



NO TO NATO

Denis Doherty & Hannah Middleton

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attended the summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Vilnius, Lithuania on 11-12 July. Albanese was present as part of the four Indo-Pacific NATO partner states – Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Australia as a valued NATO partner.

This was the latest step in NATO's moves into the Asia-Pacific region.

At a press conference in April 2022, Stoltenberg announced a new Strategic Concept which formalises extending NATO's reach into the Asia/Pacific region, with the explicit aim of countering "China's growing influence and coercive policies." This directly contradicts President Biden's reassurance to President Xi Jinping on 18th March this year that "the revitalisation of its alliances is not targeted at China."

Why would Australia want to blindly follow NATO down a path of destruction against our greatest trading partner that comes with a price tag that damns our people to a future of austerity?

UKRAINE

President Volodymyr Zelensky had expected his demand for Ukraine to join NATO would be agreed at the Vilnius summit. When this did not happen he angrily criticised the decision as "absurd."

Ukraine's entry into NATO is unlikely for the moment as it would activate the collective defence principle of Article 5. The NATO allies have no wish to be at war with Russia and so decided that Ukraine can join the military alliance "when allies agree and conditions are met."

In 1997 the US laid out a timeline for NATO enlargement, including Ukraine.

The enlargement plan directly contradicted what the US had promised Gorbachev and Yeltsin, leading to the Ukraine war which is effectively a proxy Russia-US war over NATO enlargement.

SWEDEN

Sweden applied for NATO membership in May 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Turkiye blocked Sweden's application, accusing it of hosting Kurdish militants.

In response Sweden tightened its anti-terrorism laws. It is now illegal to finance, recruit for, or publicly encourage "a terrorist

organisation" or to travel abroad with the intention of joining such groups.

Recently a Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) member was convicted by a Swedish court and a PKK supporter was extradited to Turkiye.

Sweden also lifted a 2019 arms embargo against Turkiye.

Behind the dispute lies a long-running Turkish demand to be allowed to buy US F-16 jets, something Congress has opposed due to Turkiye's purchase of a Russian air defence system.

In what is seen as a trade off for Turkiye to allow Sweden's NATO membership, US President Biden said he now supports the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkiye, on the condition they are not used to threaten Greece.

Late in the negotiations President Erdogan linked the issue of Turkiye's membership of the EU with Sweden's efforts to become a NATO member. However, this appears to have been set aside in favour of the weapons deal.

NATO is officially committed to ensuring that countries' "sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected," and "each country can choose their own path." Apparently this does not include China.

JAPAN

NATO had planned to open a "liaison office" in Tokyo but French opposition meant the plan had to be shelved.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the plan was a "big mistake" that would fuel tensions between NATO and Beijing.

Japanese Communist Party Chair Shii Kazuo said that NATO's plan to open a liaison office is one of the major factors for the current strained Japan-China relations because Japan acts in obedience to the US military strategy to encircle China.

He said that if Japan maintains this approach, it will exacerbate military tensions and divisions in the region as well as throughout the world.

FRANCE

French President Macron is opposed to an increased NATO focus on China

In 2021 he said "we shouldn't confuse our goals," arguing that "NATO is an organisation that concerns the North Atlantic, China has little to do with the North Atlantic."

Paul Keating commented that Macron is doing the world a service putting a spike into Stoltenberg's wheel, reminding all of us that NATO is a military organisation focused on Europe and the Atlantic.



ASIA PACIFIC

The Association of South East Asian Nations renewed its Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China in November last year and each member country has reaffirmed its willingness to co-operate with China.

Apart from Japan and Singapore, Asia Pacific countries (along with the rest of the developing world) have avoided expressions of hostility towards China. They prefer cooperation, especially on infrastructure development under its Belt and Road initiative.

Regional states clearly want to avoid serious conflict between China and America which would ravage the whole region.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said "The majority of Asian countries ... oppose the emergence of military blocs in the region. They don't welcome NATO's outreach in Asia."

Most of South East Asia have expressed misgivings about AUKUS. NATO's characterisation of AUKUS as a key instrument for NATO's Asia-Pacific involvement reinforces these concerns.

AUSTRALIA

The US is presently intent on constructing an overwhelming military presence in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This involves the modernisation and expansion of America's military alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, upgraded security arrangements with Taiwan, Singapore, New Zealand, and Pakistan, and efforts to build closer ties with India.

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Guardian

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Voice and action

The Closing the Gap strategy was set up in 2008, as part of Kevin Rudd's Apology to Indigenous Australians. The fact that Closing the Gap was set up at all gives the lie to the dishonest arguments that Australia is a race-blind utopia threatened by the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. There are serious gaps in life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

Closing the Gap was set up 15 years ago. New targets were added in 2019. Of the 19 Closing the Gap targets, four are on track and improving, four are in decline. School attendance is improving, as is the health of babies, and educational outcomes. The bad news is that there are more children in "out-of-home" care. More adults are in prison. There has been a rise in Indigenous suicides.

Linda Burney, the minister for Indigenous Australians said that when the government listens to communities things get better. She's right, but it can't stop there.

The Australian government has spent all of its existence treating Indigenous Australians as a separate and lesser category of person. Imperialism, class oppression and racism have combined to bring Indigenous Australians to the point they are at now, vastly over-represented in suicide and incarceration statistics, hugely behind in employment and education.

A lot of the reason that the important measures in Closing the Gap haven't improved – in parts of life that upper and middle-class Australians take for granted – is the paternalism implied in "listens to communities." We need an Australia in which the communities *are* the government, not an Australia where the communities are always something separate, to be listened to as Burney promises, ignored as Malcolm Turnbull did with the Uluru Statement from the Heart, or condescendingly dropped in on as Tony Abbott did, spending a week living in a tent near an Aboriginal community before returning to Canberra and describing the very existence of remote Aboriginal communities as a "lifestyle choice."

A Voice to Parliament is a step towards real democracy in the form of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people controlling how resources are spent and controlling their land.

The CPA has long stood with Aboriginal people in the fight to be able to control Aboriginal people's land and lives. Communism is about *real* democracy. Not what Lenin called "bourgeois parliamentarianism," whereby the mass of people get to decide every now and then who will cheat and repress them, but democracy in which the majority of us, the proletariat, control society.

There has been more than enough top-down management with NGOs and government agencies flying in, making decisions, and flying out again. The promise of the Voice is that there will be a permanent Aboriginal voice which will be heard on what is happening in Aboriginal people's own affairs.

CPA President Vinnie Molina has said, after the Voice is instituted, there will be more struggle. This is of interest to all Australians because it's part of the struggle "for a new type of society, a fairer and more democratic one, a socialist society."

When the Voice is set up Australia will continue to be a settler-colonial society. Changes will have to be fought for. Even the shape of the Voice will have to be fought for when the Yes campaign has won. That fight will have the wind in its sails.

Let's get the Voice established and listened to. Let's get that gap closed.

"We must listen"

Australian Conservation Foundation statement

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) says "Yes" to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice and the full implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Australia's Constitution is 122 years old and still does not recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of this continent. We are a nation that is not whole. We are made up of diverse peoples but are not united. And we are far from equal.

The Voice is an act of recognition of the First Peoples of this land we share, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a say over the things that affect them.

When we see the beauty of Australia's stunning natural landscapes and wildlife, we witness the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

That connection to Country is a precious gift for all of us, because we need to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures about the protection and care of nature. But to learn, we must first listen.

Listening to First Nations Peoples will drive better and fairer outcomes for First Nations

communities: for health, housing, and more. And it will drive better outcomes for all Australians, including protecting the ancient culture and landscapes we love.

ACF acknowledges that First Nations Peoples of Australia hold unique knowledge and rights inherited from their ancestors and the land and have cared for this country since time immemorial. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, that colonisation was unjust and often violent and continues to adversely affect First Nations Peoples today.

As Australia's national environment organisation, we understand we have a responsibility to help right this historical wrong.

Rightful recognition of, and genuine reconciliation with, First Nations Peoples is fundamental to protecting nature in Australia.

Writing "yes" at the planned referendum later this year is a simple yet profound action. It will empower First Nations communities to have a say in their own destiny. And it will be a joyful moment for all Australians to recognise and respect Australia's First Peoples. Crucially, the Voice represents momentum in the right direction, toward a treaty.

For close to a century, First Nations people have called for a voice in decisions that affect them. After more than 15 years of discussion and consultation, First Nations representatives came together in 2017 to develop the Uluru Statement from Heart, which called for a representative "Voice to Parliament" to enshrine recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in our Constitution.

ACF strongly supports the collective call from First Nations Peoples for Voice, Treaty, and Truth. ACF is committed to helping to build understanding of how constitutional recognition and a Voice to Parliament can be an example of lasting change, one which improves outcomes for First Nations people and for all Australians.

As we confront the urgent climate and nature crises, we have much to learn from the country's original, enduring custodians.

At this referendum, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to walk a better path as a nation. We must grasp this opportunity with both hands and open our hearts.

ACF says Yes. 🌱

NO TO NATO

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This includes the trilateral security dialogue (US, Japan, Australia) launched in 2001; the US-Japan-India trilateral launched in 2011; the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) in 2017; the AUKUS partnership (US, UK Australia) announced in 2021; and the emerging trilateral dialogue (US, Japan, South Korea).

All this is on top of the existing web of joint military exercises as well as expanding programs in maritime surveillance, cybersecurity, new military bases and arms transfers.

And now Australia is to become a willing proxy for NATO which has ambitions to once again exert power and influence in our part of the world.

WAR IS GOOD BUSINESS

The profit imperative is one of the most powerful drivers of the globalisation of NATO.

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Chris Hedges writes: "The pimps of war recruited former Soviet republics into NATO by painting Russia as a threat. Countries that joined NATO, which now include Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, reconfigured their militaries, often through tens of millions in western loans, to become compatible with NATO military hardware. This made the weapons manufacturers billions in profits."

US-based weapon manufacturers have recorded a

massive increase in sales, from \$103.4 billion in 2021 to \$153.7 billion in 2022.

In 2022, the Asia-Pacific region's military spending rose to \$575 billion. During 2018-2022, Asia and Oceania accounted for 41 per cent of global arms imports.

Arms imports by East Asian states increased by 21 per cent between 2013-17 and 2018-22, with US allies recording the largest increases: South Korea (+61 per cent) Japan (+171 per cent), and Australia (+23 per cent).

TALISMAN SABRE

NATO participation in the biannual Talisman Sabre war games has significantly increased with France, UK, Canada, and Germany taking part.

Talisman Sabre is run by the US and Australia, starting on July 22 and lasting 14 days. Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga, will also participate.

German army chief Lieutenant General Alfons Mais said, "We aim to demonstrate that we are reliable and capable partners that contribute to stabilising the rules-based order in the region."

"It is a region of extremely high importance for us in Germany," Mais said.

Of course, German troops do not need to train in jungle warfare and amphibious landings unless they expect to fight in places far from Europe.

Australia must withdraw from the partnership with nuclear-armed NATO and its aggressive war plans, Keep NATO out of Asia and the Pacific. 🌱



Perth

Cuba Today Public meeting

Saturday 12th August 3-5pm
at Perth Trades Hall (82 Beaufort St Perth)

Get first hand information from two young Cuban visitors touring Australia. Marianniz Diaz, a research scientist, and Ivan Barreto, official for the Asia-Pacific area from the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). They will share their thoughts on Cuba today and invite Western Australians to visit Cuba in the upcoming Southern Cross Brigade from December 2023 to January 2024.

Free event.

For more info contact ACFS Perth at acfsperth@gmail.com or call 0419 812 872.

Climate crisis intensifies

Anna Pha

On four consecutive days, the earth has reached its hottest day on record, culminating in a global average temperature of 17.23 degrees Celsius on 4th July. Climate change is descending on the planet and humanity faster than scientists had forecast. The consequences are catastrophic, yet too many governments, including Australia's, are still doing the bidding of profit-hungry fossil fuel corporations.

The World Meteorological Organisation has declared an El Niño with predictions of rising temperatures with worse to come.

Catastrophic weather events around the world are wreaking horrendous loss of lives, destruction of property, and loss of crops and livestock. Heat waves, drought, floods, wild fires, typhoons, melting polar ice, and rising oceans are set to intensify as governments fail to take the necessary action to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS

After 18 months of drought in East Africa the situation is dire with crops failing and cattle dying because of lack of clean water. Across Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somaliland more than 10 million people are facing severe hunger with conditions set to worsen.

This month in the Caribbean, central America and northern part of South America temperatures are expected to be above normal. With sea levels rising, people living in coastal areas face contamination of freshwater aquifers, eroding shorelines, inundation of low-lying areas and increased risks of coastal flooding. The frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones is increasing.

A relentless monsoon has brought states across northern India under severe flood alerts, as rivers have swept into towns, washing away vehicles, bridges and roads with loss of life.

India, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and other parts of Asia are experiencing sweltering temperatures while South Korea is subject to deadly flooding.

Parts of China are experiencing torrential rain and flooding. 10,000 people were evacuated from Hunan province alone.

Smaller Pacific Islands are watching the contamination of freshwater aquifers, eroding shorelines, inundation of low-lying areas and cultural sites and burial grounds disappear under water.

Last summer was Europe's hottest on record with extreme heat killing more than 61,000 people between May and early September 2022. This year looks set to be even hotter with temperatures of more than 45 degrees Celsius in some places. According to scientists this year's extreme weather is only just beginning. People there

do not have air conditioning to hide from the heat.

Arctic and Antarctic ice is rapidly melting as these regions experience record high temperatures. It is mid-winter in the Antarctic.

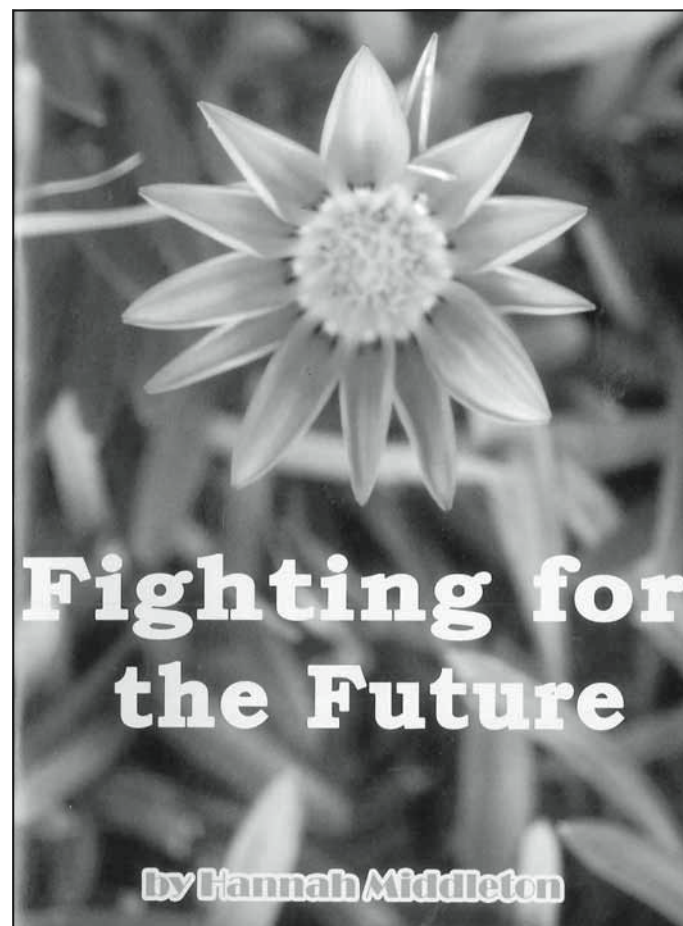
OBSCENE SUBSIDIES

Governments last year poured a record US\$1 trillion (AU\$1.6t) into fossil fuel subsidies, according to the International Energy Agency. Despite the pledges made by countries at the Paris climate conference, it is business as usual in rich countries as governments do the bidding of fossil fuel corporations.

As environmental collapse approaches, the rich countries that are responsible for the overwhelming amount of greenhouse gas emissions must take responsibility. It cannot be left to governments and corporations. It will take a united, militant mass movement.

"We face a ruling class with a single-minded fixation on profit and power ... The task ahead is monumental. Our actions must be truly historical in their sweep and consequences or we will lose the future. Humanity can opt for the preservation of capitalism or the preservation of a habitable environment," Hannah Middleton says in *Fighting for the Future*.

"Our challenge is to build a movement powerful enough to overthrow the existing destructive order and begin the task of building socialism." ✪



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Maritime Union win on renewables

Australian maritime workers continue to benefit from the fast pace of investment and expansion of offshore renewable energy projects around our coastline. The Maritime Union of Australia welcomed the announcement by the Federal Government of the final form of a new renewable energy zone in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the Newcastle and Hunter Region that will add hundreds more new seafaring and port services jobs in Newcastle Harbour.

"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 1800 square kilometre area will reach across the Hunter coastline, from Swansea to Port Stephens, an area which is home to one of Australia's largest ports along with a number of electricity

grid assets and declining coal fired power stations that have come off line or are due to be decommissioned in coming years. The potential capacity of the area is around 5GW of wind energy, enough to power 4.2 million homes and underpin the energy needs of the thriving industrial and manufacturing sectors in Newcastle and the Hunter.

According to government analysis, the offshore wind projects in this region will generate up to 3000 jobs during construction and 1560 jobs ongoing, many of which will be new jobs in the maritime sector.

The MUA's Newcastle Branch Secretary, Glen Williams, is a long

term advocate for renewable offshore energy investment to generate new job opportunities for MUA members on the Australian east coast.

"It is members of the MUA who have loaded and transported the coal and other natural resources which have provided employment and prosperity for Newcastle throughout the 150 years of our union's history 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," Williams said. "Cheaper and more reliable renewable energy will keep manufacturing towns like

Newcastle 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. ✪

A bias toward yes

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has claimed a win in service-wide Australian Public Service (APS) bargaining after locking in significant improvements to flexible working arrangements, including working from home. The union has achieved agreement with the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) on:

- Rights for all APS employees – all APS employees will be able to make a request for a flexible working arrangement, including working from home.
- No caps – the APSC has agreed to the CPSU claim for no caps to be imposed on the number of days they can work from home in a week.
- A bias towards YES – agencies required to lean towards approving requests.
- Refusal in certain circumstances only – agencies will only be able to refuse requests after genuinely trying to reach agreement, considering the employee's circumstances, and only if there are clear business reasons not to approve.

- Independent umpire oversight – if an agency doesn't genuinely try to reach agreement and follow the required steps for considering requests, the CPSU can support members to resolve the issue with their agency, and where necessary, the decision can be challenged in the Fair Work Commission.
- Roles performed in wider locations – enterprise agreements will acknowledge the benefits of flexible work to facilitate APS capability and work being performed in a wider range of locations across Australia.
- Agencies to consider connection to country – when First Nations employees make a flexible work request, the agency will be required to consider connection to country and cultural obligations.
- Ad hoc requests – employees will be able to make ad hoc requests for one-off or short-term circumstances.
- Strong protections – employees will have protections against flexible working arrangements being terminated

without genuine negotiation with employees.

The rights secured by the union and its members will establish the APS as a leader on flexible work and see it make progress towards its goal of becoming a model employer.

If the APSC and the government intend to continue their pursuit of the "model employer" label, the union believes that the next steps in bargaining must see much better pay and pay equity proposals tabled.

Melissa Donnelly, CPSU National Secretary said ground breaking flexible work and working from home rights have been secured in negotiations between the union and the APSC.

"These significantly improved and enforceable flexible work rights will open doors for individuals who were previously unable to consider APS employment, or had to leave because of a change in circumstances.

"The traditional approach to APS work has hindered the attraction and retention of staff across the Service. Flexibility in how,

when and where public sector work is done will see the APS become increasingly diverse, adaptable and accessible."

Donnelly said this is good news for public servants, public services, public policy, and the public.

"We commend the APS for recognising the importance of flexible work, and the importance of consistent application across agencies. By embracing this opportunity and becoming a leader in workplace flexibility, the APSC and the government have taken meaningful steps towards establishing the APS as a model employer.

"The CPSU has been pleased to see the APSC unafraid to make bold progress and hopes they see the value in continuing to do so.

"We will be continuing to push the APSC for significantly improved pay and pay equity proposals." ✪

Hollywood strike Q&A

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) produced the following for its members' information in response to the industrial action by MEAA's fraternal union in the US, the Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA):

Why has SAG-AFTRA called a strike?

The 160,000 members of SAG-AFTRA, Hollywood's largest union, authorised a strike if a new agreement could not be reached by Wednesday, 12th July, with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, an umbrella group representing studios like Warner, Columbia, Disney, Netflix, Amazon, and Apple. The Writers Guild of America has been on strike since early May. It is the first time that unions representing both US writers and actors have been on strike at the same time since 1960.

Like writers, SAG-AFTRA members are calling for higher wages, improved compensation and residuals in the streaming TV era and safeguards around the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Performers see their jobs as especially vulnerable to new technology, with generative AI able to replicate facial expressions, body movement and voice with alarming accuracy.

Although series budgets are increasing, that increase is not being reflected in the share of the money coming to performers. Residuals (payments for the reuse of their work) are also much smaller on streamers compared to broadcast TV rates.

Why should I support this strike?

When actors, writers, and crew members come together as a collective, our resounding message will reverberate throughout the studios and production companies, leaving no doubt that we demand nothing less than the absolute best for ourselves and our invaluable contributions.

By standing in solidarity with the striking writers and actors in the US, we can amplify their collective bargaining power. When actors, writers and crew unite, it sends a strong message to the studios and production companies that all groups are committed to fair treatment and compensation for their work. This can increase the likelihood of achieving favourable outcomes in negotiations and ultimately improve working conditions for all parties involved.

The entertainment industry is built on collaboration among various creative professionals. By demonstrating solidarity during a strike, we foster a sense of unity and mutual support among the different groups involved in the production process.

What does this strike mean for Australian actors and crew?



For Australian actors and crew engaged on Australian screen productions with no imported US performers/SAG-AFTRA members, there will be no change and your work will continue as normal.

For Australian actors and crew engaged on offshore screen productions with imported US performers/SAG-AFTRA members in lead roles and engaged on SAG contracts, this production may be affected and you may be stood down without pay.

However, where SAG-AFTRA members have been engaged on Australian productions or on standard MEAA Equity – SPA Agreements (such as the AFFCA or ATPA), then it is likely that filming can continue as normal. Those members should contact SAG-AFTRA or MEAA for clarity.

More detailed information will be sent to MEAA members as it comes to hand from SAG-AFTRA and/or impacted productions.

Is it MEAA's decision to have Australian actors and crew stood down to support the strike?

No, this is not MEAA's decision. MEAA has not called a strike and has no ability to determine whether or not our members are stood down by producers.

Am I allowed to accept other work while I am stood down?

Unless specifically precluded from engaging in other work on your contract, cast and crew can seek other employment while they are stood down. Any such employment should not encroach on your original job, and you would still need to be available when the strike or stand down ends. However, generally the National Employment Standards (NES) doesn't preclude employees from working a second job and it is unlikely that a production would prevent this, particularly in the circumstances of a stand down. If you are unsure, MEAA can confirm this with the production directly.

As a crew member who has been stood down what are my rights under the relevant MEAA agreement?

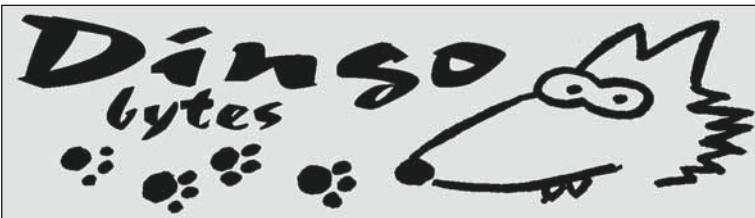
It depends on the agreement you are engaged under – however it is likely that the production can stand down your employment until the strike is resolved. The Offshore agreement allows stand down under the terms of the *Fair Work Act* – this means you can be stood down without pay. Your employment will remain in place during that time, and you will accrue annual leave. If your employment is terminated, you should be paid out at least one week's notice period (as specified in the agreements). If you have any further questions about your rights and entitlements, please contact MEAA Member Central (members@meaa.org) on 1300 65 65 13 or your local organiser.

As an actor who has been stood down what are my rights under the relevant MEAA agreement?

It depends on the agreement you are engaged under – however it is likely that the production can stand down your employment while the strike is resolved. This is likely to be temporary. Your employment will remain in place during that time, and you will accrue annual leave. If your employment is terminated, you should be paid out the full value of the contract or the minimum guarantee. If you have any further questions about your rights and entitlements, please contact MEAA Member Central on 1300 65 65 13 or your local organiser.

How can I show my solidarity with striking US writers and actors?

Throughout the coming weeks, MEAA will provide opportunities to come together to take a photo to show collective solidarity. We will be guided by our sister union (SAG-AFTRA) on any further action we may be able to do in support. ✪



The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has welcomed the passage of the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting worker entitlements) Bill 2023. The Bill, which was passed by Parliament in June, includes a number of measures to strengthen worker protections, including inserting the right to superannuation in the National Employment Standards. This means that all workers will be entitled to a minimum level of superannuation contributions, regardless of their employment status or the type of work they do, and will improve unpaid parental leave rights. The number of flexible parental leave days has been increased from 30 to 100 days, and there is now more flexibility on how these days can be taken and shared between parents. Also making clear that the Fair Work Act protections apply to temporary migrant workers. This means that temporary migrant workers will have the same rights and protections as other Australian workers, including the right to minimum wages, overtime pay, and annual leave. ACTU President Michele O'Neil said that the passing of the Bill was a big step forward in protecting workers' rights. "Australia's workplace laws need updating to protect workers from loopholes used by some big business to drive down wages and conditions. The passing of this bill is an important step forward in that process," said O'Neil who also welcomed the inclusion of superannuation in the National Employment Standards. "Superannuation has finally been recognised in our workplace laws as a universal workplace right. All workers, with their union, will be able to enforce their superannuation rights and recover super that has been stolen from them."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: A \$54,000 "compensation" payment from mining company Idemitsu for water theft at its Boggabri Coal Mine in central west NSW during the peak of the worst drought in living memory falls far short of community expectations, and will not deter other companies from committing similar offences, says the Lock the Gate Alliance. It comes nearly two years after Lock the Gate Alliance first wrote to the regulator, raising concerns that Idemitsu was in violation of its approval because it was unlawfully collecting and using hundreds of millions of litres of clean water on-site that should have been diverted around the mine into the local creek system. Lock the Gate believes Idemitsu had been stealing the water since at least 2017. The enforceable undertaking also comes two years after Whitehaven Coal was prosecuted for a similar offence, and ordered to pay \$200,000 in the Land and Environment Court. At the time, local farmers reacted angrily, saying \$200,000 was just a slap on the wrist for a company like Whitehaven. Boggabri farmer Sally Hunter, whose family was forced to destock and relocate due to the impacts of the drought, said the agreement between NRAR and Idemitsu was "inadequate." "While we and many other farmers were forced to destock or even sell up due to a lack of water, and the price of water was going through the roof, Idemitsu was syphoning hundreds of millions of litres out of this catchment illegally," she said. "This is less than a slap on the wrist. It potentially encourages coal mining companies to commit serious crimes like water theft with effectively no serious penalty. Taking precious water unlawfully, especially during devastating times like the last drought, must be punished in a way that sends a strong signal to the rest of the mining industry."

Australia Cuba Friendship Society, Sydney, invites you to a

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Fossil fuels to the bitter end

Anna Pha

If the massive amounts of undergrowth resulting from record rainfalls and flooding during La Niña dry out with an El Niño, Australia is set for a catastrophic bushfire season. Climate experts are predicting hotter and drier weather to come with much of the east coast of Australia and previously unaffected areas at risk.

The Royal Commission into the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires heard that 24 million hectares were lost, 3000 homes burnt, 33 lives lost and an estimated three billion animals killed. In addition, a further 450 people died through the effects of bushfire smoke.

The response of governments to the Black Summer bushfires and then the 2022 catastrophic floods has been disgraceful. People are still living in shipping containers, tents, caravans, and other makeshift housing. The trauma goes on.

Governments are unwilling to spend on reparations, on buy-backs of homes, or to address the corrupt planning systems of local and state governments. These are short-sighted and cruel savings.

Governments are also unwilling to tackle the fossil fuel lobby and phase out fossil fuel production. Australia is one of the world's largest fossil fuel producers with government budgets still heavily reliant on fossil fuel exports.

NEW PROJECTS

The Albanese government's legislated target of 43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 is a hoax, a dangerous stunt to convince the public that Labor is serious about climate change.

Despite all the statements by the United Nations, International Energy Agency (IEA), and other leading bodies that new fossil fuel projects are incompatible with global temperature goals, governments continue to approve new projects.

According to the latest Australian Government Resources and Energy Major Projects (REMP) list, 116 new coal and gas projects are expected to begin production before 2030. These projects are set to run from anywhere between 20 and 50 years!

In the words of the Australia Institute report: "If all proceed as estimated, they will add 4.8 billion tonnes of emissions to the atmosphere by 2030. The [...] Safeguard Mechanism would reduce emissions from these projects by just 86 million tonnes – less than two per cent of the total emissions. Worse, the Safeguard Mechanism would provide legitimacy to new fossil fuel projects, weakening state-imposed conditions and making the projects' development more likely." (*New Fossil Fuel Projects in Australia 2023*).

As Richard Denniss of The Australia Institute says, "Labor's safeguard mechanism does more to save the fossil fuel industry than it does the planet."

At the local level the stakes are high for the health of communities affected by pollutants. Prime agricultural land, clean water supplies, Indigenous art thousands of years old, sacred sites, and endangered species are all at risk. Stakes are high for the wider community and the planet.

CO2 EMISSIONS FACTORY

"The Barossa to Darwin LNG [Liquefied Natural Gas] project looks more like a CO2 emissions factory with an LNG by-product," is how the dirty and destructive project has been described.

Tiwi Islands and Larrakia Traditional Owners have lodged formal complaints alleging the big four Australian banks – ANZ, Commonwealth Bank, NAB, and Westpac – and other financiers breached their human rights commitments by participating in a \$1.5 billion loan to Santos, related to the Barossa gas project the company is trying to develop off the Northern Territory coast.

"[Woodside's] Burrup Hub would be the most polluting project ever to be developed in Australia, delivering some of the world's dirtiest LNG for up to 50 years. With estimated total emissions of over 6 billion tonnes of carbon pollution across its lifetime,



Photo: Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert – flickr.com (CC0).

the proposal has profound implications for the global climate across generations," says Piers Verstegen, Director, Conservation Council Western Australia.

Woodside Energy, Australia's largest gas producer, plans to extract 20-25 trillion cubic feet of gas, primarily for export as liquid natural gas, from its Burrup Hub in north-west Western Australia.

Climate scientist Joëlle Gergis writing in *The Saturday Paper* (1st July 2023): "We can already see the destruction caused by the 1.2 degrees of global warming that has already played out. We don't need to use our imaginations to grasp the impacts of a rapidly destabilising climate – the evidence is all around us.

"So let me say it once again – the relentless burning of fossil fuels is cooking our planet. We are destabilising the planetary conditions that have existed throughout all of modern human history; we are knowingly unravelling the only life force known to exist in the entire universe.

TURN OFF THE \$ TAP

"So why exactly are we doing this? To be blunt, our political leaders are choosing to support the fossil fuel industry down to the bitter end. It really is as simple as that. Instead of being brave enough to enact policies that will protect the collective good, our leaders are choosing to safeguard the profits of an industry that sells products they know are destroying the planet." Gergis says.

According to the Office of the Chief Economist, the 116 new or expansionary fossil fuel projects in Australia would cost at least \$200 billion.

Since 2016 the Big Four banks have lent \$44.4 billion for dirty fossil fuel projects. A number of superannuation funds have made investments in fossil fuels. Some, under pressure from members, are winding them back. But Hostplus' Balanced option is one of the worst offenders, continuing to make climate wrecking investments.

ACT NOW

Cut the flow of dirty dollars! Pressure your bank and superannuation fund to cease funding fossil fuels. To check the investments of your super fund visit marketforces.org.au (superannuation). For more on bank lending see GREEN NOTES *Guardian* #2056. ✪

GREEN NOTES

Anna Pha

The Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc (TEPCO) has more than 1000 tanks of contaminated water from the cooling of reactors as it decommissions its Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant at Fukushima. The nuclear power plant was catastrophically damaged in 2011 with a meltdown in three reactors caused by an earthquake and tsunami. The plant produces 100 cubic metres of waste water daily as part of the clean-up operation which is expected to take another three decades. It has plans to dump 1.3 million tons of nuclear-contaminated waste into the ocean. Most, but not all radioactive elements have been filtered from the water. Tritium and carbon 14 are two radioactive isotopes that have proved difficult to separate from water.

Earlier this month, the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report noting that "the controlled, gradual discharges of the treated water into the sea, as currently planned and assessed by TEPCO, would have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment." The Japanese government has used this report to give the go-ahead to the dumping of the nuclear-contaminated waste. The IAEA said TEPCO "has demonstrated its capabilities for accurate and precise measurements of the radionuclides present in the treated water stored on site." Having the capacity for accurate measurements is no guarantee of safety. We are supposed to trust a corporation with a vested interest in cutting costs!

Not everyone is happy. The plan has many problems, including the long-term effectiveness of Japan's purification facility and the supervision system. A number of scientists have warned of the potential human health impacts. Chang Yen-chiang, director of the Yellow Sea and Bohai Sea Research Institute at Dalian Maritime University, China, told *Global Times* that marine organisms will be the first group to be harmed, as aside from tritium, more than 60 types of radioactive nuclides would be left in the contaminated water and it remains unknown whether they would lead to genetic variations.

Fishing and seafood industry groups in Japan have raised concerns about their livelihoods, as they fear consumers will avoid buying seafood and it could affect marine tourism. "Piping water into the sea is an outrage. The sea is not a garbage dump," 71-year-old Haruo Ono, who has been fishing off the coast of Fukushima his entire life, told *CBS News*. "The company says it's safe, but the consequences could catch up with us 50 years down the road." Large protests have been held in Japan.

China, South Korea and the Pacific Island nations have raised concerns. Chinese customs authorities are highly critical of the IAEA's report saying it "failed to fully reflect the opinions of all experts involved in the evaluation and the conclusions have not been unanimously recognised by all parties." China announced a continuation of its previous ban on imported food from Japan's Fukushima and nine other regions.

In 1985, regional leaders established the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty), prohibiting the testing and use of nuclear explosive devices and the dumping of radioactive wastes in the sea by member states, including Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island nations.

Fukushima and Chernobyl demonstrate why Australia should not build nuclear power plants. Australia has an abundance of wind, sun and oceans which can be used to provide more than enough renewable energy to serve our needs. Write to Opposition leader Peter Dutton telling him "No nuclear power plants!" and write to your Labor MPs and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urging Labor to remain committed to its no-nuclear energy policy.

"Labor's safeguard mechanism does more to save the fossil fuel industry than it does the planet."

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Voice – Treaty - Truth

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

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Hands off Haiti

Black Alliance for Peace statement

The Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) is alarmed that representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are at the forefront of the call for armed intervention in Haiti calling on Rwanda and Kenya to help lead the charge.

Once again the BAP calls on the international community to reject US, UN, and CARICOM plans for an armed intervention in Haiti. We have been consistent in our support for Haitian people who view the presence of the United Nations Integrated Office (BINUH) and the Core Group as a foreign occupation. Since 2004, they have suppressed Haiti's independence and sovereignty. A US/UN-led armed foreign intervention in Haiti is not only illegitimate, but illegal.

CARICOM has caved in to pressure from the Biden administration and now supports the US/UN plan to violently attack Haiti under the racist guise of humanitarian

intervention. This stance reverses a position that many members of CARICOM held early this spring; at that time, the organization's president and Prime Minister of Bahamas, Philip Davis, said that the Caribbean countries had no intention of sending forces to Haiti. BAP condemns CARICOM's betrayal of the people of Haiti and their complicity in surrendering regional sovereignty to the US and the Core Group's undemocratic and imperialist aims.

And what was the argument advanced by US officials concerning Haiti? We are told that the interest of the US is humanitarian, that it wants to protect the Haitian people from gang violence. Yet, no mention has been made of the Haitian people's constant call for the disbanding of the Core Group, for an arms embargo against the Haitian and US elite who import guns into the country, for the end of support for Haiti's installed

puppet government, and for the deep financial crises placed on the people by the IMF-led move to remove fuel subsidies. There are no calls to build either hospitals or schools. And there are no efforts to provide asylum for the thousands of Haitians in the United States, Mexico – and the CARICOM countries themselves.

The call for an armed intervention of Haiti is not about humanitarianism. Indeed, as Erica Caines, co-coordinator of BAP's Haiti/Americas Team, argues:

"It is an ahistorical absurdity that US officials would have any concerns about the lives of the Black people of Haiti. The US has one agenda, and one agenda only, and that is to maintain its hegemonic control over the peoples and territories of the Caribbean and Latin America. The real reason for the violent intervention into Haiti by the US with its European allies, is to shore-up the undemocratic

and illegitimate government of Ariel Henry."

It is understandable that unprincipled servants to white power like Hakeem Jeffries, the leader of the US House Democrats who attended the CARICOM meeting along with the warmongering US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, would advocate for an imperialist military assault into Haiti to prop-up its unelected puppet regime. But it is a sad day for the Caribbean that a majority of the Black heads of state in CARICOM have agreed to give political cover to this white power intervention against the dignity and rights of the Haitian people. As we said in our earlier letter to CARICOM, "We call on your countries to respect Haitian sovereignty and to support the Haitian masses in their stand against the ongoing occupation of their country by foreign powers."

BAP, once again, is also compelled to call on the representatives

of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation to vote against any UNSC resolution sanctioning military force to Haiti.

In our initial communication with the representatives from Russia and China, we made it clear that, "in alignment with the wishes of the Haitian masses and their supporters, [we] absolutely stand against any foreign armed intervention in Haiti." We further demand a stop to the unending meddling in Haitian affairs by the United States and Western powers. We hope that the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China will stand with the people of Haiti in its fight for liberation by voting NO on another military invasion to brutalise the long-suffering Haitian masses.

No to Occupation! No to Foreign Militarism! No to CARICOM Neocolonialism!

Yes to Self-Determination! ✪

Blue plaque for CPA history

Ian Stephenson

From 1943 until at least 1981 the Communist Party of Australia printed their newspaper *Tribune* at 21 Ross St Forest Lodge, Glebe, which has received a blue plaque recognising its historical value. Other radical publications including women's liberation posters and anti-Vietnam war materials were also produced here.

The CPA was founded in 1920 and reached its peak membership in the 1940s when it had 20,000 members. *Tribune* provided well-researched and well-written journalism on social reform.

On 24th May 1940 *Tribune* was banned on the grounds of weakening the war effort. On 15th June 1941 the CPA itself was banned and hundreds of properties were searched for printing presses and evidence of illegal membership. On 29th July 1941 *Tribune* returned as a pamphlet, initially printed on rough paper using a manual press. Searches by the Commonwealth police failed to discover its location. On 3rd June 1943, restrictions on the CPA were lifted and the paper was relaunched. The premises were raided by Commonwealth security police in 1949 and 1953.

The printery survives but is now an apartment building. It is a physical testament to a time when there were a great many independent newspapers in NSW, and a reminder of popular radicalism in the 1930s and 1940s, cold war persecution of the CPA, and feminist and anti-war activism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Reprinted with permission from *Glebe Society Bulletin*, edited for reasons of space. ✪



The Tribune Printery, Newsletter Press, 21 Ross Street Forest Lodge, 1962. Photo: City of Sydney Archives.



Forest Lodge, 1962. Photo: City of Sydney Archives.

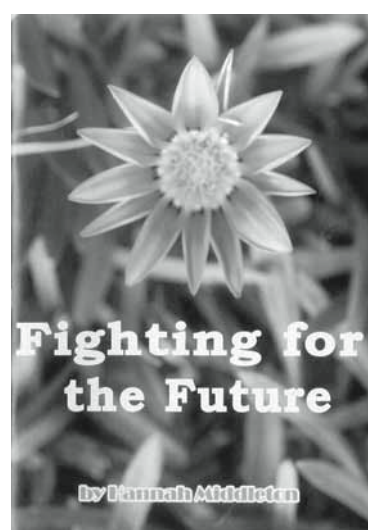
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Guns for hire?

A season for mercenaries

Thalif Deen

Just after a band of mercenaries tried to oust the government in the Maldives back in 1988, I asked a Maldivian diplomat, using a familiar military catchphrase, about the strength of his country's "standing army."

"Standing army?" the diplomat asked with mock surprise, and remarked perhaps half-jokingly, "We don't even have a sitting army."

With a population of about 250,000, around that time, the Maldives was perhaps one of the few countries with no fighter planes, combat helicopters, warships, missiles, or battle tanks – an open invitation for mercenaries and freelance military adventurers.

As a result, the island's fragile defences attracted a rash of mercenaries and bounty hunters who tried to take over the country twice – once in 1979, and a second time in 1988.

Although both attempts failed, the Indian Ocean island refused to drop its defences. It not only initiated a proposal seeking a UN security umbrella to protect the world's militarily vulnerable mini states but also backed an international convention to outlaw mercenaries, namely the 1989 "International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries."

In the US, a mercenary is called a "soldier of fortune," which is also the title of a widely circulated magazine, and subtitled the "Journal of Professional Adventurers."

When the Russian Wagner Group hit the front pages of newspapers worldwide, it was described as a private mercenary group fighting in Ukraine.

The *New York Times* said on 30th June the Wagner Group provided security to African presidents, propped up dictators, violently suppressed rebel uprisings, and was accused of torture, murder of civilians, and other abuses.

But the failed coup attempt by Wagner threatened, for a moment, the very existence of the group.

A 14th July report on Cable News Network (CNN) quoted a Kremlin source as saying the Wagner group, which led a failed insurrection against Russian President Vladimir Putin in June, was never a legal entity and its legal status needs further consideration.

"Such a legal entity as PMC Wagner does not exist and never existed. This is a legal issue that needs to be explored," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

Peskov refused to disclose any further details on the meeting between Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin and Putin, which



Photo: pxfuel.com.au (CC0)

reportedly took place several days after the aborted rebellion in June.

Besides Ukraine, mercenaries have been fighting in Central Africa, Mali, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya.

In Mali, there were over 1500 mercenaries fighting armed groups threatening to overthrow the government.

Ironically, the US which once used the Blackwater Security Consulting Group during the American occupation of Iraq, has imposed sanctions on several African nations deploying mercenaries.

Antony J Blinken, US Secretary of State, said in early July that the United States is imposing sanctions on several entities in the Central African Republic (CAR) for their connection to the transnational criminal organization known as the Wagner Group and "for their involvement in activities that undermine democratic processes and institutions in the CAR through illicit trade in the country's natural resources."

The United States has also issued a new business risk advisory focused on the gold industry across sub-Saharan Africa.

Specifically, the advisory highlights "how illicit actors such as Wagner exploit this resource to gain revenue and sow conflict, corruption, and other harms throughout the region."

Dr Stephen Zunes, professor of politics and international studies at the University of San Francisco, told IPS it is certainly good that the United States is finally taking leadership in opposing the use of mercenaries.

The Iraq War – which then-Senator Joe Biden strongly supported – relied heavily on the use of mercenaries from the Blackwater group. Similarly, during the Cold War, the CIA used mercenaries to support its military objectives in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Simon Adams, president and CEO of the Center for Victims of

Torture, told IPS throughout history, big powers have often used mercenaries. From trying to hold back anticolonial struggles to the horrors of the Cold War in Latin America or Africa, there is nothing new in that.

"But I think the big change is that the international community has become more intolerant of these guns-for-hire and privatised armies who believe that they can operate outside of International Humanitarian Law, and are often rampant abusers of human rights," he pointed out.

And it is much harder these days for their state sponsors to deny responsibility for their actions, he added.

The Wagner Group has been implicated in numerous atrocities in Ukraine, Central African Republic, and a number of other places, he said.

The bigger challenge is to ensure that no other big state or major power engages in these same nefarious practices the next time it suits their own partisan interests to do so, declared Dr Adams.

Meanwhile, according to an article in the National Defense University Press, private force has become big business, and global in scope. No one truly knows how many billions of dollars slosh around this illicit market.

"All we know is that business is booming. Recent years have seen major mercenary activity in Yemen, Nigeria, Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq. Many of these for-profit warriors outclass local militaries, and a few can even stand up to America's most elite forces, as the battle in Syria shows."

The Middle East is awash in mercenaries. Kurdistan is a haven for soldiers of fortune looking for work with the Kurdish militia, oil companies defending their oil fields, or those who want terrorists dead, according to the article.

IPS UN Bureau Report / Globetrotter (edited for reasons of space). ✪



Global Briefs

SYRIA: The Syrians gave a green light last week for the United Nations to use a key crossing from Turkey to the country's rebel-held north-west that was closed earlier this week, but it wants to take away UN control over aid deliveries to the region. Syria's UN ambassador Bassam Sabbagh said that the government is granting the UN and its agencies "permission" to use the Bab al-Hawa crossing for six months.

UNITED STATES: This year was the deadliest six months of mass killings recorded in the US since at least 2006. From January 1 to June 30, the nation suffered 28 mass killings, all but one of which involved guns, beating the previous record of 27 mass killings, which was only set in the second half of 2022.

CANADA: Dock workers reached a tentative deal with employers after a strike that halted shipments in and out of ports in the country's west-coast region of British Columbia for nearly two weeks. The strike by 7400 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union began on 1st July and shut down more than 30 west-coast ports, including Canada's largest, the Port of Vancouver.

GERMANY: Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed optimism that support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has been surging in the polls lately will shrink to previous levels again by the time of the next national election in 2025. Recent polls have shown support for the AfD at about 20 per cent, ahead of Mr Scholz's centre-left Social Democrats.

SUDAN: The bodies of dozens of people allegedly killed by Sudanese paramilitary and allied militia have been uncovered in a mass grave near Geneina, West Darfur, the United Nations said. The UN Human Rights Office said that the bodies of the 87 people, some of whom belong to the ethnic African Masalit tribe, were found dumped in a three-foot shallow grave.

PAKISTAN: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said last week that the International Monetary Fund deposited the first instalment of \$1.2 billion with the country's central bank under a recently signed bailout deal aimed at helping the impoverished Islamic nation avoid defaulting on its debt repayments. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the remaining \$1.8 billion would be received from the IMF over the next nine months.

GUATEMALA: The troubled presidential election was thrown into even greater turmoil when the country's top electoral tribunal confirmed the results of the 25th June vote while the attorney general's office announced that the second-placed party had been suspended. This came after more than two weeks of rising tensions after the first round of voting, which had seemingly sent conservative Sandra Torres and progressive Bernardo Arevalo into an August presidential run-off.

ARTSAKH: The Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) said in a statement that the situation in the region was critical after humanitarian access had been cut off to the area since 15th June by Azerbaijan threatening the lives of 120,000 people. The statement added that Azerbaijan has blocked the "two-way transportation of patients and medicines by the International Committee of the Red Cross."

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Korean war armistice: 70 years on

Graham Holton

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War (1951-1953). The war remains a humiliation for the US. On the 27th July 1953, the Armistice Agreement was signed by: Marshal Kim Il Sung for the DPRK; Peng The-Huai the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers; General Mark W Clark US Army Commander-in-Chief; General Nam Il of the Korean People's Army; and Lieutenant General William K Harrison Jr, Senior Delegate of the US Army. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) commemorates 27th July as a national holiday, known as Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War.

Since then, the Korean Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) marks the border between both the DPRK (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea, straddling the 38th parallel. The agreement was signed in the village of Panmunjom in the DPRK. The building is preserved as a museum, a few metres from where President Trump crossed over into the DPRK at the request of Kim Jong Un, on 29th June 2019.

It was a vicious war. Four million Koreans and Chinese were killed, half of them Korean civilians. The US had 128,650 casualties, with 36,516 dead. Australian casualties numbered over 1,500, including 340 dead. Every city, town and village in the DPRK, was bombed. The total number of sorties conducted by the US coalition was 1,170,590. In one incident the US Air Force dropped napalm bombs on Australian troops mistaking them for the enemy. It was not the last time Australian troops died under US friendly fire.

These casualty figures could have been far worse. General Douglas MacArthur wanted to drop twenty-six nuclear bombs along the Chinese border. President Harry S Truman refused. When Truman attempted to negotiate a ceasefire, MacArthur sent his troops across the 38th parallel. Truman fired MacArthur for insubordination.

The United Nations forces supporting

the ROK government of President Syngman Rhee included the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Belgium, France, Greece, and the Netherlands. President Rhee refused to sign the Armistice. His brutal regime continued its violent crackdown on anyone considered communist, maintaining control of the government by pushing through constitutional amendments and declaring martial law.

South Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2005 to investigate the widespread human rights violations and the reign of terror conducted under the military government. Its investigations included massacres, disappearances, political show trials, and the killing of unarmed civilians and political prisoners. Hundreds of thousands were murdered. The commission is still investigating the 150 mass graves so far found. This is the government Australia supported.

The ROK is Australia's fourth largest trading partner. As such, our prime ministers and academics continue to attack the DPRK, without any understanding of the country. In 2011 former Prime Minister Julia Gillard referred to the DPRK as "a rogue state which is a threat to its near neighbours, to the region as whole."

No permanent peace treaty has ever been signed, meaning Australia is still technically at war with the DPRK. Australia is one of seven countries that make up the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC), established in July 1953. Tension continues between both Koreas, allowing the US to station 28,000 armed forces in the ROK.

Andrew Selth of Griffith University argues that Australian personnel would be part of any future military action taken by the UNCMAC, to support US troops in the ROK. Robert O'Neill, Official Historian of Australia in the Korean War, wrote, that the quality of Australia's armed forces strengthened "Australia's reputation as a valuable ally" to the US. This ensures that Australia followed the US into war ever since.

Peace negotiations between the two

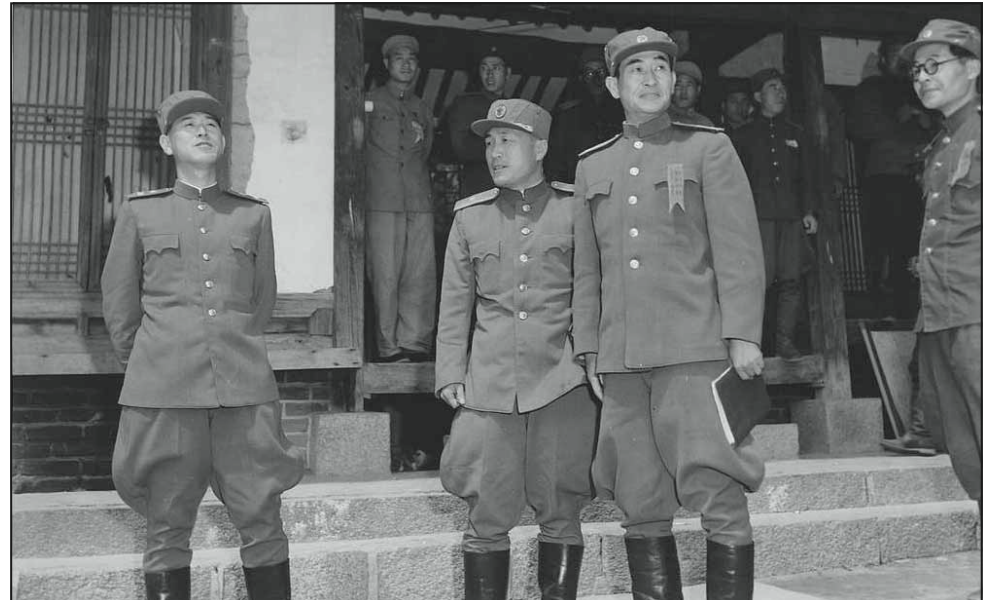


Photo: archives.gov- (Public domain).

Koreas continue. In 2018 President Moon Jae-in and DPRK leader Kim Jong Un began talks on denuclearisation and to bring a formal end to the conflict. The DPRK called off talks after the US-South Korean military staged war games not far from the DMZ. In 2019 Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump signed a joint declaration to ease tensions, but negotiations collapsed after State Department interference.

After its defeat in the Korean War, the US attacked communist forces around the world. Along with the US, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand sent troops into South East Asia, starting in 1948 with the Malay Emergency.

In the aftermath of the Korean War the US set out to destroy Communism. America's Cold War paranoia resulted in: the violent overthrow of elected governments; the manufacture of hatred; and the torture and murder of hundreds of thousands, all the direct result of America's war on the "Peril of Communism." What the US government saw as a threat, was in truth a paranoid

phantom created by the twisted minds of the US State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon. Millions of people would be killed brutally in South-East Asia, Indonesia, Latin America, and Africa.

Blanche Wiesen Cook wrote that hat American thought has been "splattered and soured by American vitriol," destroying "our national credibility." The Truman Doctrine of 1947, allowed political, military and economic assistance to nations under threat of authoritarianism. After the Korean War anti-Communism reached its height of hysteria: in the insanity of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC); Senator . McCarthy's "Red Scare" Crusade; President Dwight Eisenhower passing the Communist Control Act on 24th August 1954; and the outlawing of the Communist Party of the United States and the criminalisation of "Communist-action" organizations. It was a period of internal destruction that gutted America's creativity and thought, from which American society has never recovered. ❄

Streaming/TV review: *I'm a Virgo*

Floyd Kermod

If you're in the market for an absurdist African-American superhero story with lashings of Marxist-Leninist theory, I have just the thing for you, provided you're not totally jaded with superhero stories.

I thought I was one of the jaded ones. It's been a long time since Alan Moore became famous for being clever about realistic superhero characters. Moore's 1986 *Watchmen* book, showed superheroes who got older and had a lot of unpleasant vices. More recently, Garth Ennis' *The Boys* was a rip-roaring success both on the page and on TV both for action and for having a solid shot at the military-industrial complex, but overall a new take on superheroes seems impossible.

I'm a Virgo however, shows that there is something new in the world of ironic/dark takes on comic heroes. For a start, the cast are almost all Black. The world of superheroes has tended towards erasure, with thrilling adventures taking place in an all-white middle America, or tokenism (exhibit A: Marvel Comics introducing the Falcon to give Captain America, that icon of American liberal niceness, a Black friend who can be grateful to him).

Cootie, the hero of *I'm a Virgo* grows to be 4 metres tall for no good reason, and is hidden from the world until just before the age of 21. When he gets out, he falls in with a group of young people who smoke weed, eat burgers and show off cars. Cootie's unworldliness drives a lot of the comedy and gives the rest of the cast the chance to tell him what's what with relationships and life in Oakland.

His foster parents warn him that there will be in trouble – "you're a 13-foot tall Black man. Of course they're going to be scared" says his foster-mother. Sure enough, when he's in the outside world, Cootie has run-ins with a Steve Jobs-impersonating cult who all wear black skivvies and carry cups of coffee, as well as with The Hero, an evil narcissistic billionaire who runs a comics company and is solidly pro-police. The rest of the cast aren't pro-police, referencing the huge number of Americans, especially Black ones, in jail for minor drug offences. Once Cootie gets on The Hero's bad side, the media swing into Fox News-style demonisation mode.

Especially anti-police is Jones, a very right-on community activist with the super-power of being able to do brilliant speeches about Marxism with background animations. I just checked out *I'm a Virgo* to pass

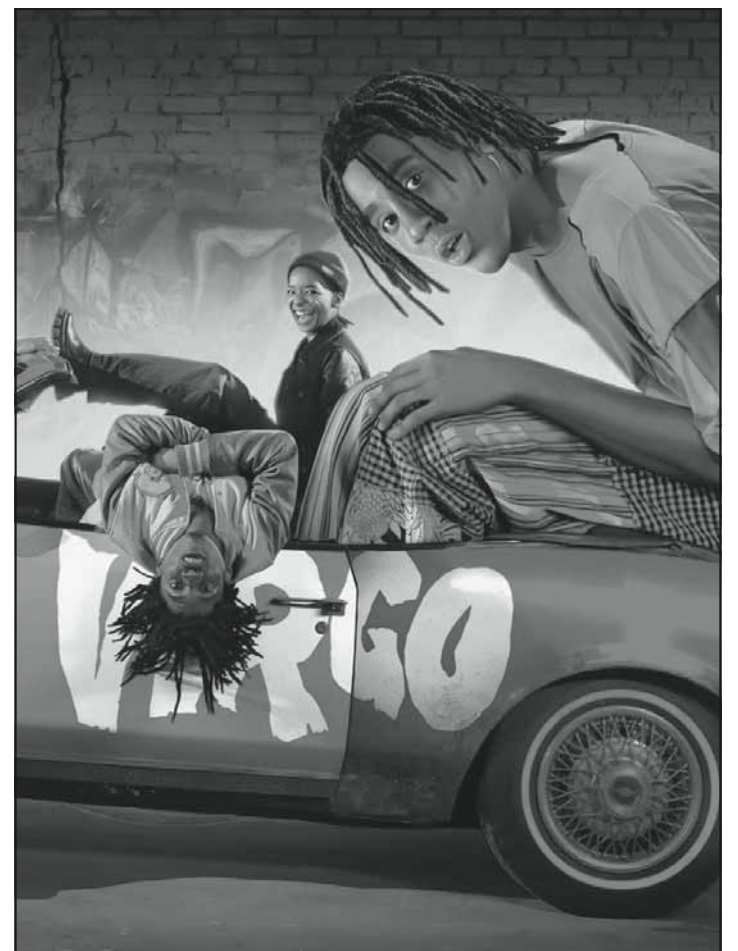
the time, but stayed for Jones saying stuff that's straight out of Lenin's *What is to be done?* and using her super-powers to explain surplus value and why capitalism needs mass unemployment. There's also feminist awareness from Flora, a super-fast character who finds everyone else too slow, especially men.

Animated Marxist fun aside, *I'm a Virgo* has a nice line in absurd humour. Cootie and his friends are addicted to a TV cartoon show called *Parking Tickets* which is a stream of Samuel Beckett-like misery interrupted by a baby who makes silly noises. They think it's hilarious.

Creator Boots Riley, a former hip-hop artist who used to be in the Progressive Labor Party, leaves a lot of room for a sequel, and after only 7 episodes of Marxism, superpowers, housing protests, and fish-out-of-water comedy, you'll be up for more too.

I'm a Virgo is streaming on Amazon Prime. ❄

Book Notice: *Stalin: History and Critique of a Black Legend*, reviewed in last week's *Guardian* (Issue #2061 – 17-07-2023), will soon be published in English by Iskra books.



Call for “intensified solidarity” with the people of Sudan

The World Peace Council (WPC) has expressed its deep concern with the ongoing armed conflict and clashes in Sudan which have resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths and thousands more injured.

The WPC is calling for “intensified solidarity with the Sudanese people and the anti-imperialist peace-loving forces against this bloody war, and support [for] their heroic struggle to achieve people’s power by establishing fully democratic civil rule.”

The Sudanese people have suffered and struggled for decades under dictatorial regimes and now under the rivalry of competing factions of the military. A country rich in natural resources, Sudan has long been the focus of interference and intervention by foreign powers. This is true of the current conflict. As the WPC notes, “the fierce power struggle between factions of the ruling generals, between

heavily armed militias, cannot hide the interests of the foreign forces backing the clashes, including imperialist powers and reactionary Arab regimes.”

The Council, along with its affiliates in over 100 countries, is calling for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of armies and militias from the cities. The WPC is also calling for the United Nations to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, and warns that “further escalation [of the conflict] will create an explosive situation for Sudan and the whole region.”

Peace and progressive forces around the world, including the World Peace Council and the World Federation of Trade Unions, continue to express their strong support for the Sudanese people’s struggle for freedom, peace and social justice.

People’s Voice ✪

Write a letter to the Editor

email: editor@cpa.org.au



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Friendship Society
Celebration
\$20
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Silent auction of Cuban artwork

6.30pm, Saturday 29th July
Maritime Union of Australia
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Bookings required by 20/7/23 - admin@melbournceafs.org



**Something
to say?
Write to
the Editor!**

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The Guardian

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Half the Sky

Women, sport, and fairness

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In recent years the issue of trans participation in sport has become increasingly contentious. Sports governing bodies around the world have begun adopting policies that limit or outright deny trans people from participating in sport. Most often the controversy is in regards to Trans women but Trans men are also frequently denied the ability to compete in accordance with their gender identity. In 2022 World Aquatics, the peak international swimming federation, adopted a policy that prohibits trans women from competing in women’s professional swimming unless they can prove they have not gone through male puberty. World Rugby introduced a similar policy in 2020 citing the potential for increased risk of injury for cis woman athletes when tackled by trans women. (Cis refers to someone having same gender as identified at birth.) In addition, the rules require any trans man who seeks to compete in the male category to confirm they have the appropriate physical ability to compete without unacceptable risk. What this confirmation involves is not specified.

When it comes to trans women, the typical justification for exclusion is that they would have an unfair advantage over their cis counterparts. I will address each of these arguments in turn.

While its true that people who have experienced male puberty do have a significant advantage, it is important to think about the actual causes of this advantage. The physiological effects of male puberty such as increased strength and height as well as bone structure undoubtedly contribute to the 10 per cent difference in performance. However, little attention is paid to the sociological differences that could account for some of the difference. Society places more emphasis on male sporting achievement and provides more funding for men’s sport. Most people who experience male puberty will benefit from this regardless of their future gender identity. A longitudinal study of Australian children shows that 9-year-old boys still have a significant advantage in athletic performance despite not experiencing puberty. This indicates that socialisation may provide more of an advantage than is commonly assumed.

Critics of trans inclusion in competition will often argue the hormone replacement therapy that trans women undergo does not have a significant effect and cannot change things such as bone structure or lung capacity. These critics often ignore the changes to do occur as a result of the absence of testosterone such as decreased muscle mass, decreased blood oxygen, decreased endurance, and decreased ability to recovery from injury. All of these changes must surely make up a significant portion of the 10 per cent difference between male and female athletic performance. This is generally acknowledged in the reverse in which athletes who take synthetic testosterone as a performance enhancing drug are deemed to have an unfair advantage. Are we to believe that the absence of the same substance will not significantly worsen performance?

For these reasons it is likely that the performance gap between trans and cis women is less than 10 per cent. However, proponents of exclusion would argue that any difference constitutes an unfair advantage and point to things like height and bone structure as characteristics that remain the same with hormone replacement therapy. The problem with this is that these characteristics are “gendered” when it comes to trans women but neutral when applied to cis women. For example, no one disputes that people who have gone through male puberty are on average taller than people who have not, but when this is applied to individuals, tall trans women are considered to have an unfair advantage whereas someone like Cate Campbell at 6’1” is just lucky. The reality is that every sex-based characteristic exists on a continuum and most elite female athletes are in some way more “male-like” than the average woman. This is rarely considered unfair. Elite sport is not fair to begin with. In the west, elite athletes are genetic freaks who get massive amounts of funding and support from their country’s sporting organisations, compared with the limited resources athletes from developing countries receive. This is of course never considered unfair but a trans woman winning a race always is. “Fairness” is often understood based on the existing power structures of our world.

In the past when I have discussed trans participation in sport with people opposed to it once they run out of arguments about fairness it has been my experience that they say that the inclusion of trans people would destroy women’s sport. To this I typically ask why. Why can’t trans women win? Why would that destroy women’s sport? Invariably, they have to sheepishly admit they don’t consider trans women to be fully women.

This issue did not come from nowhere. When same-sex marriage was legalised in the US, reactionary Christian organisations began trying to reverse it. They needed a wedge issue to re-litigate LGBT rights. They understood that directly attacking trans people would likely backfire and create sympathy, so instead they focused on a niche issue the wider public lacks understanding of. These organisations understood that if you can put an asterisk next to trans women’s womanhood in one arena, that it provides an entryway for further attacks on their rights. So it is that many of the states that put limitations on trans participation in sport have now passed bans on trans healthcare. Some states are beginning to attack gay rights as well.

One of the most frustrating things about this debate is that although the focus on science and the degree to which an advantage exists is important, very little time is spend engaging with trans people to understand our concerns. Obviously, I can’t speak for all trans women but the most important issues for me are that trans women are never called men or implied to be men, that trans women have a fair go to compete, and that trans women do not experience any discrimination or prejudice. I think one way that this could be achieved is if we got rid of gender-based categories and instead created categories based on athlete physiology. It of course would not be a perfect system but it would be much preferable to our current one.

Modernisation, heroism, Party work

Alex Denton represented the Communist Party of Australia Central Committee on the 3rd Communist Party Leaders Delegation of North American, Oceanian and Nordic Countries from the 25th of June to the 3rd of July 2023, organised by the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC).

The delegation visited three cities: Guangzhou (Guangdong Province), Guiyang (Guizhou province) and Beijing.

We headed to the Guangdong Academy of Social Science where we were treated to a presentation of the detailed history of the reform and opening up in Guangdong which has seen the province go from a primarily agricultural province with a GDP of 18.585 billion yuan in 1978 to the largest economic province in China with a GDP in 2022 of 12.9 trillion yuan. Afterwards we were given a presentation of the current state of Chinese Modernisation and the future and goals for the province. We were introduced to the concepts of common features of modernisation and the specific characteristics of Chinese modernisation. Common features include: Industrialisation, Urbanisation, Marketisation, Democratization, the Rule of law and Secularisation. Specifically Chinese characteristics of modernisation include: its large population, common prosperity, peaceful development, and living in harmony with nature.

We arrived later that afternoon into Guiyang and were taken to the CPC Guizhou Provincial Party School.

We attended a local cultural performance called "Colourful Guizhou Style." The performance was filled with wonderful displays of cultural music and dance of the local Miao people, there were also modern performances including some comedy, and

a moving modern dance routine telling the story of the Chinese Red army heroically crossing a raging river during the days of the revolution and the long march.

We attended a lecture and presentation titled, "Strengthen the Modernisation of the Primary-level Governance System and Ability" which was given by Professor Qiu Zhonghui – Director of the Teaching and Research Department of Public Management of the party school. This lecture talked about the ongoing grass roots work at the local level of the CPC.

We were taken to a pavilion in the community square, where there are QR codes that anyone can scan to submit their issues directly to the local party organisation. This proved to be an overwhelming success.

The comrade showed us into the main party building which also serves as a hub for community services. The office is always open for locals to come and go, and runs many community programs, from helping people to sign up for healthcare benefits, legal advice, and activities and classes. The local party organisation has received much recognition and awards from the CPC for this work.

During this dinner I presented a copy of the Communist Party of Australia book *The Trade Unions: Communist Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism* by Lance Sharkey to the director as a donation to their schools and its library which was warmly and graciously received.

On the 28th May we took a fast train to the Zunyi Municipal Party School for a presentation on the history of the CPC entitled "The Glorious History and Great Contributions of the Communist Party of China" which was delivered by Professor Yang Heying from the Department of Marxism of the Guizhou Provincial Party School. Afterwards we went to the site of the Zunyi

Conference and its museum where we saw artifacts from the revolutionary civil war.

We had a meeting with comrade Zhou Rongguo, the Director-General and comrade Wang Yingchun, and young members from the International Department of Communist Party of China's (IDCPC) Bureau of North American, Oceanian, and Nordic Affairs. In this meeting comrades from each country in the delegation had an opportunity to give a short presentation to the IDCPC about the situations in their country. In representing the CPA, I discussed with the comrades our current major campaign to support the Yes vote in the upcoming referendum on the Indigenous voice to parliament, and our ongoing campaigns against the aggressive and provocative AUKUS agreement and its continued draining of our country's resources away from much needed public services into the pockets of the armaments industry.

Also in Zunyi we had the honour of being the first foreign party representatives to be invited to attend internal CPC customs and processes. We attended an event packed with comrades where the CPC honoured their 50-year veterans, and witnessed the induction of new young comrades including their oath-taking ceremony.

I also discussed with the comrades the current method of attack against the CPC coming from the capitalist camp in Australia and we had discussions on potential ways of combatting the outright misinformation often spread by Australian and other western capitalist media against the People's Republic of China and the CPC.

Later we headed to the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC) and were given a presentation from comrade Shapkat Wushur, Member of the Secretariat of the CYLC Central Committee.

We headed to a meeting with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU)

and heard from comrade Xiong Xuanguo, the Deputy Chairman of the ACFTU, about the work they were doing in the country and about the changed role that trade unions play after the revolution.

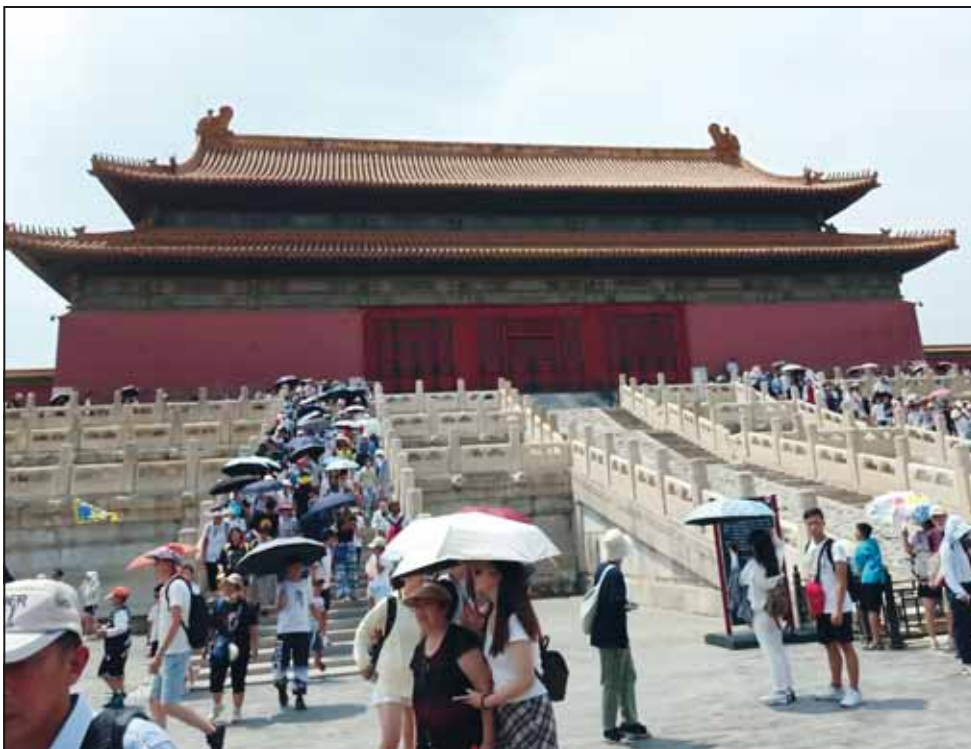
Comrades from the IDCPC took us to the new CPC museum recently built in 2021 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the CPC. The museum holds incredible exhibits spanning all 100 years of the party's history, covering events such as the war against Japanese imperialist invasion, the Chinese revolution and the recent reform and opening up period.

On the final day of official activities we began with a meeting with Professor Guo Qiang, Deputy Director for Teaching and Research of Scientific Socialism at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee. The topic for discussion was Chinese Modernisation – where we learned of the long-term modernisation plans of the CPC including their goals for 2035 and 2050.

My impressions of China are that the CPC has a very high-level understanding of Marxism and of the need to create the material conditions for the change to a socialist society and economy. The Chinese form of modernisation in particular shows the socialist nature of the country especially in its goals of peaceful development both with other countries and nature itself. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is alive and well in the People's Republic of China.

I will end with the words of one of the Chinese comrades from the CPC School in Guizhou: "The festivities must always come to an end, but our friendship is eternal".

Long live the People's Republic of China!
Long live the eternal friendship between the CPC and the CPA! ✨



Imperial Palace.



National Big Data Centre. Photos: Alex Denton – CPA.



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