushfire survivors took their fight against climate change to the courts, arguing that



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approving new fossil fuel projects and expansions is unreasonable given what we know about the threat of climate change and climate impacts that we are already experiencing.

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action were appealing an Independent Planning Commission (IPC) decision to approve a Whitehaven application to expand its Narrabri coal mine in the NSW Land and Environment Court.

The approval extends the life of the mine from 2031 to 2044 and allows some of the longest (10 kilometres) and widest (400 metres) underground longwalls in Australia.

In approving the extension, the IPC agreed that the project is a "gassy mine" but relied upon the hope of future, uncertain technology to reduce methane levels.

BSCA's Fiona Lee, who lost her home to a bushfire in 2019, said the IPC's approval of the coal mine showed that planning decisions had not kept up with community expectations, and the need to take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Continuing to allow coal mines to expand – especially highly polluting ones – has a direct impact on Australians' safety and security," Lee said. "The burning of coal, gas, and oil worsens the impacts of climate change, and we are already seeing bushfires and other extreme weather increase in frequency and intensity because of climate change.

"We know that the future of coal is limited. Now is the time to support our rural communities to transition away from coal and focus on building sustainable, prosperous alternatives. Approving new

mines is adding to the problem and making the solution and emissions reduction targets even harder to achieve."

In the court, BSCA argued that it is legally unreasonable for the NSW government to approve this super polluting mine, and unreasonable to find that the mine is in the public interest.

"How can the continuation of jobs in a doomed sector and the private profits enjoyed by only a few outweigh the extreme costs of climate change to the lives of every person in NSW, now and in the future?" Lee said.

"Bushfire survivors, including my family, know first-hand the impacts of climate change. We want to limit future impacts to our families and communities across the country, which is why we're calling on the court to recognise that it's not consistent with the law or in the public interest to allow mining companies to expand their operations in Australia."

BSCA was represented by the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) in the case.

EDO Special Counsel Matt Floro said: "The IPC has a duty to make legally reasonable, rational planning decisions in the public interest. Our clients will argue the IPC's approval of a major new source of climate pollution is legally unreasonable and irrational.

"The climate crisis has already begun, and Australians everywhere are highly vulnerable to its impacts. There is a huge body of scientific evidence that we must leave coal and gas in the ground to maintain a liveable planet. Approving more coal mines flies in the face of all the evidence." ✪

Small hope for NT public schools

The 2023-24 federal Budget was a distinct anticlimax for public school teachers, students, and communities. It offered little new funding to fix the more than a decade long crisis of underfunding in public schools, which has now reached more than \$6 billion annually.

Measures, such as the \$10 million national advertising campaign "to raise the status of the teaching profession" may be well meaning, but they are a drop in the ocean for solving the workforce and workload crisis that schools continue to face.

However, there is a sign of hope in one small-but-very-significant commitment largely went under the radar: the promise of \$40.4 million over two years to

improve school attendance and education outcomes and ensure that every school in Central Australia is fully funded to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). Although this is a tiny amount in terms of the total Commonwealth budget of more than \$10.6 billion a year for public schools, and will benefit just 36 public schools in total, it potentially represents one of the most important steps forward for the future of Australian public schools on the long-promised, and long-delayed path to full funding for all public schools. There's a long way to go.

Australian Education Union
(edited for reasons of space) ✪

GREEN NOTES

Chevron's website sings the praises of carbon capture and storage: "Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is a proven technology for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). It's critical to a lower carbon future and essential to achieving the net zero goals of the Paris Agreement...."

"We're proud that the world's largest CCS system designed to capture carbon emissions is located at our Gorgon liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility on Barrow Island."

CCS involves the capture of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from industrial processes, its transportation and then its injection into underground geological formations.

While it might be the world's largest such project, Chevron's use of CCS can hardly be called a success story. The Gorgon gas project off the coast of Western Australia near Pilbara was given approval to use CCS on condition that the company stored four million tonnes of CO₂ per annum. Chevron received a taxpayer gift of \$60 million towards its \$3 billion development of CCS.

It managed to sequester 2.7 tonnes in its first year of operation after considerable teething problems. The next year that had fallen to 2.2 million, and in 2021-22 to 1.6 million – less than half its condition of operation. At the same time the gas project expanded rapidly to make the most of global shortages. Rising emissions and declining storage of CO₂ has seen Gorgon become the largest industrial emitter of GHGs at 8,318,842 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂-e).

Advocates of CCS often point to two projects in Norway as successful examples. However, a report from the independent Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) raises serious questions about the security and stability of the two fields at Sleipner and Snøhvit where CO₂ is injected under the sea. Three years after commencement of CCS at Sleipner, it had unexpectedly risen from a lower-level injection point to a shallower level.

"At Snøhvit, problems surfaced merely 18 months into injection operations despite detailed pre-operational field assessment and engineering. The targeted storage site demonstrated acute signs of rejecting the CO₂. A geological structure thought to have 18 years' worth of CO₂ storage capacity was indicating less than six months of further usage potential," the report says.

The author of the IEEFA's report Grant Hauber says that the two Norwegian projects "cast doubt on whether the world has the technical prowess, strength of regulatory oversight, and unwavering multi-decade commitment of capital and resources" to keep CO₂ permanently sequestered.

So much for the "gold standard" of CCS! The only sure way of cutting GHG emissions is to halt gas projects.

100 RED YEARS

An online exhibition of the history of the Communist Party of Australia's 100 years

Visit:

www.100redyears.org

"an informative and fascinating look at the comrades' work over the last 100 years. Designed to inspire and educate."

GIVE THEM

A VOICE





WOTIS YES

A blow against corporate greed

WASHINGTON – In a landmark win against corporate greed and for community journalism, the News Guild, the Communications Workers and allies beat two rapacious hedge funds, Standard General and Apollo Global Management, which tried to devour local broadcaster Tegna and its news programs.

The two hedge funds called it a merger, a statement which drew a lot of scepticism. Tegna, the former media arm of the nation's biggest newspaper chain, Gannett, controls broadcast stations in Denver, Indianapolis, Buffalo, Hartford, Connecticut, and 31 other cities.

The win came when time ran out on the hedge funds' 22nd May deadline to Tegna to agree to the \$8.6 billion takeover. The News Guild-CWA, NABET-CWA, the Communications Workers, civic, consumer and civil rights groups and anti-trust advocates raised formal challenge hell with the Federal Communications Commission over the takeover's impact on employment, broadcast news coverage, and consumer choice. So the FCC staff kept raising questions – until the clock ran out.

The hedge funds withdrew their bid and, as a condition of the tentative agreement they had signed with Tegna, had to pay it \$136 million to break their pact when the financing deadline ended. The hedge funds feared they couldn't find comparable financing after that date.

A win for the two hedge funds would have consolidated financier control over local TV broadcasters, letting the funds slash staff, close newsrooms, cut people and shave production costs to the bone. The losers would be consumers, viewers, and broadcast workers suddenly out of their jobs – even if they received union-negotiated severance pay.

Venial and vicious hedge funds, answerable often only to one prime investor in secret, have carried out similar depredations among the nation's community newspapers, leaving "news deserts."

That's why the News Guild, a CWA sector, fought the takeover of Tegna. The Guild has had its own running battle against the most-rapacious hedge fund of them all, Alden Global Capital.

The patterns are the same. A hedge fund is a hedge fund. Swoop in, buy the property, sell the building, cashier the staff, cut the coverage, and then sell out, at a big profit to the secret capitalists, leaving news-less communities and broken lives behind.

"This is a major victory for our union members, who have been fighting the hedge fund takeover of local news for more than a decade," said News Guild President Jon Schleuss.

"For too long, hedge funds like Standard General, Alden Global Capital, and Chatham Asset Management have taken over local newsrooms, taken on massive amounts of debt and cut jobs and local news coverage to service that debt. Today we secured a major

victory in preventing yet another attempt by hedge funds to take over local news."

The two CWA sectors and the union joined Common Cause and the United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry in petitioning the FCC to reject the "merger, and safeguard the public's right to weigh in on large broadcast transactions affecting local news and US democracy." They raised the broader question of "private equity's disastrous impact on US media and media consolidation," too. The FCC listened and agreed, Communications Workers President Chris Shelton said.

"The FCC stood up for media workers by scrutinising a hedge fund's attempt to take over and destroy more local news in the US," said Shelton. The union thanked the agency and its staff "for finally doing what we have asked regulators to do for decades – protect American jobs and hold Wall Street firms accountable."

"Standard General and Apollo had multiple opportunities to provide more documents and failed to answer questions raised during this process," said NABET President Charlie Braico. "Their failure to provide adequate answers led to the need for further scrutiny in front of a judge and their poor planning in financing timeline led to the deal's demise."

Had Apollo and its partner, Standard General, succeeded, it would have added Tegna's 35 stations to the 14 TV stations and 52 radio stations of the Cox Corp which Apollo already controls. "The relationship of

the two major Wall Street funds raised serious questions about consolidation and control of dozens of local newsrooms," CWA said.

"Sometimes, the process works and the needs of the public are put first. This is one of those times," Church of Christ Justice Ministry Policy Adviser Cheryl Leanza told CWA. "This transaction deserved every ounce of scrutiny it received. The hedge funds seeking approval of this deal did not produce the information, data and changes needed to get through the regulatory approval process."

News Guild-CWA members have battled the hedge fund takeover of local newsrooms at the *Denver Post*, *St. Paul (Minnesota) Pioneer Press*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, and dozens of other papers. The Denver staff actually walked out one day and picketed, demanding Alden sell their paper to investors who really care about local news, not just milking profits from assets. Such newsroom destruction by hedge funds, this time in broadcast, would have left more "news deserts."

"Wall Street continues to destroy local news, resulting in fewer watchdogs at all levels of government across North America," Schleuss said. Death of this deal "should serve as a warning to Wall Street funds scheming to take over local newsrooms and a lesson for them to work with journalist and media unions. We will continue to do what we have always done as journalists – hold companies to account and defend democracy."

People's World ✪

Statement on Wikileaks founder Julian Assange

We strongly condemn the ongoing extradition proceedings relating to Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder under the Espionage Act and Computer Fraud Abuse Act. Assange has been persecuted for publishing and exposing crimes of the most powerful governments, and the truth about wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, and the environmental destruction by big business and arms companies in so many parts of the world, and files on inmates at the Guantanamo Bay prison. The release of the Afghan War Diary and the Iraq War logs sparked debates on American involvement in these two conflicts.

Publishing huge tracts of information has shaken up the political world and started a worldwide discussion around journalism. But the founder Julian Assange and his team are making history, increasing accountability and improving the democratic process as a result. What needs to be understood with regard to the US government's targeting of Assange is that he was indicted because he publicly exposed details of troublesome activities

that the government wanted to keep secret. This is a case about the right of the people to know what the governments are doing in extreme secrecy where there are no witnesses.

The US government's indictment of him poses a grave threat to press freedom and investigative journalism around the world. The fact is that prosecuting Assange on the charges that have been brought against him would criminalise journalism as news organizations have the right to publish classified information in order to inform the public of matters of profound public significance.

Julian Assange has remained in custody ever since 2019 detained at London's high-security Belmarsh Prison, one of the UK's toughest detention centres in life-threatening conditions pending extradition to the United States where he faces a 175 year prison sentence.

It's time the US administration who preach principles of a free press abroad and the importance of journalism, practice what they preach and drop these charges immediately.

Department of International Relations
People's Liberation Front-JVP
Sri Lanka ✪



Congo Pillaged

The United States, in the interests of imperialism, along with their puppet governments Rwanda and Uganda, is violently and savagely looting the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) of its raw and precious natural resources. This large-scale theft includes that of coltan – a mineral used to make cell phones, tablets, computers, other electronics, and modern military

weapons. The DRC has 64 per cent of the world's coltan. Not only that, but the DRC is rich in gold, diamonds, copper, tin, cobalt, uranium, among other resources.

Current estimates value the untapped potential mineral resources in the DRC at around \$24 trillion, easily making it one of the wealthiest nations on Earth. This is the value today – after several centuries of brutal

wealth extraction. The DRC contains almost as many minerals as the periodic table. It is for these reasons the DRC is being targeted, invaded, dominated, and looted.

Countless armed rebel militias and rogue government forces have been terrorizing the people in pursuit of ethnic vendettas, amassing greater personal power and wealth. The current conflict in the DRC has been raging for decades, with estimated death tolls of 6

million since 1996 alone. This is genocide, yet we hear nothing. Ghanaian Prime Minister, and President Kwame Nkrumah referred to the Congo as the heart of Africa. Communist Party of China Chairman Mao Tse-Tung is quoted as saying that "whoever controls the Congo, controls the world." Thus, when the Congo is free, the world will be free.

Black Alliance for Peace ✪

National People's Power, NPP holds national tour



Vinnie Molina

The leader of the Sri Lankan People's Liberation Front (JVP) and the National People's Power (NPP) comrade Anura Dissanayake addressed a full house at the Perth Convention Centre on Tuesday 27th June.

The public event was part of the NPP Australian national tour which has already had successful and widely attended public events in Melbourne and Brisbane. The next legs of the tour took JVP MP Anura Dissanayake to both Adelaide and Sydney during the week.

The public also had the opportunity to listen to comrade Dammika Patabendi, NPP national executive member. The local organisers invited comrade Liz Hulm, CPA assistant general secretary, to deliver a greeting in which she expressed solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka and offered support in the struggle for democratic change.

The organisers of the tour had previously invited comrade Andrew Irving, CPA General Secretary, to address the event in Melbourne last weekend that was attended by about 2000 people in defiance of the cold weather.

Comrade Anura's speech was warmly received by the audience who listened with attention, and enjoyed the relaxed explanation of the complex issues facing the people in their country.

It is really impressive and provides people with hope when the community comes together in solidarity

with their homeland, friends and family who every day face the failures of a system backed up with lies and empty promises by past and present governments.

People in Sri Lanka placed their hopes with Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2019 but their hopes were in vain as his government benefited just the elite and dismissed the people. After the spontaneous events that saw people rising in 2022, their aspirations were taken away by the appointment of President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Ultimately the people can only trust the people. The National People's Power and the People's Liberation Front are becoming the only option to deliver the people's aspirations for democracy and economic stability.

Sri Lanka with its rich history boasts a diverse population that strive together for a better future. It is unfortunate that British colonialism has inflicted so much damage to the people and the long list of failed governments have governed just for the elites.

As the statement shared by the local organisers says "In light of this urgent need for transformation, the National People's Power (NPP) political movement emerges as the beacon of hope. It represents the sole viable option to reshape Sri Lanka's political landscape and pave the way for a nation where future generations can live with dignity and pride."

We wish comrade Anura Dissanayake every success in his tour and we pledge our support for the JVP and NPP struggle for democracy and self-determination. ✪

Syria

90 per cent in poverty

The United Nations humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths has warned that the 12-year conflict in Syria has pushed 90 per cent of the population below the poverty line. Griffiths said millions face cuts in food aid next month because of a funding shortfall.

This comes as the \$5.4 billion UN humanitarian appeal for Syria, the world's largest, remains only 12 per cent funded, meaning that emergency food aid for millions of the country's people could be cut by 40 per cent in July.

Griffiths delivered the grim news to the UN security council, along with an appeal to members to renew authorisation for the delivery of aid to Syria's rebel-held north-west from Turkey, which is due to expire on 10th July.

But Russia's UN ambassador, whose country is the Damascus government's most important ally, described the cross-border aid deliveries as "a zero-sum game" that is undermining Syria's sovereignty, discriminating against government-controlled territory and fuelling illegal armed groups including "terrorists in Idlib."

The war in Syria, now in its 13th year, has killed nearly half a million people and displaced half of its pre-war population of 23 million.

A deadly 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit a large area of Syria in February, further compounding its misery.

Griffiths, the undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, recently returned from Damascus, stressed that the Syrian people face "profound humanitarian challenges."

He said that they were gathering on Eid al-Adh, a Muslim holy day "with less food on their plates, little fuel in their stoves and limited water in their homes" and that their hardship comes at a time when the UN and its humanitarian partners have limited means to help.

Russian ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the United States and its allies of spending far more on weapons for Ukraine than the \$55 billion that the UN is seeking for global humanitarian needs this year. "This lays out Western priorities very clearly," he added.

Morning Star ✪



Global Briefs

PAKISTAN: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has agreed to provide \$3 billion in a long-awaited bailout of the country's impoverished economy. The nine-month agreement must be approved by the fund's executive board, which is expected to make a final decision in mid-July, IMF official Nathan Porter said in a statement.

SOUTH AFRICA: President Cyril Ramaphosa has been cleared of any wrongdoing over a scandal involving the theft of more than \$500,000 in US currency that had been stashed in a sofa at his game farm. Acting Public Protector Kholeka Gcaleka said that Ramaphosa had not violated the ethics code for members of South Africa's executive over the incident, which happened in 2020.

GERMANY: Leaders of the main opposition centre-right Union bloc last week called for voters to back them in two major state elections this autumn, claiming to be the best bet for stability and that backing the burgeoning far-right Alternative for Germany would bring no change. The 8th October elections in the southern state of Bavaria and neighbouring Hesse come halfway through centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz's term.

FINLAND: The economic affairs minister in the new four-party centre-right coalition government resigned today after just ten days in the job over his alleged ties to the far-right. Vilhelm Junnila, a member of the populist anti-immigration Finns Party, stepped down in part for a speech related to a far-right memorial in the western city of Turku in 2019.

RWANDA: A court in France has convicted Philippe Hategemana, a former Rwandan police officer, to life imprisonment after finding him guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. Hategemana's crimes took place during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when Hutu militias killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and Hutus. The prosecutors had described him as having played a central part in carrying out the killings.

UNESCO: The 193 members of UNESCO have voted to support the return of the United States to the UN cultural and scientific agency after a decade-long dispute sparked by the organisation's move to include Palestine as a member. The US had announced that it wanted to return, five years after it withdrew from the agency during the presidency of Donald Trump.

GREECE: Opposition leader Alexis Tsipras announced his decision to step down after a crushing election defeat last month. Tsipras served as Greece's prime minister from 2015 to 2019. In the general election, Tsipras's Syriza party received just below 18 per cent of the vote while the winning New Democracy party topped 40 per cent.

POLAND: Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki insisted last week that his country would not be forced to accept European Union rules on migration, and he vowed to veto any plan that might force countries to take in refugees. "An attack on Europe is underway. Europe's borders are not secure. The safety of the inhabitants of our continent is at stake," Morawiecki said. He said that he would propose "a plan for secure borders" to EU leaders at a summit in Brussels.

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Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
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email: editor@cpa.org.au

We are not “all in the same boat”

Comrade Editor,

The drama involving the submersible *Titan*, in the North Atlantic near Newfoundland was followed by millions worldwide. The vessel's five passengers undertook the voyage to view the wreckage of the *Titanic*, the ocean liner that sank in April 1912 with

some 1500 victims, which lies 3800 metres beneath the surface. One hundred and eleven years later, class divisions have reached an even higher and more malignant stage. It has now become a tale, in fact, of two vessels – the *Titan*, on the one hand, and the fishing boat that sank on 13th June in the Mediterranean, killing hundreds of desperate refugees, on the other.

The nonstop media coverage of the North Atlantic episode is vastly different from the treatment devoted to last week's terrible tragedy off the Greek coast. There the individuals, Pakistanis, Egyptians, Syrians, Afghans, and Palestinians, died for the most part nameless and uncelebrated. Some of them may never be identified.

Another harsh irony lies in the fact that two wealthy Pakistanis were passengers on the *Titan*, while hundreds of impoverished Pakistani men, women and children succumbed in the Mediterranean, leading to outrage and protests in their native country.

Far from facilitating rescue efforts, European governments, especially Greece's are directly responsible for the conditions that led to the mass drowning. Officials lied and covered up their role, and slandered the dead and injured. The surviving refugees were thrown into a filthy warehouse facility. Media personalities could hardly stay awake recounting the facts.

Large scale death is now business as usual for these people. The clear implication of the reporting was that the suffering refugees had brought their fate on themselves.

Saving the hundreds on board the fishing vessel near Greece, once they were clearly in jeopardy, would have been far easier than rescuing a vessel resting on the bottom of the sea – for any government or naval force that desired to do so. It's legitimate to raise the question whether, given the homicidal record of the European governments involved, the refugees' deaths may have been deliberately facilitated, as a means of setting an example and intimidating others.

Of course, the entire tragedy could have been avoided if the fleeing people had simply been allowed, as they should have been, to move with dignity and without obstruction from one continent or country to another. Their mass flight has largely been precipitated by the imperialist wars and other operations carried out by Western powers, the very regimes now presiding over their deaths at sea.

Social inequality, neocolonial war, the growth of authoritarianism and anti-immigrant hysteria, the debasement of official politics and the media – there is “a world of meaning ... in the sad circumstances” of these two contrasting episodes.

Unmistakably, however, the general movement of the mass of the population, in the face of a dysfunctional, criminal social order, is toward the left, toward social revolution.

Jim Cowie

Battle against book bans

Chauncey K Robinson

NEW YORK: Bans on books centring LGBTQ+ people and people of colour are sweeping the country. Led by far-right parents and politicians claiming books dealing with queer themes and the history of racism indoctrinate young readers, the uptick in the number of bans has left many wondering how they can keep valuable literature on the shelves.

GLAAD, the world's largest LGBTQ+ media advocacy organisation, along with EveryLibrary, a national organisation supporting campaigns against book bans, have announced a new resource to help communities push back against this literary censorship.

The resource guide *Book Bans: A Guide for Community Response and Action* is a downloadable toolkit that informs and prepares community members to organise and work with media to “ensure diverse local voices are heard against book bans and in support of LGBTQ+ people and all people of colour.”

According to a recent study released by the writers' organisation PEN America, book bans in US public schools increased by 28 per cent in the first half of the 2022-23 academic year. The organisation described the bans as a “relentless conservative crusade to constrict children's freedom to read.”

The study surmised that over a six-month timeline, book bans across the country affected over 800 titles. This equates to over 100 new titles removed from student access each month. Pen America also noted that the most prevalent culprits in the book bans were the states of Texas, Florida, Missouri, Utah, and South Carolina. Texas led the list with 801 bans in 22 school districts, followed by Florida with 566 in 21 districts and Pennsylvania with 457 bans in 11 districts.

The study noted that 30 per cent of the unique titles banned are books about race, racism, or featuring characters of colour. Meanwhile, 26 per cent of unique titles banned have LGBTQ+ characters or themes.

Last month, PEN America joined Penguin Random House, parents, and censored authors to sue Escambia County in Florida, alleging school board members banned books and ignored recommendations from

its formal review process to return the books to shelves. PEN America found that 96 per cent of book challenges were initiated without the requisite written forms that most district policies officially require.

PEN's study highlighted the evolution of book bans over the last two years in the United States. In the 2021-22 school year, parent-led groups coordinated to advance book censorship. For the 2022-23 school year, they had the backing of governments, with state legislation adding to the pressure for more extreme book bans.

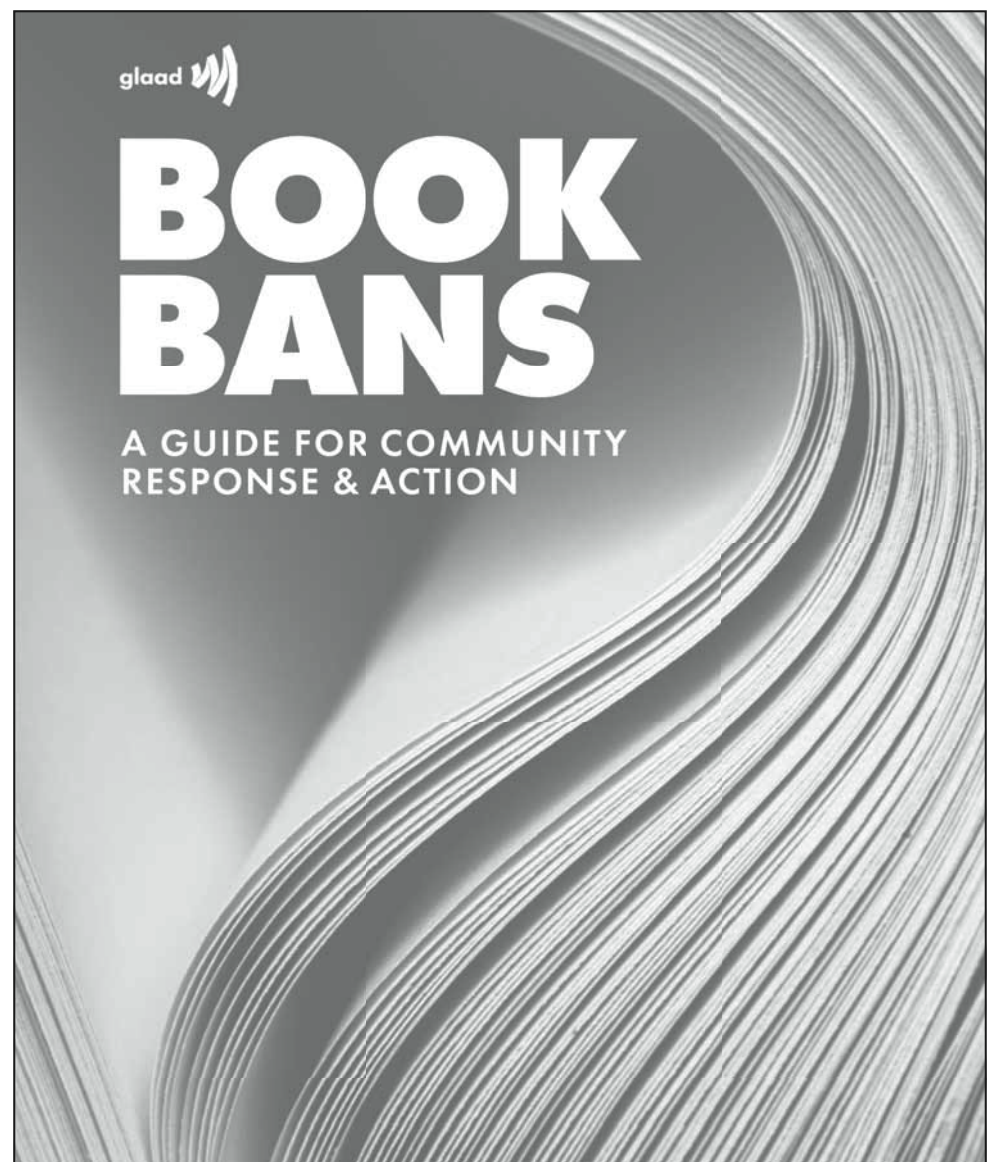
GLAAD's guide offers community members step-by-step recommendations to resist censorship and protect the freedom to read.

They include:

- Organise a diverse local coalition including students, parents, teachers, librarians, LGBTQ+ advocates, authors, health professionals, and clergy.
- Create fact-based and meaningful messages to inform and inspire all in the community and present to school and library boards.
- Engage news, social, and local media with facts and local interview voices and resources.
- Inform everyone in the community, including families, businesses, elected officials, and taxpayers, about the absurdity of book bans and the threat they pose to vulnerable youth. Focus also on the entire community's safety, prosperity, and reputation.
- Hold school and library boards accountable to all taxpayers, ensure proper protocol is being followed in book reconsiderations, and demand necessary reforms to end the skyrocketing and discriminatory wave of book banning.

“This guide is urgently needed as communities face a skyrocketing number of book ban attempts across the country targeting LGBTQ+ books and books about race, and racism,” explained GLAAD President and CEO Sarah Kate Ellis.

Ellis continued: “LGBTQ+ people and books about us belong in libraries, schools, and everywhere. This playbook to push back against book bans will help communities become safer, stronger, and smarter. By using the power of personal storytelling and



engaging media, communities can unite with their neighbours, send a signal of welcome and acceptance, and see challenged books return to shelves. Communities who care about each reader and a future where all can be free must get the last word.”

EveryLibrary Executive Director John Chrastka said, “We cannot allow this attempt to erase the lives of millions of Americans

through book bans to continue. That's why we're committed to providing pro-bono resources to communities who are fighting back. I know this guide will help hundreds of communities respond to the attack on their First Amendment rights and the rights of their LGBTQ+ friends and family.”

People's World ✪

European Union: bribes and blackmail

The Workers' Party of Tunisia and several human rights groups have strongly objected to a deal proposed by European countries on the movement of migrants. They have called it a violation of sovereignty and the human rights of refugees.

On 11th June, top EU officials

visited Tunisia and issued a joint statement after meeting President Kais Saied, saying that both parties have agreed to work jointly to end “irregular migration.”

Critics of the deal claim that the EU is using Tunisia's precarious economic condition to force it to control the movement of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea in

exchange for financial support, just like they did with Turkey, and Libya.

The Workers' Party claimed in a statement on 15th June that any such deal will make Tunisia a “policeman” patrolling its borders so that people trying to escape their deteriorating economic conditions can be stopped from going to Europe and punished.

Reports indicate that the EU is pushing Tunisia to establish a harsh border policy in exchange for its support for the country's stalled bid to obtain a \$1.9 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Tunisia's loan has been stalled for months due to Saied's reluctance to implement the reforms

demanding by the IMF. Saied is reportedly worried that his government – already facing large-scale popular resistance since his political coup in July 2021 – will face another popular upsurge if the IMF's demands to cut subsidies for essential commodities such as flour and fuel, cuts to social services, and privatisation are implemented. ✪

Israel: criminal state



Perth rally for Palestine. Photo: CPA.

Maureen Clare Murphy

Israeli forces have killed at least eight Palestinians during an ongoing major military offensive in the northern Israeli occupied West Bank city of Jenin – the largest operation in the territory since 2002.

Hundreds of Palestinians were streaming out of Jenin refugee camp in yet another chapter of displacement. The Israeli military denied that it had ordered the evacuation of part of the camp. The Palestine Red Crescent Society said that it evacuated 3000 Palestinians from the camp.

Defence for Children International-Palestine said that two of those killed were children: Nour al-Deen Marshoud, 15, and Majdi Ararawi, 17.

Ayed Abu Eqtaish, a program director for the children's rights group, called on Karim Khan, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to "at a minimum issue a preventative statement in an effort to deter ongoing Israeli war crimes."

Decades of international impunity for Israel sends a message: willful killings, destruction and other violations go unpunished. Human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity cannot be normalised. Israel cannot continue to evade accountability.

The invasion began at around 1 am when Israeli forces moved into Jenin and its refugee camp and closed off the camp entrances, "isolating it from the city," while Israeli airstrikes targeted civilian infrastructure.

Four Palestinian fighters were killed as residents attempted to repel the invading forces, identified as Nour al-Deen Marshoud, Sameeh Abu al-Wafa, Aws al-Hanoun, and Husam Abu Thibah.

One or more Israeli snipers executed three Palestinians whose bodies were seen piled on top of each other on a street in Jenin refugee camp in videos and photos that circulated on social media.

The three men were left to bleed for more than half an hour when people managed to pull them inside one of the houses. By then, all three were dead.

The Palestinian health ministry in the West Bank reported at least 28 injuries, mostly among civilians, with nine in critical condition.

CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE DESTROYED

Israel has destroyed civilian infrastructure and troops have targeted paramedics and journalists

during the Jenin invasion, which Israeli officials said could last for two or three days.

The municipality of Jenin said that its water supply was cut off after Israeli troops destroyed infrastructure. Defence for Children International-Palestine said that camp residents were also shut off from electricity and telecommunications.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said that Israeli troops blocked roads and intercepted ambulances trying to enter the refugee camp.

Red Crescent director Ahmed Jebriil told the UK charity Medical Aid for Palestinians that "ambulances came under direct fire" and were obstructed after Israeli bulldozers destroyed main roads in the camp.

The World Health Organisation in the West Bank and Gaza condemned as "deplorable" the "ongoing attacks against health care, including [the] prevention of access to persons critically injured."

JOURNALISTS ATTACKED

Journalists also came under attack.

Video shows an Israeli sniper firing directly at a camera on a tripod belonging to the crew of Al-Araby TV, in what the broadcaster said was a deliberate attack:

The ongoing incursion in Jenin refugee camp has disturbing parallels to Israel's 2002 invasion, during which at least 52 Palestinians and 23 Israeli soldiers were killed.

The Israeli military left "a landscape of ruin," with "the smell of death" permeating the camp, according to a witness to the aftermath of the 11-day siege. More than 400 houses were destroyed, displacing a quarter of the camp's population, according to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestine refugees.

Some observers have described Israel's multiple deadly raids in Jenin and its surroundings during the past year and a half as an incremental massacre:

More than 180 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops, police and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza so far this year, or died from injuries sustained previously, according to *The Electronic Intifada's* tracking.

Nine Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli forces in the Jenin area since the beginning of the year, according to Defence for Children International-Palestine.

In the same period, 28 people have been killed by Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank in occupation-related violence, or died from previous injuries.

The Electronic Intifada
(edited for reasons of space) ☪



Reflections on increasing our voice as Communist women

E Lennon

Since the creation of the NSW Women's Fraction earlier this year, many of us as members have been able to formalise our work to advance the rights of women in our state. This work has also been in conjunction with other women members from across the country.

In coming together and creating strong Party organs and spaces for women, it means we can speak our minds and explore how we can fight the issues we face. It also provides us a space to celebrate our achievements and continue the great history of red women.

We are seeing fantastic examples of our members' voices being elevated. At the recent Trans rights rally in Sydney, one member of the Women's Fraction gave a speech on the importance of work rights for trans workers. A speech that was well received and a great example of Communist women asserting our voices in the left and more broadly.

When we hold on to our achievements it is also crucial that we ask ourselves what we can do to build on these successes and continue the growth of women's membership.

Political parties have a long history and reputation of being regarded as "boys' clubs" where women have been disregarded and excluded. Time and time again, these caricatures have been proven true in electoral politics. We don't need to look any further than Australia's parliaments to see political structures steeped in sexism, misogyny, racism, harassment, and horrifyingly, sexual assault. It is the duty of all Communists to avoid the pitfalls and entrenched sexism of bourgeois politics.

The question remains: how do we avoid these pitfalls and elevate our voices? Mao Zedong wrote "Communists must be ready at all times to stand up for the truth, because truth is in the interests of the people; Communists must be ready at all times to correct their mistakes, because mistakes are against the interests of the people."

It is essential that truth and honesty are held not just as ideals but are everyday practices in our work as Communists. In particular, women should feel safe to express their discomfort at unhelpful and harmful behaviours and attitudes.

Communist men should take it upon themselves to listen and empathise first when we speak our minds or call out these issues. Just as we as women ask why sexist behaviours and attitudes arise, so too should Communist men, while helping us to address these issues.

It is the duty of all Communists, regardless of gender, to ensure a cohesive culture across Party structures that prioritises transparency, corrigibility, and responsibility. Self-criticism is key to this work and should be a means to practice honesty in our daily lives.

This isn't to say we should take ourselves to task over every minor fault and split every hair. It is simply that for the voices of Communist women to continue strengthening, and for women to feel empowered to join a political Party, we need to bring intentionality to how we enable women's participation and remove obstacles to doing so.

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4th July: land of the un-free



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Graham Holton

Americans love to celebrate the 4th of July, commemorating their independence from Britain in 1776. School children and adults are taught that the United States is the “land of the free,” the freest country in the world. It is far from that.

The history of any country is reflected in its laws and judicial system. The US enforces the deprivation of freedom in a vain attempt to solve its crime rate. This has achieved massive numbers of incarcerations, with some states still enforcing the death penalty. Its law enforcement and criminal justice systems are heavily biased by blatant classism and racism.

Rates of family incarceration were disproportionately higher for communities of low-income and colour. This has meant that of all ethnic groups in prison, African Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and Native Americans have the highest rates of incarceration.

The US has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the world, and shamefully holds 20 per cent of the world's incarcerated people. At the end of 2021, 1,840,622 people were incarcerated in state or federal prisons or local jails. This is a 500 per cent increase over the previous forty years. It was brought about by changes in sentencing law and policy, not through any increase in crime rates, which have changed very little since the 1980s.

Todd Schulte, President of prison reform group FWD.us, said, “our current criminal justice system is harming our economy, communities, and families and undermining the promise of what America can and should be.”

Half of Americans have family members who have been incarcerated. A 2018 study showed that 113 million adults, out of a population of 225 million, had an immediate family member formerly or currently incarcerated. One in four adults has had a sibling incarcerated. One in five has had a parent sent to jail or prison. One in eight has had a child incarcerated, with 63,000 young people now in confinement. More than 6.5 million adults have an immediate family member currently in jail or in prison.

The US criminal justice system holds 2.3 million people in its 1,719 state prisons, 109 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, and 80 Indian Country jails. People are also locked up in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centres, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the US territories.

Every year, over 600,000 people enter prison, and 10.6 million go to jail. Most people in jails have not been convicted, but are there because they are too poor to pay the bail bond. The median felony bail is US\$10,000, which is the equivalent of 8 months' income for the typical defendant. If they take a bond loan, 10 per cent must be paid upfront and 5 per cent is paid as a processing fee.

On any day, around 150,000 are convicted, usually serving misdemeanour sentences of under twelve months. There are 840,000 people on parole and 3.6 million people on probation. In some states people are incarcerated for unpaid debt.

Nonviolent drug convictions are a major feature of the federal prison system. Drug possession, a victimless crime, accounts for the incarceration of almost half a million people. There are around one million drug possession arrests each year. Each such arrest causes a criminal record damaging employment prospects and increasing the likelihood of longer sentences for future offences.

Over 13,000 people are held in federal prisons for criminal convictions of immigration offences, and 10,600 more are held pretrial by US Marshals. Another 49,000 people are detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for being undocumented immigrants. A 2005 report showed 27 per cent of federal prison inmates were foreigners. Of the 22,000 people involuntarily detained in state psychiatric hospitals and civil commitment centres, many are not convicted, but are detained indefinitely.

People of colour, who have greater rates of poverty, are overrepresented in the prisons and jails. These racial disparities are particularly stark for Black Americans, who make up 40 per cent of the incarcerated population, despite representing only 13 per cent of US citizens.

According to the US Bureau of Justice in 2018 black males accounted for 34 per cent of the total male prison population, white males were 29 per cent, and Hispanic males, 24 per cent. The imprisonment rate for black males was 5.8 times higher than white males. The imprisonment rate for black females was 1.8 times higher than for white females.

While capital punishment has been abolished in twenty-three states and Washington, DC, thousands of inmates still face the death penalty elsewhere. As of 1st October 2022, there were 2,363 on death row: 994 White, 970 African-American, 330 Hispanic, 45 Asian, and 24 Native Americans.

Seven out of ten prisoners on death row have less than a high school diploma and more than 10 per cent have a mental illness. It is illegal to sentence anyone to death who has a limited intellectual capacity, such as Downs Syndrome, but there is much anecdotal evidence that it does happen. In 1992, Bill Clinton went out of his way to execute a prisoner who left part of his last meal “for later,” not understanding that there would be no later for him.

People of colour have accounted for a disproportionate 43 per cent of the 1,348 people executed since 1976. Today 55 per cent of those awaiting execution are Black. Recently 136 people were exonerated from death row, after new DNA analyses proved they had not committed the crime. ★

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