



Stop AUKUS!

Labor's war hawks succeeded in cementing AUKUS and the nuclear submarines and missiles that go with it in the party's platform at its national conference this month.

Despite opposition from a number of left unions, the Labor Against War grouping, 40 or more ALP branches and many individual rank-and-file members, AUKUS was adopted as party policy.

The attempts to justify war preparations as the path to peace by Labor's leaders demonstrated the arrogance of the ALP right and its contempt for rank-and-file members.

Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong even described AUKUS as "an instrument of peace."

AGENTS OF A FOREIGN POWER

Under the AUKUS plan announced by US President Biden in March, Australia will begin hosting US nuclear-powered and armed submarines from this year and British vessels from 2026.

As Hannah Middleton has said in this paper, in committing Australia's future to the biggest most aggressive military power in history, Prime Minister Albanese and Defence Minister Marles, like Morrison and Dutton before them, are now exposed as agents of a foreign power.

They are willing to sacrifice Australia's economy and risk massive military and civilian casualties in order for the United States to retain economic and military dominance in the Indo-Pacific.

They are prepared to risk World War III and the possibility of it going nuclear with devastating worldwide consequences. AUKUS is the most dangerous and expensive military project in the nation's history.

The cost of the program, including construction and maintenance, is estimated to reach more than \$368 billion over the life of the program to 2055.

The north of Australia is being integrated into US planning and preparation for a war against China. This includes the military and spy bases established at North West Cape in Western Australia, the port, barracks and air base in Darwin, the joint RAAF-US Air Force base at Tindal outside Katherine, and



the expanding Pine Gap spy and war fighting base outside Alice Springs.

The US has established a regional command centre in Darwin. The US Marines, Air Force, and Navy operating within and from Australia are all under the command of the US Indo-Pacific Command.

DESPICABLE PROPAGANDA

Albanese boasts of what he calls "new jobs, new industries, and new expertise in science, technology, and cyber" – but this is all for war, for death, and destruction. It is despicable propaganda.

War and preparations for war are the greatest threat to the environment. There are no billions for life and sustainable development, for our health, housing, education, and other human needs.

Where is the funding for diplomacy and arms control?

Where is the funding for the half a million Australians who are struggling to afford food every day?

Greens defence spokesman Senator David Shoebridge called the AUKUS deal a "\$368 billion nuclear-powered raid on public education, health, housing, and First Nations justice that will starve core services for decades to come.

"Until it is reversed, today's announcement will force Labor to deliver austerity budgets to funnel billions of dollars offshore to fund the US and UK nuclear submarine industries," he said.

FOR THE PEOPLE

A government with genuine commitment to the wellbeing of the people would prioritise its spending differently.

With \$200 billion, for example, the government could raise rates of income support on pensions, JobSeeker, youth allowance and other payments to \$88 a day.

An annual investment of \$5 billion a year would go a long way towards fixing the housing crisis.

The aged care system is in crisis. Aged care workers need a wage rise of at least 25 per cent which would cost an estimated \$35 billion over ten years.

The public education sector is screaming out for funding – it needs an additional \$65 billion for public schools, \$69 billion to abolish university fees, \$4 billion for free preschool, and \$10 billion for a wage increase for early childhood education, and care workers.

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No more money for war!

YES TO THE VOICE

Guardian

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When rent freezes over

Rent is in the news lately, for several reasons. There is a national housing crisis. The Albanese Labor government, always keen to be seen as progressive without upsetting anyone who benefits from things as they are, has had a housing bill blocked by the Greens who are pushing for rent freezes, more actual spending on housing, and a raft of other improvements for tenant rights, such as long-term leases and enforcing minimum standards for rental properties. Some state and territory governments are considering rental freezes or controls.

Are rent freezes the answer?

For a lot of the Australian commentators, the idea of landlords losing the right to charge whatever they like whenever they like is anathema. Landlords would stop renting if they lost this incentive, they claim. The commentators don't explain what would happen to the properties the landlords stop renting. Presumably, the landlords would sell the properties to people who would either live in them or rent them out. There's another group of Australians who can't get whatever they like whenever they like. They're called workers, and they still rock up to work even though they can't just jack up wages whenever they want to, like landlords can do with rent.

Are rent freezes enough? On their own, absolutely not. Housing in Australia is plagued with rorts which have been set up to transfer money from people who work for a living to people who own property. In neoliberal ideology, this is meant to transform workers into either property owners or would-be property owners. In neoliberal practice it increases inequality and is on the way to creating an underclass. Rent freezes are a good idea, but would leave the rest of the system unchanged. Likewise, the CFMEU's Zach Smith has called for a tax on large corporate profits, to raise funds for building more homes. It's another good idea, which Labor will not do, but it's not enough. The problem is the system. Let's look at the rorts.

One rort is negative gearing. This gives a tax discount to people who own investment properties at the expense of people who own one or none. If you own a property and rent it out for less than you pay on your mortgage, you get the difference off your taxable income. Another is the capital gains discount. If I work at a job, I'm taxed. If I do nothing except own a property, live in it and then sell it at a profit, I get a tax discount. These two rorts alone will cost Australia some \$20 billion over the next decade.

Housing schemes set up to encourage home ownership, such as the first home-buyer scheme, raise house prices and encourage more landlordism.

Communist Party of Australia policy on housing is clear. Housing is a human right. In Australia there is no good reason for homelessness or housing stress. Contrary to popular belief, the CPA is not coming for your family home, but housing, like all property, should be used first and foremost for human needs, not to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Rent freezes and controls are a positive step, but much more is needed. We need to bring back real public housing – in large quantities which can keep rents overall affordable, owned and run by the people. Bringing public housing back is a big ask – even the Greens use the language of “social and affordable” housing, but it's essential if we want to really improve life for renters.

Communists around the country are campaigning for public housing and for the rights of tenants. Join us.

Statement in solidarity with the Communist Party of Venezuela, PCV

The Communist Party of Australia has growing concerns at the increasing actions against the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) by the use of the judiciary and the break in relations between the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Communist Party of Venezuela. It has resulted in violations of the PCV's right to carry out their political activity without the fear of liquidation. These actions should not occur in a democratic society under any circumstances.

The CPA expresses its solidarity with the PCV leadership lead by comrade Oscar Figuera, the constitutionally elected General Secretary at the 16th PCV National Congress held in Caracas in November 2022.

The PCV is the oldest working class political party in Venezuela. It has been faithful to the deep structural transformations that the Bolivarian revolution needs in the interest of the people.

The CPA condemns in the strongest possible terms

the judiciary decision that has appointed a group of non-members to leading positions of the CPV. The decision has given control of the legal status and assets of the PCV against the Party's internal rules. This is a violation of the PCV constitution and the will of its membership.

The PCV has a long history of struggle in which many hundreds of Venezuelan comrades have given their lives for social change, democracy and socialism.

The CPA calls for the halt of the actions that prevent the lawful participation of the Venezuelan communists in the democratic process and the defence of the Bolivarian revolution.

The CPA calls for unity of the people as the only weapon that can defeat the coercive economic measures imposed by US imperialism and the survival and deepening of the Bolivarian Revolution.

**Communist Party of Australia
Central Committee Executive
19th - 20th August 2023**

Stop AUKUS!

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PASSION FOR PEACE

We must unite and mobilise to force the Australian government off this path to war.

Write to PM Albanese, War Minister Marles, and Foreign Minister Penny Wong to tell them that you reject Australia becoming a proxy in such a war and bearing the terrible consequences.

Make Tuesdays your No AUKUS day – email them every Tuesday.

a.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au
richard.marles.mp@aph.gov.au
senator.wong@aph.gov.au

DESTABILISING

Since WW2, the Australian military has no longer had the purpose of defending the country against any supposed threats but has been reset to become an increasingly dangerous and destabilising force in the region. The Pivot to the Asia-Pacific and the exorbitant military budget have become an offensive force, particularly so with the US Alliance at the centre of its doctrine, and now with AUKUS and QUAD agreements and the proposed acquisition of nuclear submarines and the militarisation of Australia's north.

The CPA's campaign for a peace budget should bring people together under the banner that to give peace a chance it needs a budget. We aim to raise awareness to bring enough pressure on the government to stop the AUKUS treaty and its enormous militaristic budget projected for the next five years. That money should be funding for people's health, housing, and education.

No more money for war! Peace deserves a budget!

PINE GAP

Australia is already deeply complicit in US war plans through Pine Gap, one of the largest and most important US satellite ground control stations in the world. Pine Gap (near Alice Springs) is a ground

station for satellites which cover China, southern Russia, and the Middle East oilfields. Pine Gap is essential to the US nuclear war fighting strategy.

WORLD-WIDE STRUGGLE

The world-wide struggle between the people and the transnational corporations is intensifying. Pursuing their insatiable drive for expansion and ever-higher profits, the transnational corporations have undertaken a new drive to expand their control over the markets and resources of all countries by whatever means necessary, including war.

On the other hand, the working class, working farmers, the self-employed, those with professions and small business people, are resisting in various ways the onslaught by the big corporations and those governments which are implementing policies on their behalf.

The foreign policy of the United States is driven to: make the world safe for investment by American corporations; enrich US armaments corporations who contribute generously to Congress members; prevent the development of any society which becomes an example of an independent alternative to the capitalist model; extend its political and economic control over as much of the globe as possible.

We are witnessing the use of global power on an historic scale by an aggressive imperialist state willing to disregard international law and norms of civilised behaviour in its drive for world domination.

However, resistance to US efforts to impose its will on the world is growing. This movement is broader, better educated, better organised, more aware, and at a higher political level than ever before. The anti-capitalist movement is coming together with the anti-war movement, bringing in new people, increasingly the youth.

The coming together of these forces, their solidarity and mutual support, will give the many millions the power to roll back the

New World Order and ultimately bring about revolutionary change.

The naval nuclear reactors for Australia represent one of the lowest points in Australian democracy in living memory. Huge expenditure has been announced for a single weapons capability, submarines, in a decision made behind closed doors, and overflowing with risks, many of which have barely been acknowledged yet.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The submarines are intended to take part in a nuclear war. Australia should urgently sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to remove any doubts about our intention to remain nuclear weapons free.

The submarine decision has been taken, in the name of defending “democracy,” by a tiny handful of people, with not a single Australian outside elite circles – some with vested interests – being consulted and listened to.

Naval nuclear reactors are to be imposed on one of our cities with zero consultation with the people there.

The Communist Party of Australia campaigns for peace and for Australia's sovereignty and independence and to build friendship and solidarity with the people of Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

The CPA advocates:

- The removal of US military and intelligence bases from Australia.
- The removal of US military and intelligence bases from the Asia-Pacific region.
- Opposition to Australia's role as a US proxy in the Asia and Indo-Pacific region.
- The promotion of an independent Australian foreign policy that builds peace, and respects the independence and sovereignty of countries and people in the Asia-Pacific.
- Exposing and opposing foreign armaments corporations in Australia.
- Opposing the development of an armaments industry in Australia. ✪

Dr John Patrick Berwick

Family man, comrade, barrister, scholar

5th February 1951 – 1st July 2023

Peter Mac

John Berwick was born in 1951 in Sydney. His family was working class, and his Aboriginal father was a professional boxer. The eldest of six children, John excelled at sport and was an outstanding natural scholar and a voracious reader. When he was ten years old John told his father he was depressed because in his Marist Brothers primary school exams he scored 100 percent in all subjects except one, and he could not work out how he had lost one mark in that subject.

As a teenager John was an eager surfer and played a formidable game of rugby league. After finishing school, he enrolled in the University of Sydney Arts faculty, graduating with an honours degree in modern history. He was highly popular and remained in contact with many of his fellow students throughout his life. He became very interested in politics. Beginning a lifetime of activity in support of left-wing and progressive causes, he became involved in the Vietnam moratorium demonstrations and the anti-apartheid and Aboriginal rights campaigns. Arrested and tried for assaulting a police officer at an anti-apartheid demonstration, he fortunately was found not guilty.

In 1979 John travelled to India, and the next year he met and married Devleena Ghosh. John had a fascination with India and learned to speak, read and write the Bengali language. He subsequently gained a PhD. His thesis, *Students in Bengal As a Social Constituency in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, examined the social history of Bengali students, including their political activity, during Britain's colonial rule of the sub-continent.

John joined the NSW State public service in 1985, taking a position at what was then the

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. He rose through the ranks, working in special fields of interest. He was very concerned with the development and promotion of Australian culture and organised funding for the famous film *Strictly Ballroom*.

John subsequently studied law and after graduation in 1991 became a barrister. True to his beliefs, he often defended ordinary people who found themselves the victim of oppressive government policies or corporate greed, or who had simply fallen foul of the law. His sister, Jane Bridges once caught a taxi and told the driver she had to attend a court hearing. The driver asked which barrister was representing her. When she told him it was John, the driver said John had acted in court for his son, who had got into trouble with the law, and that John's successful defence during the hearing led to a complete turn-around in the boy's behaviour and was an event of major significance in his life.

In 2014 John ceased acting as a barrister, and the next year he joined the Communist Party of Australia. John had been very interested in the Party but joining it had not been possible previously because of his very demanding career.

In 2017 John travelled on the Trans-Siberian Railway through Russia with Devleena and others who were or had been party members. It was a very important trip for John, because of his lifelong interest in the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. However, his subsequent involvement in Party life was limited because of chronic illness which would ultimately prove fatal. He was unable to participate in demonstrations, but his wide reading and incisive knowledge of history, law and politics were particularly valuable during Party meetings and classes.

John had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Sydney's criminal history. He pointed out that Australia benefited from the criminal

tendencies of some of its citizens, as in the case of Bill Devine, who was honoured by the state for having killed with great enthusiasm many of his fellow human beings in the WW1 trench warfare. (Devine fell out of official favour when he continued to satisfy his lust for violence as a Sydney gangster in the 1920s.)

John was interested in the political aspect of great literary works, for example *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. In this novel, members of the Jarndyce family fight each other in court over an inheritance, but the only ones to benefit are the lawyers, whose fees eventually claim all the inheritance. John pointed out that Jarndyce vs Jarndyce is one of the world's most famous legal cases, even though it's a work of fiction. He argued that the family's financial ruin did not just result from their avaricious lawyers taking full advantage of the contorted procedures of England's ancient Court of Chancery; rather, it stemmed from the profit-fixation of nascent nineteenth-century capitalism, a political-economic system based (then as now) on incessant greed and exploitation.

John was deeply concerned about the duplicity of the news media, which for example blamed Russia for food shortages that occurred in developing countries after Ukrainian wheat production because of Russia's devastating invasion. As John pointed out, Russia supplied many developing countries with wheat, and the food shortages stemmed largely from the US embargo on trade with Russia, not just from the shortfall in Ukraine's wheat production. Nevertheless, John agreed that the embargo would not have been imposed if Russia had not carried out the invasion in the first place.

John died on 1st July. At his funeral his coffin was covered with red roses, and one of his favourite Bengali songs, *People Ask Me About My Beliefs*, was played. The song poses the question:

In Loving Memory Of

Dr John Patrick Berwick

5th February 1951 - 1st July 2023



Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Nor the furious winter's rages

Thou thy worldly task hast done

Home art gone, an' ta'en thy wages

(William Shakespeare - Cymbeline)

"Some tell rosaries, some count the tasbih beads,

But when you arrive or depart this world

What mark of difference remains?"

In John's case the answer is that he was a loyal friend and comrade to many people, and that he will always be remembered by his family, comrades and friends (including those he assisted in court) for his generosity, his great sense of humour, his breadth of

knowledge and his commitment to the interests of ordinary working people.

John is survived by Dr Devleena Ghosh, his wife of forty-three years, his 99 year-old mother Mrs Beryl Berwick, his sister Jane Bridges (OAM), his brothers Paul, Peter, and Mark, his daughter Rochéle and his grandchildren Zachary, John, and Sébastien. ✨

Victoria: Vulnerable students left behind

The Australian Education Union Victorian Branch has strongly condemned the Andrews Labor government's decision to cut Visiting Teacher jobs in the middle of an already severe teacher workforce shortage, and when students and staff in schools need additional support.

AEU Victorian Branch President Meredith Peace said that the government's decision to reduce the Visiting Teacher workforce at a time when many schools across Victoria are struggling to fill teaching vacancies didn't make sense and was deeply misguided.

"Visiting teachers are an integral part of the education system and provide education, support

and assistance to some of the most vulnerable students in schools, including students with physical disability, visual and hearing impairments, autism, and chronic illness.

"They work closely with classroom teachers, education support staff, and families to help ensure that the students most in need are educated and supported to reach their full potential.

"This decision will have a very real impact on outcomes for these students and will leave staff in schools, who are already struggling with excessive workload, without the support of highly qualified expert teachers.

"There are currently over 1800 unfilled teaching vacancies across

Victorian public schools and the impact of this is already being felt in classrooms, with staff workloads mounting and class sizes steadily increasing.

"For the Andrews government to look at the pressure staff in the public education system are under currently and then decide to sack Visiting Teachers who provide them and their students with additional support, is deeply disappointing to say the least."

The AEU Victorian Branch has called on Premier Daniel Andrews and Education Minister Natalie Hutchins to reverse this decision and save Visiting Teachers' jobs.

Australian Education Union,
Victorian Branch ✨

Virtually anti-AUKUS

Teachers at Virtual School Victoria (formerly Long Distance Education) AEU sub branch have passed a resolution refusing to engage in, and promote to their students, the Nuclear Submarine Propulsion Challenge programme:

This meeting of AEU members condemns the Nuclear Submarine Propulsion Challenge promoted by the Department of Education via their website, and run by the STEM Hub in collaboration with the Department of Defence.

The government spending of \$368 billion on AUKUS nuclear submarines will require whole new industries in Australia, and

beginning to draw our brightest teenage students into this war industry must be opposed. A pro-AUKUS curriculum that normalises nuclear powered submarines and other military technology has no place in our schools.

We resolve to refuse to refer students to this program or others like it, and we will refuse to promote it within our schools. We call on the Department of Education to cease all involvement in this and similar programs.

We encourage other AEU bodies to take up this resolution and to support a formal AEU boycott of this and similar pro-AUKUS programs. ✨

Support the *Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

www.cpa.org.au

Wage theft costing workers nearly \$850m a year

A fresh analysis of wage theft by the McKell Institute has revealed Australian workers are being underpaid nearly \$850 million a year, ripping more than \$330 million in economic activity out of the country.

The think tank analysed Fair Work Ombudsman business audit campaigns dating back to 2009, finding an average of five wage victims per business who ended up being repaid \$610.83 each.

More than more than 40 per cent of the businesses audited fell foul of the Fair Work Act, while more than a quarter recorded breaches of monetary obligations such as award rates and agreements.

Extrapolated across Australia, this equates to 269,728 businesses collectively ripping off more than 1.3 million workers, or roughly 11.5 per cent of the country's workforce, a collective \$847.25 million annually.

McKell Institute CEO Ed Cavanough said the estimates were at the lower end, because the analysis did not account for cases where workers were underpaid against appropriate award rates or the incorrect payment of penalty rates.

"The analysis puts a conservative figure on the cost of wage theft that is rampant across Australia, equivalent to a 0.01 per cent loss in GDP," McKell Institute CEO Ed Cavanough said.

The FWO generally found that employer non-compliance was due to a lack of awareness and understanding of award provisions, rather than employers acting maliciously.

"The total amount of actual wage theft is likely much higher. This is an extraordinary amount of money being stolen and it's unacceptable. Being unaware is not an excuse. The onus is on employers to understand their obligations to their employees," Cavanough said.

"It shows why we need strong laws to criminalise wage theft, like the protections being pursued through the federal government's workplace reforms."

The McKell Institute's findings are based on an International Monetary Fund analysis of economic multipliers that found every \$1 increase in Australian



Graphic: James Drury – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0).

workers' pay results in a 39c boost to the economy. Using that formula, the economic cost of unpaid wages is \$330 million.

The analysis breaks down wage theft by state and territory – with NSW accounting for nearly a third of lost wages, or \$306 million across more than 500,000 workers – as well as by federal electorate.

The seat of Sydney had the highest average amount owed to workers, based on FWO reimbursements. The analysis estimated 41,106 workers had missed out, with the collective amount owed exceeding \$25 million.

In the electorate of Melbourne, more than 28,500 workers missed out on nearly \$17.5 million. North Sydney was the third-worst electorate for underpayments, totalling \$10 million across 16,500 workers.

"These horrifying figures are another blow for workers who are struggling to meet mortgage repayments, keep up with rising rents and pay their bills," Cavanough said.

The McKell Institute ✪

Where wage theft is happening

Top 10 electorates for wage theft	Annual wage theft by state/territory	Wage theft per worker (state/territory)
Sydney	\$25.1m	National \$847m
Melbourne	\$17.5m	NSW \$306m
Brisbane	\$12m	Victoria \$221m
North Sydney	\$10m	Queensland \$163.5m
Mcnamara	\$9.6m	Western Australia \$76.5m
Adelaide	\$9.6m	Tasmania \$47m
Perth	\$9.4m	SA \$14.5m
Reid	\$9.2m	ACT \$12.7m
Moncrieff	\$8.8m	Northern Territory \$5.5m
Isaacs	\$8.5m	

Electrical Trades Union members rally

Hundreds of Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members and activists will rally at the front of Evoenergy's Greenway depot as ads launch publicising the company's attempt to cut the real wages of its workforce.

Despite the worst cost of living crisis in recent memory, the company's pay offer amounts to a paltry eight per cent over three years, a significant cut to real wages with

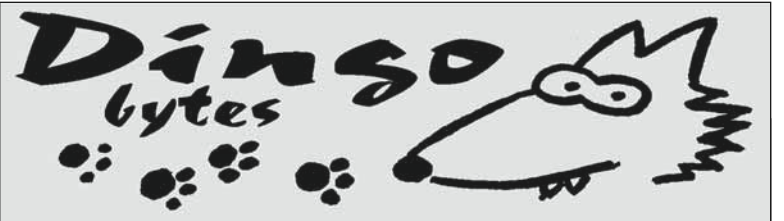
annual inflation running at six per cent.

The ETU has launched an advertising campaign to hold the company to account.

The ACT government effectively owns 50 per cent of Evoenergy through its wholly owned subsidiary, Icon Water. The union is also calling on the Chief Minister and Energy Minister to explain why they are allowing Evoenergy to treat hard working employees with contempt.

ETU NSW/ACT Secretary, Allen Hicks, said Evoenergy's conduct was unacceptable. "Evoenergy needs to stop treating its workforce with such contempt. These hardworking men and women keep the lights on, working difficult and unpredictable shifts. Yet Evoenergy is proposing a cut to real pay.

"We will not take a backward step. The ETU intends to keep campaigning for a decent deal that meets the cost of living." ✪



The increasing concentration of wealth and power among mega-corporations, facilitated in no small part by rigged rules of the global economy, is undermining democracy, economic security and planetary health. A report by the development organisation *Global Justice Now* – delves into this problem of monopoly capitalism.

The global economy is dominated by gigantic corporations. These huge businesses wield enormous power, crossing borders, avoiding laws and taxes, compelling governments to compete with each other for investment. The biggest corporations have captured eye-watering wealth, which far outweighs the economic power of most countries on earth. And that wealth and power is only growing. As the world is battered by a cost-of-living crisis, still recovering from the worst pandemic in a century, and struggling to cope with the effects of disastrous climate change, the profits of the biggest 500 firms on the planet nearly doubled, exceeding \$3 trillion in 2021. Their combined income amounted to an almost unimaginable \$38 trillion – equivalent to nearly 40 per cent of the entire world economy. That's more than the GDP of all but the very richest countries in the world combined. The combined income of just the five biggest corporations in the world was more than the income of the poorest 2 billion people put together – one-quarter of the world's population. One single corporation – Walmart – earned more than half-a-trillion dollars. That's more than \$1.5 billion every day, exceeding the GDP of even wealthy countries like Austria or Norway. Meanwhile, Apple, the most profitable private corporation in the world, saw its profits rocket by 65 per cent to \$95 billion. These gigantic corporations have captured the economy, giving them the power to set prices, in sectors including food and energy. So while food and energy costs rise dramatically for ordinary people, corporations in those sectors are under no pressure to lower prices even as their profits spiral into the stratosphere. The big five oil corporations, for instance, brought in record profits of \$195 billion in 2022, funnelling around \$110 billion straight into the pockets of mostly very wealthy shareholders.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: The WA Cook government. Their decision to reinstate the export ban for Perth Basin gas projects but officially lifting it in other parts of the state, puts the Kimberley at serious risk. Buru Energy is pursuing a floating gas facility and associated pipeline in order to export oil and gas from its Kimberley tenements. Activist organisation Lock the Gate Alliance WA Coordinator Claire McKinnon said the Cook government appeared to be doubling down on its support for the dangerous, polluting industry in the Kimberley. "Oil and gas companies hold huge tenements over breathtakingly beautiful and culturally rich parts of the Kimberley, and the projects they have planned would all rely on building new destructive pipelines for export," she said. "This could have been an opportunity for the Cook government to protect the Kimberley's communities, culture, and precious environment from the scourge of oil and gas. Yet here in WA, the Cook government is eager to fan the flames on an already overheating planet, instead of responsibly putting in place a ban on fracking, and a ban on new oil and gas projects in the Kimberley."

Nothing and no-one is forgotten

Commemoration Activity
Tuesday 12
September

Special Guest:
Alejandro Salvador
Fernandez Allende
Journalist and
grandson of
President Allende

From 09:45am
Parliament House
New South Wales

6 Macquarie St, Sydney

OP-ED: ALP Conference and the path to war

William Briggs

“If you’re pro-human rights, you need to be pro-AUKUS. If you’re pro-peace, you need to be pro-AUKUS. If you’re pro-advanced manufacturing, you need to be pro-AUKUS.” In such a fantasy-world, to militarise the region, to threaten war, to arm for war, to destroy an economy for the sake of war, is to be pro-human rights, pro-peace and pro-jobs. This was how Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy sought to sell AUKUS to delegates at the ALP National Conference. It was a disgraceful speech and an insult, not just to the ALP, but to all of us. He also likened those who oppose AUKUS to pre-WW2 “appeasers.”

Conroy attacked the unions who stand against the militarisation of our economy in terms that would win him praise in any conservative party.

His remark, that it was not in Australia’s national interest to have “one power dominate our region, especially one that breaches international laws” was illuminating. The reference was to China, but it is the USA that dominates our region. It is the USA that has a record of overturning sovereign states, with coercion and by force.

The Prime Minister lauded AUKUS as a job creation scheme. This was meant to placate the union delegates. These delegates, the union members represented by

them, the rank-and-file ALP members who passed resolutions across dozens of branches, and the growing numbers of Australians who are resisting AUKUS will not be so easily fobbed off. \$368 billion to produce 20,000 jobs is an insult to anyone’s intelligence. That’s 18 million dollars for each job created.

We live with health and housing crises of gigantic proportions. How many affordable homes, schools, hospitals, climate change mitigation actions would \$360 billion buy? How many tens of thousands of socially useful jobs might be created? We will, instead, get a war-based economy that will endanger us all, both in this country and across the broader region.

Logic and good sense tell us that a war against China serves no-one’s interests.

The assumption that a conflict is all but inevitable and that “deterrence” can only be achieved by beligerence, is a strategy that will lead us all into very dangerous waters. The ALP government is eager to wade into these waters and to take us with them.

The ALP Conference aimed to sideline, at least for a time, any internal opposition to its war-mongering policies. While the parliamentary branch got their way, the anti-AUKUS movement will not go away and nor will the growing opposition in Australian society to the developing war economy or our government’s obsequious attachment to US foreign policy in the region and the world. ✪



Teachers against AUKUS NSW Teachers Federation Statement

It is a deep commitment to peace that guides the NSW Teachers Federation’s opposition to militarism and belief that war should never be used to resolve international conflict. There have been too many times in history when warmongering and arms build-ups have led to international conflict, death and destruction.

Federation opposes AUKUS and joins the growing chorus of concern that the AUKUS security pact Australia signed with the USA and the UK compromises the pursuit of an independent foreign policy and has the potential to drag Australia once again into foreign conflict and war.

Recent alarmist, war mongering commentary, deployed in an attempt to bolster unsubstantiated predictions of an inevitable war with China, is of deep concern.

Within weeks it was announced that the Australian government is to spend \$368 billion on nuclear-powered submarines, which will increase the hosting of US military forces on Australian territory. Continuing reports that Port Kembla is being considered as the site for a nuclear submarine base is of deep concern for our public education communities.

While governments appear ever ready to commit huge amounts of public revenue on military expenditure there remains a serious underfunding of public pre-schools, public schools, TAFE and higher education, and other areas of the public sector. A massive transfer of public wealth to private armament manufacturers will constrain public expenditure in all government portfolios for decades to come.

We are reminded of the words of former Federation President Sam

Lewis when addressing the union’s 1951 Annual Conference:

“The greatest single factor on the world scale causing inflation and leading to the undermining of the living and cultural standards of the people is enormous expenditure on production of armaments. Teachers are concerned very deeply with conservation: conservation of natural resources, conservation of human resources. They are the agents in the battle against material and moral erosion, against the scorching of human flesh and the searing of the human spirit.”

It was also Sam Lewis who ensured the belief that “all wars are fought against children” underpins our work as teachers.

The Federation will continue to work with the anti-war, peace, and broader union movement to expose and oppose the threat inherent in this rise in militarism. ✪

PEACE NOTES

More War Games

Hannah Middleton

Australia has just hosted the Malabar Exercises which were held in Sydney and across the NSW south coast from 10th to 21st August. The naval war games involved Australia, India, Japan, and the United States – the four Indo-Pacific countries which make up the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), a de facto military alliance directed against China.

Coming on top of US-led military activities throughout the region, particularly in South Korea and the Philippines this year, and now in Australia, Malabar was unmistakably a show of force aimed at China.

So far this year there have been exercises in Europe, South Korea, the Philippines, and now Australia.

The Malabar exercises were one more example of the US drive to build military alliances to help contain China and reassert imperialism’s unipolar domination and exploitation of the region.

The Malabar Exercise began in 1992 as a training event between the United States and India. Japan joined in 2015. In 2008 Australia withdrew from the war games, but from 2015, the Australian government was eager to participate again following the US pivot to Asia, a vast military build-up directed against China.

This year Australia for the first time hosted Exercise Malabar which included constabulary operations, air warfare activities, anti-submarine warfare, naval gun-firing and anti-ship missile defence activities, and communications, and replenishment at sea between ships.

However, little specific information on the activities was made public. Australia’s growing role in the US-led preparations for war against China increasingly looks like “a conspiracy against democracy and the population itself.”

Australia sent the destroyer HMAS Brisbane, the landing ship HMAS Choules, a Collins class submarine, helicopters, F-35 fighter jets, an Air Force Hawk 127, and Poseidon aircraft.

India sent a destroyer, frigate, and submarine; Japan dispatched a destroyer; and the US Navy sent ships from the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group and other units for the US 7th Fleet.

The war games are about aggression and intimidation, not defence or disaster response.

The Malabar Exercise followed on from last month’s Talisman Sabre biannual war games. This year’s version involved more than 34,000 military personnel. The main partners, Australia and the US, were joined this year by NATO states France, the UK, Canada, and Germany as well as Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga.

Talisman Sabre involved extensive live-fire exercises, including the use of sophisticated missile systems, as well as maritime and littoral combat exercises clearly aimed at rehearsing a war with China.

Amid Talisman Sabre, the US-Australia Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) were held in Brisbane. The talks reached many decisions but their essence was a joint commitment to expand and operationalise the US military takeover of Australia.

The words “Enhanced Co-operation” were repeated throughout the AUSMIN communiqué, describing the terrifying speed and breadth of the surrender of independence, sovereignty, and autonomy by the Australian government.

There will be Enhanced Force Posture Co-operation across land, sea, and air, as well as through the Combined Logistics, Sustainment and Maritime Enterprise. There will be Enhanced Maritime Co-operation, Enhanced Air Co-operation, and Enhanced Space Co-operation.

Australia pledged to expand US basing arrangements, as well as to develop joint missile production and stockpiling capabilities. They also signed a secretive agreement related to the conduct of space warfare.

All these activities are part of Australia’s transformation into a militarised, frontline state for conflict with China. This includes AUKUS and the government’s Defence Strategic Review, which earlier this year outlined the biggest expansion of the armed forces in 80 years, with a focus on the development of strike capabilities for “impactful projection” throughout the region.

Claims that this has anything to do with “national defence” or protecting “democracy” are lies. The real aim is to prepare for war on China because it is the chief threat to US imperialist hegemony.

Monopoly capital

Anna Pha

As families struggle to put food on the table and keep up with rental and mortgage payments, profits are soaring. Inflation was running at six per cent for the year ending 30th June with housing (at 8.1 per cent) and food and non-alcoholic drinks (7.5 per cent) – the two largest drivers of the cost-of-living crisis.

While the shortage in housing is contributing to rising costs, the banks are also making a major contribution. Mortgage payments on relatively recent home loans of \$600,000 have risen by \$1,000-\$1,200 or more. Every time the Reserve Bank of Australia increases the official rate, the Big Four banks pass on the increase in full to borrowers but fail to pass it on in interest to those with savings.

As a result, the Big Four (CBA, NAB, ANZ, Westpac) are raking in record profits. For the first half of 2023, they reported profits of \$17.1 billion, up 19 per cent compared with the first six months of 2021.

A recent survey of more than 1000 households found the cost of an average weekly grocery shop had risen by 25 per cent over the past year from \$145 to \$185.

As struggling households look for ways to save on soaring grocery bills, the major supermarkets are also wallowing in profits. Woolworths made a \$907 million in profits for the first half of 2023 – up 14 per cent on the year before. Its profit margin increased to 30.7 per cent. That is its revenue from sales exceeded its costs by 30.7 per cent!

Coles increased its net profit by 17.1 per cent to \$643 million with a profit margin of 26.5 per cent.

These are margins that every capitalist dreams of!

The term profit-driven inflation is no exaggeration!

But how do the banks, supermarkets, and other sectors of the economy get away with it? After all we have 'free markets' where competition is supposed to drive down prices.

The banking and supermarket sectors in Australia are among the most profitable in the world.

MARKET CONCENTRATION

Woolworths, Coles, and the Big Four banks are what is known as monopolies. Because of their size they control markets. Monopolies exert considerable power to not only determine what they charge consumers but also the terms of trade with their suppliers. The large scale of their purchases enables them to demand lower prices from producers and manufacturers than would-be competitors pay (see item in Dingo page 4).

They are not the only monopolies in Australia. Over 80 per cent of the market for newspapers, domestic airlines, health insurance, department stores, internet service providers, baby food, and beer is

controlled by the biggest four companies in these industries.

And when it comes to petrol, cinemas, liquor retailers, telecommunications, bottled water, and fruit juice, the biggest four providers control around two-thirds of the market. (Andrew Leigh and Adam Triggs, "Product market power and its implications for the Australian economy")

Monopolies also exist in mobile telecommunications, internet service provision, energy retailing, insurance, and pathology.

And then there are the Big Four consultancy/accounting firms (PwC, EY, KPMG & Deloitte), internet search (Google) and social media (Facebook and Twitter), Amazon, Apple, and Facebook that are monopolies.

RISE OF MONOPOLIES

Lenin, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, pointed to qualitative changes within capitalism since the time of Marx. He said "... the rise of monopolies, as the result of the concentration of production, is a general fundamental law of the present stage of development of capitalism."

Lenin raises one of the defining economic characteristics of imperialism: "the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life."

He also refers to "the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves." The Big Four consultancy/accountancy firms are one such examples of global monopolies. Other examples are Google, Facebook, Amazon, Ebay, Alibaba, Visa. They now exist across most industries. (see *Guardian* 2066 for examples of food monopolies).

Lenin pays special attention to the concentration of production and capital in the development of monopolies. This occurs through takeovers, mergers and smaller companies going bust as they are unable to compete.

While countries have anti-trust laws to prevent monopolies taking over markets, these are largely ineffective. Likewise with legislation that purports to prevent the formation of cartels (monopolies colluding on pricing) and monopoly price fixing.

In Australia, the Competition and Consumer Act is supposed to protect "free markets" and the interests of consumers from the creation of large monopolies and monopoly price fixing. It has proved largely ineffective.

The monopolisation process accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s when neo-liberal governments deregulated markets and privatised banks, insurance companies, energy retailers, and telecommunications, in the name of increasing competition and efficiency and lowering prices for consumers.

In the '80s, major banks in Australia accounted for 50 per cent of lending, with credit unions, building societies and other home-loan originators making up the other half. By 2010, banks controlled 91 per cent of

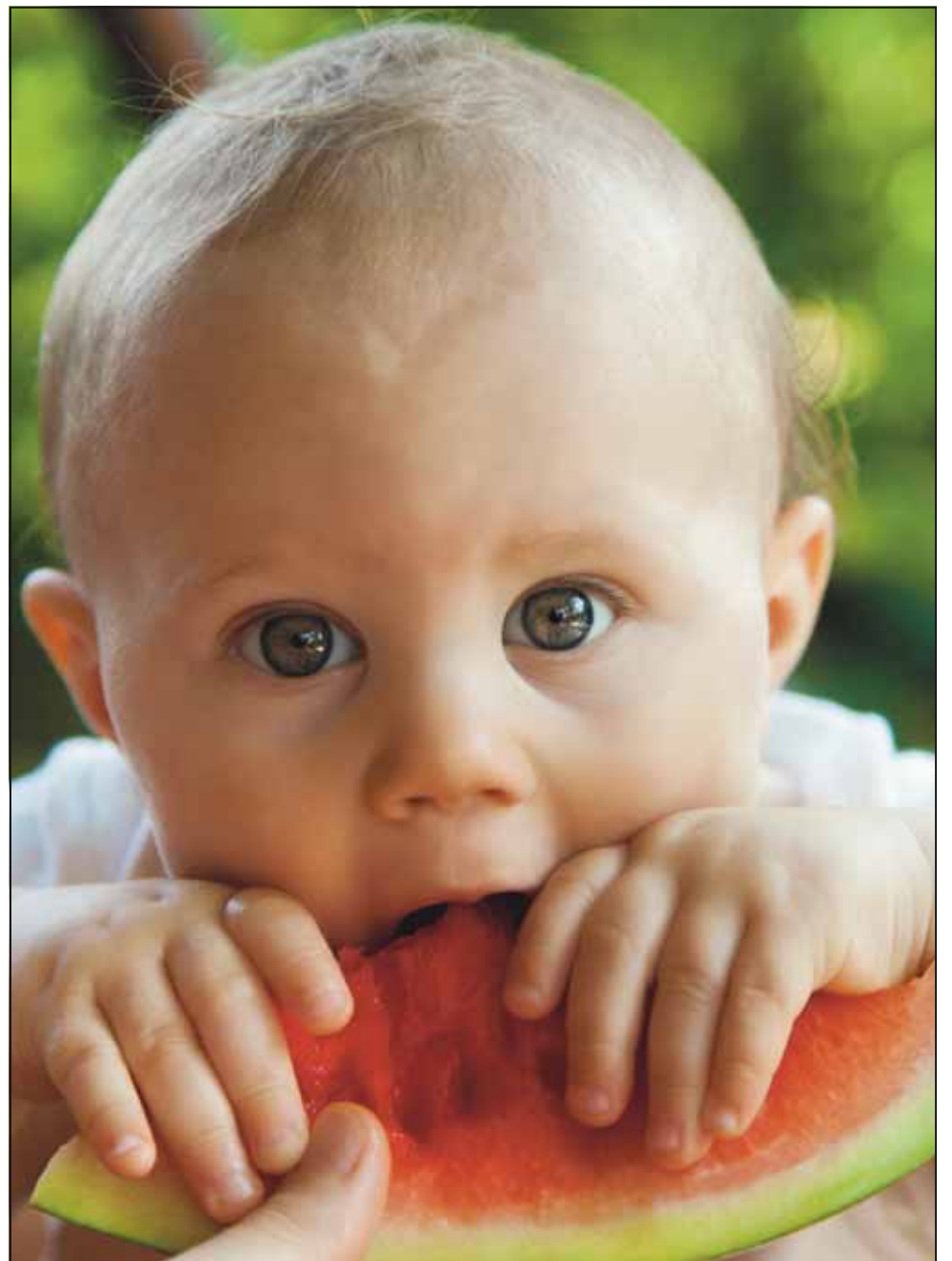


Photo: pxfuel.com

the lending market. This has since declined but it is still over 70 per cent.

CONTRADICTIONS

Lenin stated that increased concentration of production would result in new and more intense contradictions. He was right.

Today we are witnessing a widening of the wealth gap midst record wealth creation; mass starvation amidst a plenty of food production; climate change a direct result of the pursuit of profit regardless of consequences; scientific advance but its application not put to the benefit of humanity; wastage on military and wars; medical developments capable of saving lives but access denied because of patenting systems and the lack of ability to pay.

These contradictions are also seen in

financial and economic crises, water crisis, amongst others. Capitalism is in deep crisis and resorts to war for domination of markets as the way out.

One of the most profound changes that we are seeing is a change in the role of the state. The state is withdrawing from many of its responsibilities for society and undoing many of the progressive social gains of the post-WW2 period.

Privatisation and deregulation are giving more power to the monopolies including finance capital through its loans and partnerships with corporations.

We are witnessing in Australia the Albanese government surrendering sovereignty and undermining democracy in service to the naked power of monopoly capital, in particular the US military industrial complex. ✖

Gougery galore

Origin Energy, one of Australia's biggest energy providers has announced a surge in profits by a whopping 83.5 per cent, also posting a net income of over \$1 billion.

Origin's gross profit has nearly doubled on gas up from \$3.0/GJ to \$5.1/GJ on declining volumes. It nearly tripled on electricity up from \$5.8/MWh to \$16/MWh on flat volumes. In other words, all of Origin's gross profit is attributable to price increases rather than units sold.

Origin has previously upgraded its performance predictions, partly due to the lower cost of purchasing energy.

This will come as a shock to many energy consumers who have seen their bills rise by up to 25 per cent from 1st July in some parts of the country.

A recent ACOSS survey showed that 65 per cent of people on income support are cutting back on heating and 60 per cent are going without essentials like medication or food.

Consumer Reference Group research also points out that more than a quarter of people struggled to pay their energy bills in the past 12 months, up to November 2022.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Joseph Mitchell said Australians

will find it hard to swallow that Origin can post such an enormous increase in profits. "Especially when we hear heartbreaking stories of people going without heating, hot water, or sacrificing lighting their homes at night just to be able to make ends meet.

"Customers will rightly wonder how these big energy companies can justify such large profits, especially as Origin reports that it is due partly to the cost of purchasing energy for them is fallen, and they have failed to promptly pass on those savings to consumers."

Mitchell said the profit announcement is a perfect example of why energy and utilities are currently sitting in 3rd place in submissions to the ACTU's Price Gouging Inquiry.

Another gouger in line for a prize is Australia's top general insurer, IAG, which posted a net profit after tax of \$832 million, up 140 per cent on last year's profit of \$347 million. IAG is the operator of some of the biggest insurance businesses like NRMA Insurance and CGU.

IAG also increased their insurance margin of 9.6 per cent, up from 7.4 per cent from last financial year.

This growth in profits is even more startling considering

the total amount of claims paid out by the company was up 20 per cent on this time last year.

Insurance is in the top five most submitted issues by ordinary Australians for the Price Gouging Inquiry.

"We've all had that sinking feeling opening our car or home insurance quote for the year to see that yet again it's gone up, even if you haven't made a claim," said Mitchell. "The term, insurance 'premium' seems to only suit the provider.

"What's hard to swallow is seeing those bills come in, and then finding out the reason your insurance is rising is because your already profitable insurance company is increasing its profit margins, all when millions of Aussies are under the pump.

"Insurance is an essential. To protect our homes and to get to work we all have to pay those premiums. It's beyond the pale to expect hard working Australians to continue cop increases to life's essentials just to have big business creaming from the top."

Submissions to the ACTU's Price Gouging inquiry can be made at pricegouginginquiry.actu.org.au ✖

“This is not our revolution”

Deiaa Haj Yahia

At the end of July, Shikma Bresler, one of the leaders of the protests against the Israeli coalition government’s judicial reforms, stood up to speak out against the annulment of the so-called “reasonableness” powers of the supreme court.

She made a point to single out other countries where, she said, democracy was being threatened by coups, including Hungary, Turkey, Iran, and Venezuela.

None of those countries, she said, are engaged in a military occupation. Thus, she concluded, the “occupation is not the reason for our situation.”

In other words, she suggested, to great cheers and applause from thousands of protesters, that Israel could be a perfectly fine democracy even with its occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

Such words perfectly illustrate why Israel’s Palestinian citizens feel they have little stake in protests that pitch themselves as being about democracy, but are not about democracy for all, let alone for Palestinians under Israel’s military occupation.

“These protests are supposed to have a leftist character and the goal of equality,” said Ghassan Minyar, an activist from Lydd with the National Democratic Alliance, better known as the Ballad Party.

“But it seems that Zionism is stronger.”

Bresler’s words – a denial of Palestinian political and national rights – were not an exception.

Early in the demonstrations, Palestinian flags were removed by police and other Jewish protesters.

Speeches referencing Israel’s occupation were often silenced. Reem Hazan, of the Democratic Front in Haifa, also known as the Hadash party, decided against delivering a speech at the beginning of the protests after being asked to change its content by the organisers.

Her speech touched on the occupation and racial discrimination, linking the judicial amendments to the occupation. Hazan later told *Al-Ittihad* newspaper that “the censorship of political opinion is intrinsic to fascism, and not part of the fight against it.”

A HISTORY OF PERSECUTION

“There is a big contradiction in the protests,” said Abdul Abu Shehada, a member of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality. “On one hand, protesters try to portray them as having a liberal, leftist character, when, in truth, they do not even meet the basic standards of liberal thought.”

Youth activist and Baladna member, Marah Amara, 24, from Kafr Kanna, near Nazareth, said that prejudice against



Photo: Alisdare Hickson – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Palestinian citizens has long been deeply embedded in Israeli society.

“Israel harmed our Palestinian community’s rights long before these protests. I don’t feel any additional threat [from Israel’s judicial reforms] because racism and discrimination are already embedded in all parties. I don’t feel these protests speak to me or address my rights.”

Why, she continued, would Jewish Israelis expect Palestinian citizens to join their protests?

“Israeli Jewish society does not participate in protests about our fundamental issues, such as prisoners’ rights and crime. We didn’t see any Jewish Israelis protesting the passing of the racist nationality law. When Palestinians suffer, it’s easy to ignore us, and anyone ignoring the human rights of minorities will eventually ignore human rights in general.”

With the participation of soldiers, politicians and “elitists,” said Amir Bwerat, 26, from Arraba village in the north, the protests do not speak to or welcome Palestinian citizens.

“When they come to ask us to join, we tell them: ‘Now you remember us? Where were you when they passed the nationality law?’”

Bwerat, who works with youths in deprived communities, pointed to decades of underfunding in Palestinian communities in Israel, underfunding that has left many opting for a life of crime.

That situation is only getting worse. Bezalel Smotrich, Israel’s finance minister, announced that he would be freezing all funds to Israel’s Palestinian communities and East Jerusalem.

“One cannot talk about democracy when blood flows in the streets, arms are freely available, homes are still being demolished, and the infrastructure of Arab towns is destroyed. We have not reached a stage where we can demand democracy: we don’t even have our basic rights.”

NOT OUR REVOLUTION

Bwerat said the forcible removal of Palestinian flags was the clearest signal that these protests were not for or about Palestinians.

“Seeing protesters trying to take down the Palestinian flag in various demonstrations made me automatically refuse to participate. Lowering the flag that represents my homeland and people means denying all my rights.”

The ultra-right coalition behind Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government has also not caused Palestinian citizens to come out in numbers.

According to Minyar, this is because none of the concerns of Israel’s Palestinian population feature in any of the protests.

“There is no importance attached to ending the occupation in the agenda. There are no calls to abolish the racist laws enacted

in recent years, such as the Kaminitz Law, which accelerates house demolitions in Arab towns, or the nation-state law, while Palestinian families remain prohibited from reunification.”

“In all this, why should I, as a Palestinian, defend the Supreme Court? Wasn’t it the one that legalised calamities against our people in Khan al-Ahmar and al-Araqib? For me, these protests are a struggle between Jewish elites of white ethnicity, fighting for a democracy that serves only them.”

The participation of what is called Israel’s left also does not sway opinion. Haya Suleima, 40, from Nazareth, said she never “believed in the intentions of the Israeli left.” The so-called unity coalition that brought together Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett, the one preceding Netanyahu’s current coalition, did nothing for Palestinians, she pointed out.

All stripes of Israeli governments, the community activist continued, have neglected the Palestinian communities in Israel, and the proposed judicial amendments will not change anything for Palestinian citizens.

Most importantly, she said, the protests are led by elite soldiers in many cases, the so-called “brothers and sisters in arms.”

“How can we, as Palestinians, stand shoulder to shoulder with those accused of war crimes? This is not our revolution.”

The Electronic Intifada ✪

India: Modi’s Toxic Politics on Display

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Red Fort speech on the occasion of the 77th Independence Day had all the hallmarks which have become typical of his independence day speeches of the past years. There were the boastful claims of how, since 2014, India has made tremendous progress in all fields.

The only new addition was Modi’s claim that we can look forward to a thousand years of “*Amrit Kaal*” (astrological term for “golden era”) as compared to the thousand years of slavery which began with Muslim rule and ended with British rule. There was, as usual, a long litany of achievements of the government in different spheres with the focus firmly being on the central role of Modi himself.

It would be a waste of time to critically pull apart the bombastic claims and bring them face to

face with the actual realities. Such critical examinations have been done in the past and now too. Instead, it would be more useful to look at the political aspects of his speech.

Modi touched upon the Manipur situation right at the beginning of his speech. But what he said would have disappointed the people of Manipur and all concerned citizens in the country. He superficially talked of how there was conflict, lives were lost, and women dishonoured, but that peace had returned to the state in the last few days. He said that the central and state governments are working together to establish peace and solve the problems. The message was clear. The chief minister, Biren Singh, who was responsible for aggravating the ethnic conflict and playing a partisan role, is not to be held accountable. In fact,

the central government is going to depend on him to find political solutions. There was nothing about rendering justice to the victims of the horrible sexual crimes, nor was there any reflection on how this sensitive north-eastern state was plunged into ethnic conflict and chaos.

The politics in the speech was obviously coloured by the forthcoming 2024 elections. The speech saw a sharp attack on the opposition, unlike earlier independence day speeches. He attacked dynastic politics, corruption, and appeasement politics. Referring to his pet theme, he said that dynasty parties are a “disease” and “deformity” in Indian democracy. However, this tirade against dynastic politics ignores the fact that within Modi’s BJP, more and more political dynasts are assuming key positions at the state and national levels.

As for his harangue against corruption, it has become another potent weapon against the opposition parties. The Enforcement Directorate has been weaponised to crack down on opposition leaders. That corruption is purely a weapon against the opposition is amply clear when we see the record of high level corruption in the past nine years and how the Modi government has tackled it. Apart from burying the glaring discrepancies in the Rafale deal, the latest Comptroller and Auditor General of India report has exposed wide ranging corruption in the building of highways and in the implementation of various central government schemes like the PM-JAY [publicly funded health insurance scheme for the poor].

It is the attack on the politics of “appeasement,” which is new and ominous in the independence day speech. Appeasement means

minority appeasement. According to Modi, this appeasement has put a blot on the national character and harmed social justice. Modi was condemning minority appeasement from the ramparts of the Red Fort, just 70 kilometres away from Nuh where there was widespread communal violence only a few days ago, in which the Muslims bore the brunt of attacks by the Hindutva goons and were targeted by the state administration. For Modi, to decry minority appeasement at a time when Muslim homes and shops were bulldozed by the administration, is a clear signal that communal polarisation will be on the agenda for escalation in the run-up to the Lok Sabha [parliamentary] polls.

All in all, the tenth independence day speech of Narendra Modi was a display of the toxic politics of the BJP-RSS combine.

People’s Democracy ✪

China's good momentum

Long Dingbin
Chinese Consul-General
to West Australia

The Good momentum of China's economic development is conducive to the economy of Australia and the world.

Achieving modernisation is a dream that the Chinese people have striven to fulfill. The 20th CPC National Congress held last October drew up the blueprint for China's future development and laid out the task of advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernisation. With over 1.4 billion people on course toward modernisation, a number larger than the combined population of all developed countries, China will give a remarkably strong impetus for the global economy.

In the past ten years, the Chinese economy grew at 6.2 per cent on average annually and its share in global economic output increased from 11.3 per cent in 2012 to over 18 per cent. In the past three years under COVID-19, China achieved an average annual growth of 4.5 per cent, about 2.5 percentage points higher than the world average. China's trade in goods ranked the top in the world for six years in a row. On average, China's contribution to global growth was over 30 per cent, ranking first across the world and more than all the G7 countries combined.

China has the world's largest manufacturing system with the most complete industrial chain and supporting facilities, as well as strong technological innovation and industrial production capabilities. China's industrialisation and urbanisation is at the stage of in-depth development, and its middle income population is expected to go beyond 800 million in the coming 15 years. Chinese domestic market has tremendous space and potential, which will provide Australia and other countries with huge opportunities.

China's development and modernisation is aimed at bringing common prosperity to the world. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Global Development Initiative (GDI) are significant public goods China provides to the international community. Ten years on since its commencement, the BRI has formed more than 3000 cooperation projects, created 420,000 jobs for countries along the route, and lifted nearly 40 million people out of poverty.

Put forward in 2021 by President Xi Jinping, the GDI calls on

the international community to prioritise development, pay attention to the special situations of developing countries, and pool efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. By now, over 100 countries and international organisations have supported the GDI, and nearly 70 countries have joined the UN-based Group of Friends of the GDI.

While pressing forward with social economic reforms and opening up to better people's lives, China readily takes on its responsibility of protecting environment and tackling climate change. China has contributed to the conclusion of the Paris Agreement and established and invested about AU\$350 million in the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. China has made the solemn pledge of achieving carbon peak and carbon neutrality by 2030 and 2060 respectively, and committed itself to moving from carbon peak to neutrality in just 30 years. China's afforested area accounts for a quarter of the world's total. China's utility-scale solar capacity exceeds that of the rest of the world combined and China's wind capacity is roughly equivalent to the total of the next top seven countries. Half of the world's new energy vehicles run on Chinese roads. Over the first half of 2023, China added 78.42 gigawatt in installed PV capacity, over half of the total newly installed power capacity nationwide.

In the context of the volatile and downward trend of the entire world economy, under the strong leadership of Chinese Communist Party, China's economy got off to a solid start in 2023 and continued to recover steadily and demonstrated a positive trend of development. China's economy witnessed a 5.5 per cent growth in the first half of 2023, visibly faster than the three per cent growth rate last year and three percentage points higher than the growth rate of the US economy.

According to the IMF World Economic Outlook updated last month, China's economy is expected to grow by 5.2 per cent and account for one third of global growth in 2023.

Presently, China is forging ahead to apply the new development philosophy, promote high quality development, accelerate the building of a new pattern of development, comprehensively deepen reform and opening up, intensify macro regulation, increase domestic demand, promote the initiative and growth of the private sector, and open up to the outside world at a higher level.

China's high quality economic development has made solid progress and consumption plays a significantly stronger role in



Photo: Sharon Drummond – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

driving growth. In the first half of 2023, China's domestic demand accounted for 110.8 per cent of economic growth, 59.4 percentage points higher than the same period last year. Industrial structure continued to get upgraded. Between January and July, investment in high-tech industries increased by 11.5 per cent year on year, and investment in scientific research and technology services industries was up 23.1 per cent year on year.

In the first half of 2023, the combined export of electric cars, lithium batteries and solar panels increased by 61.6 per cent year on year, demonstrating the strong resilience of China's foreign trade. Despite the contracted foreign demand, China's export has maintained a generally stable global market share in the first seven months of this year.

China's post COVID-19 economic recovery might expect more twists and turns. The confidence in China's economy outlook stays strong because China has a strong political leadership, stable and consistent guidelines and policies and the strong resilience, ample potential and robust dynamism as well as the fundamentals sustaining China's sound economic growth in the long run remain unchanged.

China and Australia are both influential countries in Asia Pacific and China has long been the biggest trading partner of Australia, accounting for nearly one third of

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- Introduced in 2013
- 155 countries have signed up to it
- 3000+ projects
- 420,000 jobs created
- 40 million people lifted out of poverty globally

Global Development Initiative (GDI)

- Introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2021 at the UN to help countries meet Sustainable Development Goals
- Supported by more than 100 nations
- More than 70 countries in Group of Friends of the GDI

Australia's trade with the world. Our cooperation is mutually beneficial and brings concrete benefits to people of both countries. After experiencing some difficulties, China Australia bilateral relations have stabilised, improved and developed ever since President Xi Jinping met with PM Albanese in Bali, Indonesia last November.

History of the past decades has proven that China's peaceful development is a boon to Australia and the world. This year marks 50 years since Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam's historic state visit to China, and the coming year will see our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership enter its 10th year. Now both sides are working closely to keep track of Prime Minister Albanese's visit to China later

this year, which will undoubtedly become another milestone in China Australia relations.

Standing at a new starting point of China Australia relations, we need to take concrete measures to further tighten our collaboration ties. Besides the traditional areas of energy, mining and agriculture, clean and renewable energy, electric vehicles, digital economy etc might be the new sectors into which China and Australia could tap the cooperation potentials to join hands in tackling common severe challenges such as climate change.

Now the winter is drawing to its end and early flowers have already been in full bloom. China Australia relationship will usher in another spring soon. ☀

Iranian President to attend BRICS Summit in South Africa

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi is set to travel to Johannesburg to take part in the summit of the BRICS, the economic cooperation bloc composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Naser Kanani, the spokesperson for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed the president's trip to the 15th Summit of Heads of State and Government, and he highlighted that Iran had applied for membership in the group of emerging economies in 2022.

"Cooperation with BRICS and membership is significant for Iran, and the president's participation is aligned with this framework."

"Iran stands out as one of the few countries

engaging in dialogue and cooperation with all BRICS members," Kanani said.

Raisi will travel to Johannesburg upon an invitation from South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and he will deliver a speech before the BRICS+, which includes non-member countries of the organisation.

The 15th Summit convenes to address, among other matters, the expansion of the bloc. Currently, around forty countries have expressed interest in joining the BRICS.

South Africa has extended invitations to 67 leaders from the Global South for the event, including Presidents Miguel Diaz-Canel of Cuba, and Luis Arce of Bolivia. ☀

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

Join us in Sydney to demand that
the USA stops the blockade on Cuba
with the right to self determination

Also stop Venezuela & Gaza blockades

12:30 pm Sunday September 17
Sydney Town Hall

Deadliest fires



Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

Max Graham

HAWAII: The wind picked up on Maui the night before the fires broke out. By early morning on 8th August, gusts were whipping fast enough to topple trees and rip roofs off buildings in the historic Hawaiian town of Lahaina, on Maui's west coast. Then came the conflagrations. Fanned by the blistering winds, flames hurtled as fast as one mile per minute as they engulfed Lahaina and other towns in Maui, like Kula, killed at least 96 people, and incinerated homes, businesses, and churches.

As thousands of displaced people take refuge in makeshift shelters and hotels, cadaver dogs and search crews are still trying to determine the true scope of damage from the deadliest wildfires in the United States in more than a century. Photos from Lahaina show harrowing scenes: rows of charred buildings behind the scorched shells of cars, consumed by fire as they sat in traffic; corpses of boats burnt on the water; an historic church reduced to rubble.

"Ultimately all the pictures that you will see will be easy to understand," said Josh Green, Hawaii's governor, "because that level of destruction in a fire hurricane – something new to us in this age of global warming – was the ultimate reason so many people perished."

Similar disasters ... should be expected with more frequency and intensity on a warming planet.

Wildfires are not new to Hawaii. According to the state's wildfire management organisation, roughly 0.5 per cent of its total land catches fire every year, on par with other US states. But conditions – many of them connected to climate change – have evolved to make parts of the state more likely to ignite.

The blazes in Maui, for instance, were brought on by a "flash drought," a major hurricane south of the archipelago, invasive weeds that acted like kindling, and winds that ran as high as 130 kph, according to the governor. There are allegations that Hawaiian Electric's power lines played a role in the fire, too. The result; a wildfire even deadlier than the Camp Fire that incinerated the town of Paradise, California, killing 85 people, in 2018.

Though it's too early to say exactly how climate change contributed to Maui's wildfires, scientists have long been saying that similar disasters, like wildfires in the Western United States, should be expected with more frequency and intensity on a warming planet.

Climate change is "leading to these unpredictable or unforeseen combinations that we're seeing right now and that are fuelling this extreme fire weather," Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, a researcher at the University of British Columbia's faculty of forestry, told the Associated Press.

This summer, parts of Hawaii

experienced a "flash drought" a rapid drying out of soil and plants that occurs when hot air sucks moisture out of the ground. The drought left parts of Maui especially dry and ready to combust. Such droughts are likely exacerbated by climate change – although a longer-term trend of declining precipitation, which also contributed to the fires, may not be directly connected to human-caused climate change, a scientist told the Washington Post.

Compounding the drought, a proliferation of grasslands on abandoned plantations made vast fields into fuel for the fires. "There's all these huge, huge quantities of vegetation, and it's all papery thin and ready to go," Clay Trauernicht, a wildfire scientist at the University of Hawaii, told Grist. As much as a quarter of the state is covered by invasive grasses.

Adding to the drought and fields of tinder were exceptionally high winds, running from 97 to 130 kph. Experts have said that the winds were fueled in part by Hurricane Dora, a Category 4 storm that barreled across the Pacific south of Hawaii. Dora created a difference in air pressure across the archipelago that led to unusually fierce winds – the sort that plied roofs from buildings before driving flames across Maui.

As climate change makes hurricanes more intense, not all will make landfall, but they still could help spur deadly disasters. On Maui, where the fires did an estimated \$5.6 billion of damage, according to the governor, the death toll is likely to climb for at least 10 more days, Green said. "They will find 10 to 20 people per day probably until they finish," he told *CBS News*. Hundreds of people are still missing.

Grist.org



Global Briefs

SPAIN: Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's candidate for the speaker of the Congress of Deputies won the vote for the position in Sanchez's first trial in the newly elected house and raises the possibility of a new government headed by the Socialist Party leader. Francina Armengol won with the support of 14 votes from two pro-Catalonia independence parties, including seven from Junts (Together) which is led by fugitive politician Carles Puigdemont, who resides in Brussels after fleeing Spain following his unsuccessful 2017 secession bid.

WEST BANK: A Palestinian man was fatally shot in the head, chest and abdomen by the Israeli military in Jenin on 17th August after the forces stormed the city with bulldozers. Israeli forces raided a home above a bakery where 32-year-old Mustafa al-Kastouni was after claiming he was a militant who shot at the soldiers. Clashes also broke out in the streets.

SLOVAKIA: Former and current heads of the Slovak spy agency and five other police and intelligence officers have been accused of abuse of power and criminal conspiracy. The seven are accused of conspiring as a criminal group led by a businessman to obstruct investigations in corruption cases, including by manipulating testimonies and attempting to get rid of other officers.

WILDFIRES: Huge swathes of Spain's Tenerife island have been burned by an out-of-control fire, forcing some 7600 people to evacuate or be confined, with some 250 firefighters and soldiers tackling the blaze. In Canada, air evacuations began today to move residents in Yellowknife out of the path of the fires near the city of 20,000 people as more than 1067 wildfires burn across the country.

LIBYA: One of Libya's rival prime ministers warned last week that his government would not tolerate any further militia fighting, days after the year's bloodiest bout of clashes rocked the capital. At least 45 people died in Tripoli after violence broke out between militiamen from the 444 brigade and its rival, the Special Deterrence Force. The warning came from Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who heads the Tripoli-based government. "We are used to the sound of clashes, but (coming near) civilians is forbidden," Dbeibah said in a televised speech accompanied by tribal elders from eastern Tripoli, a district where both militias have a strong presence. During his 45-minute speech, he also threatened to introduce "other measures" against the two militia groups if the fighting escalated but provided no further detail. The Tripoli-based Interior Ministry said that it has upped the presence of security forces in the neighbourhoods that witnessed the most intense fighting. Since 2014, Libya has been divided between two rival administrations, one in Tripoli and one operating in Sirte.

BRITAIN: More than a third of Londoners face a "mortgage bomb" as monthly payments soar. London Mayor Sadiq Khan cited new polling from YouGov, which found that 34 per cent of mortgaged homeowners across the capital will struggle to meet costs by early 2024, up from about a fifth earlier this year. The Labour mayor urged Downing Street to take a number of measures, including reinstating mortgage payment holidays and reversing cuts to interest rate support.



Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

OP ED: Albanese and Hawaii

FK

A quick online search for "Albanese speaks out on Hawaii" brings up a lot of entries. They're all about Scott Morrison's ill-fated holiday to Hawaii when Australia was in the midst of its worst bushfires ever.

Anyone whose memory goes back as far as 2019 might remember the air quality dropping to hazardous levels in all the eastern state cities, and Morrison's contribution. He instructed his staff to hide the tropical holiday, then came grumpily back to Australia, where he responded to calls for support for fire fighters by talking about fire fighting as though it was some kind of hobby. Morrison also, of course, didn't want to talk about the connection between the fires, climate change, and his government's efforts towards making climate change worse by attacking renewable energy

and promoting fossil fuels. Albanese is happy to speak out on how awful Morrison was as a PM. The search also reveals that, Foreign Minister Penny Wong was delighted to announce that Albanese wouldn't be holidaying in Hawaii this year.

Nobody is chucking about Hawaii at the moment. How things have changed. We had a Prime Minister who was making global warming worse, and couldn't deal with the consequences. Now we have a Prime Minister who is making global warming worse by opening fossil fuel projects, and carrying out his predecessor's plans for AUKUS. The main difference is that the current PM isn't actively hostile to renewable energy projects.

That's as good as it gets under the bourgeois parliamentary system. Fires like the ones in Canada, Hawaii, and Australia will happen again unless we make some real changes. ✪

Marx and *Robinson Crusoe*: British Imperialism and the slave trade

Graham Holton

Marxist literary criticism explains a literary work, a novel, through an analysis of the human-social relationships which reflect the economic base of the story, rather than the social institutions from which they originate. It analyses the class division, racism, exploitation, alienation, and the means of production presented in the novel. The class struggle and the relations of production are the central instruments in this analysis. Culture is governed by historical conditions and the relations of dominance and subordination prevalent in the writer's society. All cultural products, such as the novel, are directly related to the economic base of the society in which they are created.

Karl Marx outlines the historical process by which the means of production is concentrated in the hands of the Capitalist, leaving the workers no alternative but to sell their labour to the owners of the means of production. This wage labour force was created through the expropriation of the tenant farmer's property and labour. At the same time, the genesis of industrial capitalism began with the looting of Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European Imperialism.

The Capitalist class to which Daniel Defoe belonged, was concerned with trade, entrepreneurship and colonial rule. The massive profits of the Transatlantic trade enriched mercantilists and the growing Capitalist class. Defoe invested £800 (his wife's inheritance) in Britain's Royal African Company, founded in 1672. He argued in his political pamphlets that slavery was an economic necessity for Britain and criticised those who would restrict the profitability of the Atlantic slave trade. In 1692, he was arrested for debts amounting to £17,000, forced to declare bankruptcy and sentenced to the debtors' prison. Ironically, Defoe died in 1731 with little money, unlike his fictional character.

The Life and Adventure of Robinson Crusoe Written By Himself was published by Daniel Defoe in 1719. The novel was a political treatise, laying out the assumptions of the period: that the slave trade was acceptable under Christianity, because it makes the slave owner rich; women should be "proper for service" to their men; and the Indigenous people of the Americas were "savages." The allegory of *Robinson Crusoe* provides the reader with an insight into the workings of the Transatlantic slave trade.

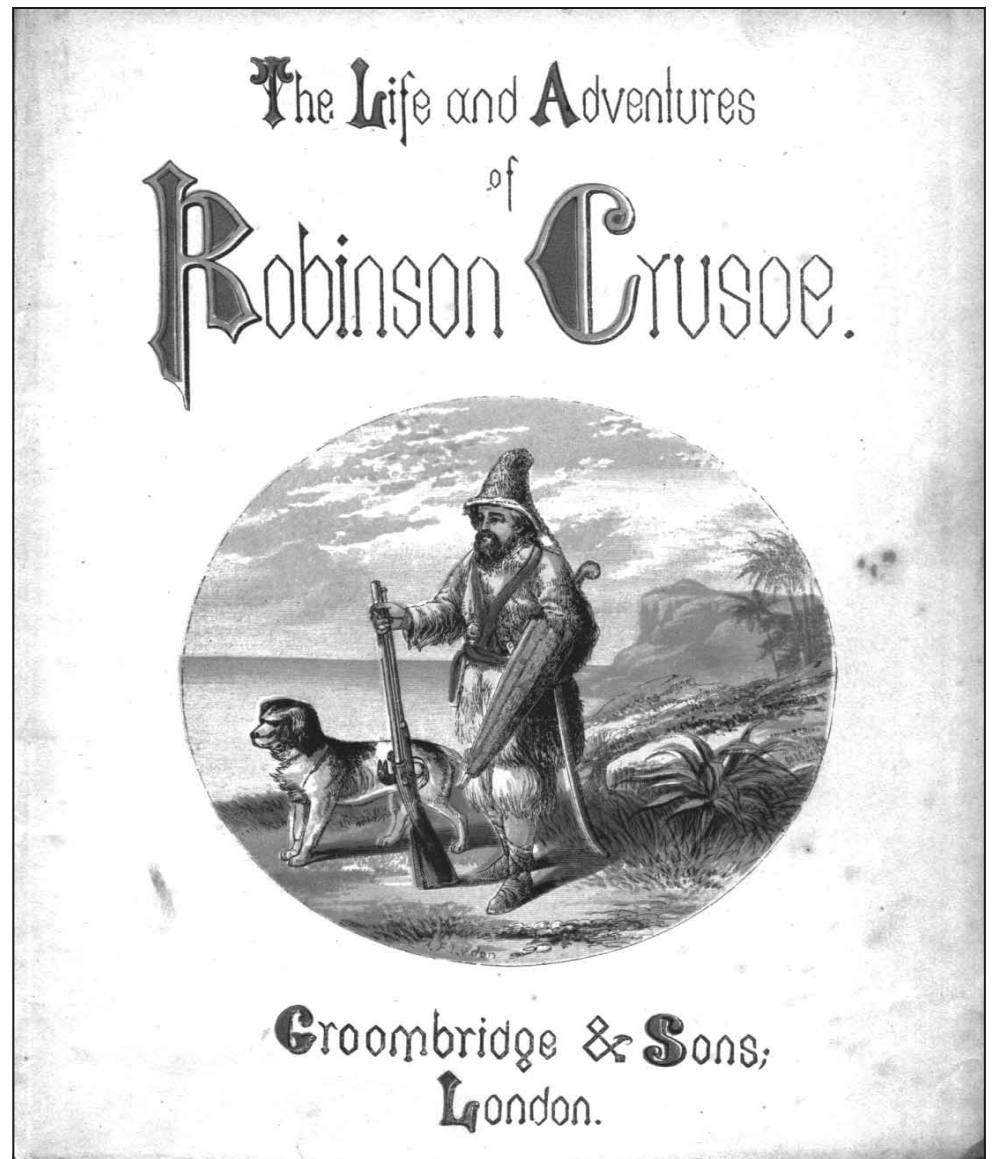
In *Grundrisse* (1857-1861) and volume

one of *Capital* (1867) Marx describes Robinson Crusoe as a pre-capitalist, working within the early capitalist system and Imperialism, which Lenin argues is the highest stage of Capitalism. Without the Atlantic slave trade, Crusoe would have had no reason to leave England. That he was able to sail the Atlantic Ocean in pursuit of profit is because European shipping enabled the slave trade to function and prosper. Slavery financed the Atlantic Triangular Trade, the Middle Passage, with its trade in people, sugar and goods between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and North America. Here was the origin of British Imperialism.

Robinson Crusoe begins with Crusoe's capture off the Barbary Coast (Morocco). He spends two years as a slave. Crusoe escapes with Xury, whom he sells to a Portuguese sea captain for 60 Pieces of Eight (Spanish coins) to finance the purchase of a sugar plantation and two slaves in Brazil. As commodities slaves can be bought and sold, their potential labour supplied to the slave owner as a monetary value and future derived profit. In 1659 Crusoe joins merchants to buy slaves in Guinea (West Africa) and is marooned on a remote island near the mouth of the Orinoco River, now Trinidad and Tobago. When he sees Caribbean islanders, "cannibals," he dreams "to make them entirely slaves to me." The killing of the Indigenous "cannibals" and gaining a servant, Friday, is Crusoe's rise to bourgeoisie individualism.

During Crusoe's solitude his accumulated goods (gold, weapons and tools from the ship, his clothes and furnishings) have no monetary use value, nor exchange value, as there was no market for his commodities. It was only when he obtained the servant Friday, and later the Spaniards, that these goods attained value, with the creation of an economy. Crusoe uses force – his guns – to control the labour of others. He established a plantation and settler economy, such as was initiated by Capitalism in the colonies of the non-European world. Money and capital are social relations representing the social power over others.

In 1686, twenty-eight years after being marooned, Robinson is saved and the ship takes him to Brazil. The trustees of his plantation "had given in the account of the produce of my part of the plantation. He discovers he is a wealthy man, having accumulated £5,000 sterling and an estate worth a thousand pounds a year. He receives a very high rate of return on his initial capital of £40, a profit he had earned not through hard work, but by being part of the capitalist class in the Portuguese colony of Brazil.



The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel de Foe. Cover artist: A F Lydon. This edition published by Groombridge and Sons. Date Published circa 1865.

The novel illustrates the economic background to colonialism and international trade. The story of *Robinson Crusoe*, is one of sovereignty, trade and slavery, and maintaining a Christian way of life through force of arms. Crusoe is punished by God for disobeying his parents, first becoming a slave and then stranded on a desolate island, where he reads his Bible daily. Crusoe becomes a land owner in Brazil and the master of an island, where he maintains an unequal structure and reward system established and maintained through force. Crusoe's world is one of the structural violence of poverty,

the symbolic socialisation of slavery and master, and physical violence, killing those who threaten his way of life.

Britain's international trade is based on a division between the metropole and the periphery of Capitalism – England and the frontiers of the Americas and the Caribbean – between the colonisers and the colonised, the masters and the servants/slaves. Its relationship of capital to labour, is based on the bourgeoisie controlling the means of production and the labourers doing the work. *Robinson Crusoe* is a study in Capitalism. ✪

'Rent is too damn high'

USA: A state-wide coalition known as 'Rent is Too Damn High' will descend on Michigan State Capitol on 5th September to protest escalating costs of housing in the state. According to the coalition's press coordinator, Lindsey Barchard, well over 600 people had pledged to join the protest at the capitol by early August.

The 5th September rally will include a DJ, chanting and marching, spoken word poetry, multiple speakers, and an area for people to share their own housing stories. "Our plan for the 5th is to make as much noise as possible," Barchard said, "to convey to the legislators the sheer volume of Michigan's residents who are becoming increasingly desperate for change."

Rents in Michigan have grown rapidly over the past few years as urban gentrification projects have been offered as the main solution for economic woes. According to recent media reports, a typical renter in 2023 must earn an average of \$21.65 per hour to afford basic housing in the state.

The state's minimum wage, however, remains locked in at a paltry \$10.10 per hour, and the "tipped" hourly minimum is \$3.84. In addition, an anachronistic state-wide ban on rent control has also fuelled skyrocketing housing costs.

The Rent is Too Damn High rally will "raise awareness and put pressure on lawmakers to take action to address the full-blown housing crisis in our state," Barchard said.

5th September was chosen because it will be the first day of the state's new legislative session. Democrats, who control both houses and the governor's office, promised to solve the state's ongoing housing problems when they took power in 2023. Activists intend to hold them to their pledge.

Coalition leaders are calling for three major steps to ease the costs of housing:

1. Remove the ban on rent control.
2. Put \$4 billion toward "social housing".
3. Designate \$1 billion for housing services for people who are at risk of homelessness.

The coalition's demand for "social

housing" funds refers to the goal to expand a permanently affordable "public option for housing," which would remain "under democratic community control by non-profit and cooperative entities."

Funds for housing services would aim to boost programs of direct service, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing for at-risk folks.

These proposals do more to support working-class people than many urban renewal or gentrification schemes. According to Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID), which has been the only local media to cover that city's housing crisis in careful detail, public money for gentrification projects dramatically outpaced resources to support at-risk households. Indeed, a recent city measure that would criminalise the unhoused, GRIID reported, signalled a distortion of priorities that favour developers over workers.

While Rent Is Too Damn High was initially conceived solely to organise the September rally, the immense attention

and support gained during these last few months have the coalition discussing a post-rally existence, with the goal of escalating actions further until the state legislature takes meaningful action.

"With the state of housing security and housing conditions continuing to worsen for the residents of Michigan, our work is far from over," said a statement from the coalition, "but our 5th September rally is an exciting jumping-off point for what is becoming a huge movement that we believe will foster real change in our state."

The coalition, which began as a Lansing-based movement, now includes more than two dozen organisations and groups from across the state. These include Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice, Michigan State University's chapter of Sunrise, Detroit Action, the Michigan District of the Communist Party USA, Nation Outside, Greater Lansing Democratic Socialists of America, and many other state, regional, and local organisations. ✪

People's World ✪

Book review – Helen Mercer

Guilty of Journalism

The Political Case Against Julian Assange

by Kevin Gosztola

For more than 10 years Kevin Gosztola has focused his journalism on Wikileaks and whistleblowers, and has been one of the few journalists to cover fully the trials of Chelsea Manning and of Julian Assange.

His aim with this book is to provide “a guidebook for following the US trial” and illustrates “why it is hard to believe that Assange will have access to fair justice.”

In this he has brilliantly succeeded.

This book is all that a relative newcomer needs to understand the history of the US persecution of Assange; for those with some awareness and knowledge it provides the armour and ammunition, the proof and arguments to persuade others to become active in Assange’s defence.

The political case against Assange can be understood in two ways.

First, there are the actual and potential political effects of Wikileaks publications.

The tranches of classified documents which are the subject of the current indictment against Assange exposed torture techniques, war crimes, illegal rendition and black site CIA prisons, together with the work of US embassies to maintain immunity from prosecution and manipulate policies of foreign governments.

Collectively these challenged and undermined the US war narrative and negatively affected the US assertion of its moral and military authority.

For instance, no US troops remained in Iraq beyond the 31st December 2011 deadline agreed with the Iraqi government, because that government refused to grant immunity to US personnel from prosecution for war crimes, as revealed by Wikileaks in the Iraq rules of engagement and the Iraq war diaries.

Gosztola comments that this example confirms the prophetic power of Assange’s famous phrase: “If wars can be started by lies, peace can be started by truth.”

Secondly, Gosztola analyses the institutional and legal mechanisms through which the US state unleashed all its coercive and persuasive powers to pursue and punish Assange.

It is a formidable arsenal: the successive roles of the CIA, the FBI, the use of spies, informants and bribery, the collusion of the “prestige media,” not to mention the judicial system.

He shows that each escalation of the rhetoric by Mike Pompeo and others, such as labelling Assange as a “non-state hostile intelligence agency” was the direct response to the politically explosive nature of Wikileaks publications.

It was after the release in March

2017 of the Vault 7 documents which described the CIA’s cyber warfare and hacking capabilities that “the gloves came off at the CIA” and plans evolved for kidnapping and assassinating Assange in London, as revealed by Yahoo News in 2021.

Gosztola perhaps preserves his most bitter criticisms for journalists and the “prestige media” themselves which provided a megaphone for government narratives about Assange and Wikileaks.

In turn this unleashed the current wave of “digital McCarthyism” – the policing and denial of access to services by tech and financial companies – which threatens any critical journalism.

As Gosztola’s historical analysis shows, the reasons for the pursuit of Assange and the means used are nothing new, but Assange’s case has intensified the speed of the process.

The Espionage Act of 1917 has gradually taken precedence over the freedoms asserted in the First Amendment, but never before has it been used to indict a publisher and a journalist.

Assange’s case sets an alarming precedent and eventually, as Gosztola says, “we could all be guilty of journalism.”

Morning Star ✪

US: Teachers and allies fight history whitewash

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA: Right-wing Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis’s whitewash – the word is deliberate – of US history is upsetting teachers, students, civil libertarians, and civil rights leaders. A dark cloud of racism, they say, has descended on the Sunshine State’s schools.

But teachers, students, and civil liberties groups are fighting back, with rallies, lobbying, and, for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a lawsuit that’s resulted in a win in US District Court. DeSantis is appealing that, though.

All this is occurring because DeSantis hates teachers, their unions, public schools, and their students of colour – and because he perceives that extreme positions against teachers and students will let him out-trump Donald Trump in the race for the Republican presidential nomination.

To accomplish that, the DeSantis-named State

Board of Education decreed there would be new history curricula in the state’s public schools, downplaying the enslavement of African Americans and even saying the enslaved sometimes benefited by learning trades.

The flip side of that dictate, which the governor has extended to the state’s public universities, is to whitewash the white enslavers of the pre-Civil War era, as well as the repressive white nationalism after the end of Reconstruction in 1877.

Notable African Americans and their allies, up to and including Vice President Kamala Harris, an African American, and her boss, Democratic President Joe Biden, are outraged. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the League of United Latin American Citizens issued “travel advisories” in May, warning Black and brown people against visiting Florida. The Human Rights Campaign also flagged Florida.

People’s World (edited for reasons of space) ✪



Nuclear energy

Wait a minute, nuclear is just a thing, isn’t it? How can that be a weasel word?

Nuclear energy is a way of producing electricity by using a nuclear reactor, that’s true. Nuclear power produces energy without using fossil fuels or causing carbon emissions. There’s a downside; nuclear power produces radioactive waste as a byproduct, and if something goes badly wrong as at Chernobyl or Fukushima, you can irradiate a lot of land and kill a lot of people.

It qualifies as a weasel word because “nuclear power” is waved around by people who have absolutely zero interest in actually using it to generate electricity. Peter Dutton is doing the “let’s have the conversation” bit (see previous Weasel Words) on nuclear. He has access to decades of reports showing that nuclear is dangerous, expensive, and slow compared to renewables. Dutton knows that building safe nuclear power in Australia would cost an absolute fortune and that the money would have to come from somewhere – taxes or higher power bills are the most likely candidates. He doesn’t care about any of that. He wants to talk about nuclear power because he wants to deny the government a win, and to placate the anti-renewable wing of his party who, like him, overlook all the drawbacks of nuclear power because it’s a way of hating renewables.

Populist

“Populist” is a meaningful term. The non-weaselly form means making simplistic appeals to the most people. It’s bad to be a populist, it means you’re kind of insulting everybody’s intelligence by appealing to easy to understand, but wrong popular beliefs. When Donald Trump proposed to keep illegal immigrants out of the US by building a really big wall, he was being populist, because a really big wall wouldn’t keep migrants out.

Populist is weaselly when it’s used to describe a popular idea you don’t like. Some things just are that simple and popular. Taxing bank super-profits is one such idea. It’s a good idea, and unlike Trump’s magical wall, it’s very doable, but some commentators have called it “populist.” That’s popular guys – deservedly so.

Seamless

It’s good for things to be seamless, it means they’re working really well. I don’t mind a seam or two in clothes, but I get that seamless stuff is really well made. “Seamless” is how Richard Marles describes having US spies integrated into Australia’s Defence Intelligence Organisation (see *Guardian* #2066). Once upon a time, Australian spooks had a category of information labelled “AUSTEO” meaning that it was for Australian Eyes Only, but that was before Marles made us a seamless part of the United States military.

Salty (terms)

Calling someone’s language “salty” suggests that they’re either a pirate or enjoy dropping the odd swear-word, but in a fine example of weaselly British language, “salty” joins the long list of Weasel Words which exist to make racism look like enjoyable aggro (Australia abounds with these – “feisty,” “outspoken,” “politically incorrect”). Lee Anderson is the Deputy Chair of the British Conservative Party, and has been defending the indefensible – his party’s new idea of keeping asylum seekers in overcrowded disease-ridden barges. Anderson has also described all Roma as thieves and has argued that it’s possible to make a meal for sixty cents, which is more innumerate than salty.

Strength

Pat Conroy, our Defence industry minister, has told the ALP conference that “Strength deters war”. It’s a funny form of strength that is shown by paying the US more money than any Australian government has ever paid anyone for anything in return for submarines which we’re only allowed to use if the USA give us the okay. Then again, Conroy also accused ALP members who opposed the AUKUS rush to war of being just like Robert Menzies selling pig-iron to the pre-war Japanese, so anything goes, it’s that kind of conference.

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GET RAUKUS NO AUKUS

The above slogan resounded on the streets of South Brisbane as the ALP conference came to town. The plans of Antony Albanese and Richard Marles who had hoped to silence any opposition to the militarist policies pursued by the federal government were defeated by the fact that this ridiculous waste of money and drive to war could not be allowed to go by in silence.

A multiplicity of peace groups and environmentalists joined with unionists and members of the Labor Party plus a broad alliance of political parties to oppose the highly unpopular expenditure on nuclear submarines. The current nearly 400 billion dollars price tag on the subs is alarming, but this commitment to preparing for a war and funding aggressive attack-class submarines along with increasing militarisation of the Australian economy will come at the expense of Education Health Transport and Housing. The excessive inflation that goes with the militarisation of the economy will only get worse. Climate change

and housing have been underfunded while this government and the previous one have promoted war-time budgets in peacetime.

Expenditure for war preparations has never led to peace, and armed and aggressive military blocs are designed to start and carry out wars. This has not changed from the war games that brought forward WW1 to the invasions of Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The militarism and rhetoric have ramped up against China, and from a system of peaceful trade we now have an aggressive policy based on after lie.

Spotted on the street was renowned militarist journalist Peter Hartcher. This irresponsible militarism and rhetoric could lead humanity towards a global catastrophe. The global arms industry is talking up fear and putting us on the brink of this human catastrophe. Nuclear disarmament should be the order of the day.

The demonstration was a great success and is the beginning of a very important campaign against the militarists. ✪



Part of the anti-AUKUS demo in Brisbane.

The return of 'foreign agents'

The following statement was issued by the Communist Party USA on 11th August 2023, in response to allegations in the *New York Times* that a wealthy American citizen in Beijing is secretly funding left-wing and peace groups in the US with the aim of furthering the foreign policy aims of the Chinese state. The *Guardian* is reprinting the statement because the Red Scare hysteria of the 1950s was rampant in Australia as well as the USA. Our party was persecuted by ASIO and the Australian government then, using the same rationale imported from the US.

It's official: The new Cold War is on – and the *New York Times* "proves" it by warning of a nefarious Chinese plot to influence US public opinion.

In an article that would have made Joe McCarthy, Roy Cohn, and J Edgar Hoover green with envy, the *Times* puts a bullseye on the activity of groups like Code Pink, the People's Forum, and the Tricontinental Institute and the financial support they supposedly rely on from Neville Roy Singham, a wealthy American with a history of donating to left organisations.

The most damning piece of evidence in the prosecution's arsenal is saved for the hit job's ending sentence: "Just last month, Singham attended a Chinese Communist Party propaganda forum. In a photo, taken during a breakout session on how to promote the party abroad, Singham is seen jotting in a notebook adorned with a red hammer and sickle." A notebook emblazoned with a red hammer and sickle? Oh no!

The article is replete with such "proof." According to the *Times*, Singham also has offices in a building in Shanghai and has been seen in the company of Chinese officials at events where China's role in the world is presented in a way that does not align with US foreign policy discourse.

And that brings us to the heart of the matter: Once again, we see the revival of the notion that challenging US foreign policy is tantamount to acting as an "agent of a foreign power," a charge drawn straight from the playbook of the old House Un-American Activities Committee.

At the height of the McCarthy period, a figure no less esteemed than Dr WEB DuBois, 83 years of age at the time, was handcuffed by the government on such patently false premises. As part of a similar crusade today, the *Times* authors leave no McCarthyite stone unthrown and no Red Scare dog whistle unblown.

This is not investigative journalism. It is reheated McCarthyism, the putrid leftovers of a conspiracy theory that was already rotten the first time around, served up to delegitimise China's emergence as a global power and discredit critics of US foreign policy.

If the individuals and organisations targeted in the article were part of the welter of privately-funded NGOs, think tanks, conferences, and media networks used by the US ruling class to promote its foreign policy priorities, there would be no story here.

But they're not. And because they do not take talking points from Washington and Wall Street, they are accused of taking them from Beijing. Because they engage with China rather than treating it as an enemy, the details of their political activity

are stretched, twisted, and lit from behind to project the menacing shape of a foreign, Communist plot.

We have seen this shadow-play before, with the same choreography – against organised labour, against movements for civil rights, against the peace movement. We have seen it before, with other leftists, other progressive organisations, in the crosshairs that Singham, Tricontinental, Code Pink, and People's Forum now occupy. We have seen it before, when the profits and power of the US ruling class come under threat.

We remember those days well because, as is widely known, we were at the very centre of the McCarthyite storm. And just as we did then, we condemn it today. We condemn it not only as Communists, not only as believers in peace and international solidarity, but as partisans of democracy in the struggle against fascism.

Here, in the aftermath of 6th January, the right side of history has no room and no time for conspiracy theories. The stakes are too high and the enemy too close at hand to traffic in crude red-baiting and anti-communist paranoia.

After all, that role is already taken. Donald Trump pledges to keep "foreign, Christian-hating Communists" out of the country. The government of Florida bars Chinese citizens from buying property in the state, and now the Biden administration does likewise with certain types of technology investments. Heavily-armed extremists slap the "Marxist" label on anything they designate for repression, from the environmental movement to public schools.

For an institution with the reach and resources of the *New York Times* to echo

those positions, to spread those same conspiracy theories, is not merely irresponsible. It is a betrayal of the struggle for democracy and a material service to the extreme right.

Democracy would be better served if the *New York Times* turned its prodigious investigative resources on the donors, corporate and otherwise, who bankroll lawmakers who participated in Trump's attempt to overturn the 2020 election; or on the funders behind the attempted fascist coup of 6th January; or on infiltration of police forces by white supremacist terror groups.

The struggle to preserve and expand democracy against the MAGA right needs all of us: communists, socialists, liberals, moderates, grassroots activists, artists, intellectuals, elected officials, labour leaders, Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and white, organisers, and, yes, some business forces, too. It needs unity, focus, and determination.

What it does not need and cannot bear is another round of right-wing conspiracy theories and anti-communist paranoia endorsed by the "centrist" *New York Times*.

Be forewarned: This is a dangerous turn of events, and the Republican right in the person of Marco Rubio has already seized upon it, demanding a Justice Department investigation, a probe that has the potential to affect everyone regardless of political point of view.

That's how witch hunts start. As James Baldwin said to Angela Davis on the eve of her trial, "If they come for you in the morning, they'll come for us that night."

People's World ✪



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