



Political Resolution

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

The Party for the Future

Adopted at the CPA 11th National Congress
October 2-5, 2009

Communist Party of Australia

Political Resolution

adopted at
the CPA 11th National Congress
October 2-5, 2009

Published by the Communist Party of Australia
74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills, NSW, Australia, 2010
Phone: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

Printed by New Age Publishing Pty Ltd
74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills, NSW, Australia, 2010
Phone: 02 9699 8844

ISBN 1 876919 19 1



Printed on Recycled Paper

HOLD TO YOUR COURSE!

by Vic Williams

Hold to your course, my people, as the slaves of Pharaoh
Went straight to the throat of the desert, the jaws of the rock rim.
Freedom blew from the mountains: there could be no returning.
Hold to your course, my people, you marched from Eureka,
Your sons were not drafted like cattle for the wars of the traders.
Grow wattle of independence on scars of invaders.
Hold to your course, my people, with the flag of the stars!

Hold to your course, my class, they smile and entice you,
They roll golden apples to those who waver,
They praise your furrow of struggle, plant the burs of doubting.
Is their gusher of words an oil to soothe or burn you?
The cobweb doubts of the banks cling to your ankles,
You take the five train home, but they lock the door.
Hold to your course, my class, where you live is yours!

Hold to your course, my union, the shield of workers
And every step must be won again and again,
Till the forests of unions shelter the ravaged lands.
You must burst through the batons of laws, the gates of prisons
To win to your rights at the workplace, but for them, the owners,
Each strike is a gun at the head they will not forgive.
Hold to your course, my union, for they bank their hate!

Hold to your course, my Party, weapon of workers,
Give us your sight and your arms as we go to battle.
Their towers upon towers are falling, we build from the rubble.
Can those who killed our millions be ever repentant?
Take guns from the hands of the killers, the spoils from the robbers,
For the sacked, the evicted, the prisoned to make world of the future.
Hold to your course, my Party, our world will prevail!

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
THE WORLD SITUATION	1
THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF CAPITALISM	14
THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS	23
AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY	35
THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN AUSTRALIA	50
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA . . .	53
THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA	84
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA	90

INTRODUCTION

All around the globe people are in struggle against capitalist policies and imperialist war. Indeed, in a significant number of countries, capitalism itself is under challenge like never before, with masses of people consciously struggling to build an alternative to the rapacious private enterprise system and its horrendous consequences of war, mass impoverishment, starvation and growing environmental devastation.

Reactionary governments have been overthrown and national liberation and people's movements have made significant advances. Anti-globalisation struggles are developing in every corner of the earth. The struggle for peace, against war and imperialist plunder, has swept every continent. The crisis that hit the world economy in 2008 has revealed to the world's masses the bankruptcy of capitalism and its "neo-liberal" agenda.

Capitalism is killing humanity and killing the planet. It is a bankrupt and moribund system and our efforts must be directed at developing the class struggle between the capitalist ruling class and the ever expanding and strengthening working class and its allies. This is the only way to ensure the future for humanity, a peaceful and socialist future.

We declare the 21st Century to be the century of socialism. That is the objective of our activity. Its achievement depends on a successful struggle to overcome capitalism and imperialism. This in turn depends on the organisational, political and ideological maturity of the communist parties around the world and on their ability to play the leading role in shaping humanity's future.

THE WORLD SITUATION

Capitalism in crisis

The people of the world are not just facing global financial and economic crises and the resultant social consequences, but a food crisis threatening the lives and health of hundreds of millions of people, an environmental crisis threatening the future of life on our planet and the possibility of new wars (including nuclear) and fascism. According to United Nations statistics about one billion people suffer chronic hunger and 100,000 die every day as a direct or indirect result of malnutrition. Add to that the millions who do not have

access to safe drinking water, health services, education and other essential services.

At the same time, the situation creates new opportunities for fundamental progressive change and a socialist future for the people of the world.

People around the world are demanding a better life. The massive response of US electors in November 2008 to a call for change, the left and progressive changes taking place in Central and South America and the ditching of the ultra-conservative Howard Government in Australia in December 2007, are all expressions of the strong desire of the people for real change, for policies that put people before profits.

A new multi-polar world

The uni-polar dominance of the United States is coming under serious challenge.

Imperialism is beset by sharp contradictions which include the struggle between the main industrialised countries (the US, the European Union and Japan) for a greater market share for “their” corporations.

China, Russia and India remain outside the close imperialist circle (the so-called G7 – Canada, US, France, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany and Italy) even though capitalist economies predominate in both India and Russia at the present time.

The formation of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation in 2001 created a new alignment between China, Russia and Central Asian states committed to peaceful development and mutual assistance against imperialist attack.

While the United States continues its drive for the imposition of the neo-liberal agenda through institutional and military means, the limits of its ability to pursue this strategy are rapidly becoming clearer. *The Political Resolution* adopted at the CPA's 10th Congress summarised the unfolding decline of US imperialism:

“Imperialism’s profound and unresolved contradictions have become more acute and numerous. This has resulted in more and more people becoming involved in struggle against global monopoly capitalism and imperialism.”

A major new feature of the current period is the appearance and development of alliances and economic agreements between countries that, while they may still seek to promote the capitalist mode of production in their economies, present a break with previous arrangements and pursue a path of development independent of the US.

Other alignments, notably those developing in Latin America, have a clear anti-imperialist foundation. The socialist countries continue to strengthen

their economic and diplomatic position despite the strenuous efforts on the part of the US to encircle and undermine them. Cooperation between countries breaking away from the dominance of the US has taken on a military aspect in some cases.

The process is uneven and overall the global situation remains unstable. The US remains a powerful, aggressive and dangerous force in world affairs, despite the financial crisis, its military setbacks in Iraq, the stalling of its "Greater Middle East" strategy to create compliant states in the region, the growing resistance to the client state of Israel, the increased resistance in Afghanistan, the failure to impose more of its economic agenda through the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation and other similar developments.

The election of President Obama by US voters demanding change may lead to a reordering of some priorities and some easing of tensions but the overall strategy of US imperialism to extend its control over the entire globe will continue. The election of the Rudd Government in Australia in response to similar demands has delivered only very limited changes to the overall military and economic strategy of the previous government.

Many dangerous flashpoints and confrontations will persist. US imperialism's drive to encircle China and Russia and to break up their territorial integrity carries with it grave dangers of new wars for markets and resources.

The array of legislation and powers to suppress dissent gathered over the past decade under the guise of combating "terrorism" remains in place. The battle of ideas waged by dominant monopoly-controlled media against alternatives to capitalism and imperialism will continue.

For the moment, the US has cemented the European Union as an ally in its drive for military and economic control. NATO has continued its eastward expansion to include former socialist countries and has involved them in plans to encircle Russia militarily. Former republics of the USSR including Georgia and the Ukraine are being encouraged to seek membership of the US-led alliance. At its Istanbul summit in 2004, NATO altered its objectives to include military objectives outside Europe. With its involvement in Afghanistan, NATO now has troops in Asia.

While it is a relationship with its own tensions, rivalries and contradictions, an increasingly militarised EU, NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe work with the US to expand control over markets, resources and secure strategic assets such as military bases. Japan is being encouraged to shed the restraints of its pacifist constitution and take up a greater role in the US's hostile military stance towards China and the

other socialist countries of the region. Australia remains locked into the US alliance.

Having noted these facts and the significant dangers, the successes already achieved in the anti-imperialist struggle and the improvements in the living conditions for masses of the poor in developing countries where victories have been achieved, will inspire and create openings for others to set out on the same path. The next period has considerable potential for radical, even revolutionary, breakthroughs in the struggle for more just and democratic economic development and socialism. There are greater possibilities for resistance and social progress.

In Latin America, the deep economic crisis of the late 1990s resulted in a general swing to the left. In Venezuela, Brazil and Bolivia, and later in Ecuador and Nicaragua, left-wing governments have come to power which in varying degrees have challenged the dominance of the United States. More recently the FMLN was the most successful party in El Salvador's elections. Cuba remains a beacon of socialist aspiration, particularly in Latin America.

Other challenges to the imperialist agenda – Latin America

Resistance to the diktats of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and efforts to impose unjust bilateral and regional free trade agreements has spread across the globe. The coming together of Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRIC grouping) for talks on economic and trade issues is a potentially definitive development in world affairs. South Africa is also now featuring as an important partner in efforts to build alternatives to US dominated trade mechanisms. Unfortunately, Zimbabwe's efforts to steer an independent path appear to have failed as a result of a combination of internal and external factors.

Developing countries have joined groupings such as NAMA-11 and G-33 to oppose the fraudulent "free market" attacks on their economic sovereignty and sustainability. They press for greater access to the markets of developed countries and action by developed countries to reduce their high levels of subsidies on agricultural produce. They are also seeking assistance to deal with the high cost of manufactured and hi-tech imports. The struggle to achieve these objectives will become more difficult as developed countries seek to strengthen protectionist barriers.

NAMA-11 stands for non-agricultural market access and is a grouping of 11 developing countries, including India, calling upon developed countries to lower tariffs adversely affecting developing ones. They also seek policy change to allow more rapid industrial development in poorer countries. Other members are Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Namibia, Philippines, South Africa,

Tunisia and Venezuela. G33 is a grouping of 33 countries seeking changes to WTO arrangements that restrict access to the markets of developed countries.

Nowhere has this collective resistance been more pronounced or more successful than in Latin America. The Bolivarian Revolution that followed the election of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez in 1998 has seen off several concerted efforts on the part of the Bush Administration to overthrow it. Despite a narrow defeat in a referendum to enshrine a socialist objective in the constitution in 2007, the government remains committed to socialist construction and the consolidation of new structures of people's power. In a successful referendum in February 2009 the people of Venezuela endorsed the Chavez Government's changes to the constitution. These changes aim to strengthen Venezuela's path to socialism. The referendum results showed the highly polarised class struggle in Venezuela.

Chavez' Government has nationalised a number of key industries. It is the main force driving the integration of several Latin American countries in an economic grouping based on principles of solidarity and mutual aid not seen since the demise of the world socialist economic system. Its principles are the opposite of those of the US-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA – ALCA) which stalled in 2005 as a result of popular resistance throughout Latin America.

The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) is an unambiguously anti-imperialist grouping of countries with progressive governments. ALBA's ambitious plans are to be backed by a development bank, the Bank of the South, and a common regional currency, the SUCRE. Assistance extends to communities in non-member countries. Trade in kind is facilitated. Its members have made a commitment to come to each other's defence in the event of military attack.

ALBA was made possible by and is a logical outgrowth of the revolutionary movements still gathering strength in Latin America. Cuba, once an isolated beacon of hope in the region, has been joined by Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Nicaragua and now El Salvador in having governments committed to protecting their countries' sovereignty from US imperialism and building their societies on the principles of social justice.

Other countries in Latin America are asserting their independence from the US to a lesser but still noteworthy extent. Mercosur unites Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and the emerging economic powerhouse of Brazil. Venezuela is in the process of joining. Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and even right-governed Colombia are associate members. Mexico is an observer. Mercosur is a more conventional trade grouping with a noteworthy distinction – it does not involve the US, which has traditionally viewed Latin America as its “backyard”.

Imperialism will persist with its efforts to undermine the far-reaching changes taking place in Latin America. It backs the oppressive Uribe Government in

Colombia in an effort to maintain a foothold in a continent in revolt against its domination. It backs counter-revolutionary groups and parties in the region, has supported anti-government strikes in key industries and fuels separatist movements in Venezuela's Zulia province and the state of Santa Cruz in Bolivia.

Nevertheless, in January 2009 the Government of President Morales received the support of the people of Bolivia for a new constitution that will enable sweeping reform of the economy including land reform. While dangers remain, the revolutionary movements in Latin America clearly have strong popular support at home and have inspired the anti-imperialist struggle at the international level.

Peace and war

The end of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the principal barrier to capitalism's global dominance. The imperialist powers, led by the United States, were able to break up and re-divide the former socialist countries, subject hundreds of millions to exploitation for the first time and intensify the exploitation of others, especially those in Third World countries that previously received support from the Soviet Union.

Imperialist forces waged brutal wars in the Middle East, Central Asia, across the Balkans and in Africa to remove remaining resistance and seize natural resources. Wars waged for economic control by imperialism have caused untold suffering and cost exorbitant amounts of money which are met by the working people of the aggressor states and the victims of aggression.

Although the might of the capitalist and imperialist states often appears to be overwhelming, they face world-wide opposition and their power is being challenged in all continents. However, the imperialist states continue to control immense economic, military and political resources and are the main threat to the peace of the world. It is this imperialist control that stands in the way of the social and economic progress, peace, security and stability that is desired by the people of all countries.

The United States aims to dominate the planet and its resources, to install compliant governments everywhere, to privatise and deregulate the economy of every nation, and to inflict "free market" corporate capitalism on the peoples of the world.

Although we can also expect a greater emphasis on diplomacy and a greater preparedness to work within international structures such as the United Nations, the presidency of Barack Obama will not bring any real change in US imperialism's basic goals.

The expanding US Missile Defence project is designed to give the United

States control of space and a first strike nuclear capacity without fear of retaliation. Its bases in Australia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Britain are part of a system designed to be fully operational within twelve years and be directed at SCO countries – China and Russia in particular.

The US seeks control over energy supply routes in Central Asia, control of Afghanistan and a solution in the Middle East that can sustain its client regimes in Saudi Arabia and Israel, maintain access to oil assets in Iraq and neutralise Iran.

In Africa it seeks regional domination in the oil-rich areas. In Latin America it sustains the right-wing paramilitary-based regime in Colombia and is stepping up its efforts to subvert democratic advances in Venezuela, Bolivia and Honduras and to isolate and cripple socialist Cuba.

These policies raise the danger of aggression and war to a new level. Combined with US imperialism's willingness to use its massive arsenal of nuclear weapons, planetary destruction is becoming a real possibility.

A key part of the US strategy is its continuing reliance on nuclear weapons. US efforts to replace and upgrade its nuclear weapons, along with development of its missile defence system, have the potential to plunge the world into a new nuclear arms race. Overall, the US strategy represents a threat to the future of humanity.

The United States now has military bases in more than 100 countries, a fact which threatens the independence and sovereignty of all countries without exception.

In recent decades developments in computer technology have led to a revolution in warfare. The US is perfecting many new sophisticated high-tech weapons including unmanned planes (drones), mini-nukes and bunker busters, lasers and space weapons. The US is developing its "missile defence" program which is intended to give it the capacity to fight from and in space and to fire at terrestrial targets from space.

Peace in the Middle East

There can be no peace in the Middle East without the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and justice for the Palestinian people.

A very high priority should be given to solidarity with Palestine. The support given by US imperialism to Israel's continued occupation of Palestine, the flouting of international law by the occupiers, the building of illegal settlements and the Apartheid Wall, must be exposed and opposed.

We support Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation and call for the

establishment of a two-state solution which would create a viable Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a right of return for refugees in compliance with UN resolution 194.

The key to peace and justice in the Middle East, especially in Palestine, is the political defeat and removal of the reactionary and racist Israeli ruling circles. Indeed, a lasting solution to the Palestinian struggle for land, peace and justice can only be secured on the basis of fundamental progressive change in Israel.

The CPA will work in close co-operation with the various solidarity groups and with trade unions, to create and develop links with unions in Palestine, to develop boycotts of Israeli goods and services and divestment campaigns from financial investment in the Israeli economy. This campaign is of the utmost importance as international financial investment in Israel has risen to record levels.

We call for the dismantling of all Israeli nuclear weapons and their production facilities as the first step towards a nuclear-free Middle East.

We oppose the imposition of sanctions on Iran in response to its civil nuclear program. This is part of a US strategic plan for regional dominance. The danger of outright military attack against Iran remains significant. The CPA must work with other organisations to mobilise the widest opposition to any action by the Rudd Government to support US war plans.

Any so-called peace process which is not based on the implementation of United Nations' resolutions and international law is not an attempt to bring true peace to the region, but an attempt by the United States and its allies to legitimise Israel's attacks on the Palestinians and neighbouring states and its role as imperialism's police force in the region.

War industry

Militarism is an essential part of the drive for world domination by the United States. The massive armed forces that are being continually built up are the military arm of globalisation.

An estimated US\$1 trillion is spent every year globally on weapons. The US military budget is over \$US437 billion every year, larger than the Australian economy, while global poverty and inequality are getting worse. In Australia from 2009 spending on the military will top \$70 million every day and the Rudd Government promises annual increases of three per cent.

Military spending by imperialist countries has driven other countries, primarily in the Third World, to increase their own military budgets for defensive reasons in many cases. This even includes the acquisition of nuclear weapons as a deterrent measure, as in the case of the DPRK. These developments

make our work for disarmament and reduced military spending even more important and urgent.

Military expenditure reduces public and private investment, diverts funds and personnel from civilian research and development and negatively affects economic growth and development. High military spending means money taken from employment, health, education, housing, clean water and other alternative consumption and investment.

The military industrial complex has for decades drained the public purse of governments through lucrative contracts that are licences to print money. When world commodity prices plunged and the manufacturing sector was sacking workers and reporting losses, the leading private military contractors and arms manufacturers were still reporting super-profits.

Lockheed Martin, for example, raked in almost US\$5 billion in profits in 2008, a return on invested capital of 21.7 per cent! It is involved in electronic systems, including surface and undersea, tactical missile programs, the F-16, F-22, C130J and other aeronautical programs, space transportation, satellite activities, training, and other programs for the US military. It carries out research, manufactures and provides support services and training around the world.

Raytheon reported sales of US\$23.2 billion for 2008, up by 9 per cent from 2007, and a profit of US\$1.7 billion. In January 2009 it was predicting “continued growth in sales, earnings and returns on invested capital”.

The arms race has proved extremely profitable for such corporations. But war is even more profitable in three respects. It consumes weapons and equipment generating further orders, offers the private sector profits from being integrated in the war machine itself during war, and then billions more profits from reconstruction programs.

In Iraq the private sector has become an integral part of the US Army. A whole new industry of war has developed, with private companies and contractors operating in war zones. Michael Dobbs writing in the *Washington Post* (August 28, 2003) reported expert estimates that as much as one-third of the monthly US\$3.9 billion cost of keeping US troops in Iraq was going to independent contractors.

Services being provided by corporations such as Halliburton (through its subsidiary Brown and Root) include building, managing and defending military bases, logistical support, intelligence work, delivering mail, providing hot meals, and training Iraqi military and police.

Halliburton, the company formerly headed by then US Vice President Dick Cheney had won contracts worth more than US \$1.7 billion – under a no-bid system. That was only six months after the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003. Halliburton’s shares rose by over 50 per cent in one year,

in part due to its Balkan war profits and expectations from Iraq. Halliburton executives and shareholders have not looked back since. Its annual operating profits tripled in 2005 to US\$2.7 billion from the year before. When other sectors of the economy were downgrading profits in 2008, Halliburton boasted an increase of 20 per cent in profits – a total of \$4 billion.

Other leading recipients of Pentagon largesse include Boeing, Northrop Grunman, Raytheon and General Dynamics. War has been turned into an industry, big business with the corporations taking part in it. The industry defends itself as one of the US's biggest trade groups and as having “a genuine stimulus on the economy”. Both claims are true, but there are far healthier and safer ways of stimulating economies. There are socially beneficial industries and sectors which would create many more jobs with the same taxpayers' dollars. It remains to be seen what US President Barack Obama's position is on this question.

Palme Dutt's references to war as “the supreme destructive activity of capitalism” have been borne out in the US-NATO led war on Yugoslavia, and in the ongoing US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Commentators described Iraq as being “bombed back into the Dark Ages”. In all three of these wars US-led forces set about the wilful destruction of basic infrastructure – energy generation, water supplies, bridges, hospitals, schools, homes and other buildings, telecommunications systems, oil facilities, pharmaceutical and other factories, etc. The purpose of this destruction was to pave the way for the private sector to step in and begin the process of reconstruction and profit gouging.

The third arm of the war industry is reconstruction. The corporate invasion of Iraq began when the Coalition Provisional Authority was set up by the US. Around US\$20 billion of funds from Iraqi oil money (confiscated during the sanctions regime and sold during the occupation) set the ball rolling. A reconstruction program for Iraqi oil had been drafted before the war in 2002. Iraqi companies received around 2 per cent, US firms 74 per cent and UK firms 11 per cent of those funds. Exxon Mobil, Shell, Chevron, Total, Bechtel, Serco, Booz Allen, AMEC, Siemens, Vodafone, and hundreds of other “vultures” descended. By mid-2008, an estimated US\$117 billion had been spent on the reconstruction of Iraq, including US\$50 billion of US taxpayers' money.

The contracts are riddled with corruption and scandals. Projects were not completed, billions of dollars were cashed out and never accounted for, bidding went by the wayside, sky high-prices were never challenged and public accountability was another casualty. Lenin's references to the corrupt, parasitic, and decaying nature of capitalism at the stage of imperialism has never been truer.

It is of little consequence to imperialism how profits are achieved. Military spending is a drain on resources that could be used to meet pressing social needs. The US staved off serious recession for 20 years, largely through

profit-generating wars and the massive accumulation of debt. Never mind the lives that are lost and the other devastation war entails. If that is more profitable than providing schools, health services, food, drinking water, housing, then that is the path capitalism will pursue. The debt bubble has imploded and it is the ordinary working people of the world who are bearing the brunt of the crisis, in particular, in Third World countries.

The socialist countries

China's rapid economic growth continues despite the major downturn in demand for its exports in the US and other developed countries. China, unlike the USSR when it was in existence, has attempted to integrate its economy into the world-wide capitalist system – buying resources under the capitalist model, allowing some capitalist corporations to function in the country, and exporting manufactured goods to the developed capitalist countries. The USSR established an alternative world-wide socialist model of trade, which went hand-in-hand with assistance to developing countries. The opening up of China's economy and the development of market socialism has not been without problems. Income inequality between its citizens, between cities and the countryside and between regions is marked and was acknowledged by the Chinese Communist Party at its 17th Congress. It has flagged measures to address these challenges.

The US has instigated a hysterical campaign of disinformation in an attempt to curb China's growing prestige. It has centred on questions of human rights including allegations of abuse of members of the violent Falun Gong cult.

The US has sought to fan separatist movements among the Tibetan and Uyghur people and promoted the celebrity of the anti-communist Dalai Lama. It has encouraged moves for independence in Taiwan and provoked incidents involving the violation of the PRC's airspace. It is drawing Japan and attempting to draw India into tightening the encirclement of China.

Despite these adverse developments, the living standards of the Chinese people have improved at a remarkable rate. Careful planning has enabled it to take timely and appropriate steps to safeguard its economy from the effects of the deepening worldwide economic crisis. It has introduced new labour laws to protect the rights of workers whose rights had been abused by the expanded private sector. There is significant progress in the protection of the environment and the development of green technologies to focus on the challenges presented by rapid industrial expansion.

Increasingly, developing countries in the Asia Pacific region, in Latin America and Africa look to China for assistance with their development. Its influence continues to grow with every milestone achieved. China's achievements in space are impressive proof of its growing technological prowess. Socialist

China is the foremost emerging power identified by the US as a target for destabilisation.

Vietnam is also experiencing rapid economic development as a result of its opening to foreign investment and faces similar challenges to those of China. It is overcoming the economic burden left by decades of war. Laos is setting off on a similar path towards development.

The Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea has continued with its distinctive self-reliant road of development and has overcome a series of challenges in recent times. It has stood up to US intimidation over nuclear issues and achieved important diplomatic breakthroughs in six nation talks on the issues. It remains committed to a nuclear-free region and to dialogue with the south over reunification.

Socialist Cuba has emerged from the damaging isolation it suffered with the destruction of the USSR and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Its revolution has survived the hardships suffered during the “special period” and is beginning to record solid economic growth once more. Venezuela and the People’s Republic of China have assisted greatly in this recovery. Brazil is now beginning to take up a role in aiding Cuba’s development.

Cuba still suffers the consequences of the five-decade-long US-led illegal economic blockade of the island and other grave injustices including the detention in US penitentiaries of the Cuban Five. In spite of these attacks and injustices, the prestige of Cuba in the eyes of the people of the world has continued to grow. Its record for solidarity with the poor of other countries suffering natural and other crises through the deployment of medical personnel is unparalleled, as are its other health and literacy programs. In 2006, Cuba became head of the Non-Aligned Movement – a development that has raised the profile and importance of that international organisation.

Cuba has entered a transition to a new type of leadership following the retirement of President Fidel Castro. It has reaffirmed its commitment to building socialism and has opened up a wide-ranging national dialogue on inefficiencies in the economy and administration.

While the socialist countries are pursuing diverse paths towards the building of socialism in their countries, together they remain the strongest and most consistent states standing up to and opposing imperialism. Their example is enduring evidence that a tested alternative to capitalism and imperialism exists. The destruction of their revolutions will remain one of the top priorities for the strategists of imperialism. Solidarity with the socialist countries continues to be an important task for the world communist movement and the rest of the movement resisting imperialism.

China, Russia and the SCO

Established in 2001 out of a grouping made up of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation set out to promote mutually beneficial trade and joint security. Although unstated, the threat to security being addressed undoubtedly comes from the US, which had sought to establish military bases on the territory of the former USSR and continue the fostering of pro-US “colour revolutions”. The group was joined by Uzbekistan and now has India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan as observers.

The bringing together of such a diverse grouping of countries that includes populous and still rapidly developing ones such as China, Russia and India is of great significance. There are contradictions within the organisation. It combines countries with radically different social, political and economic systems. While India maintains observer status, it is at the same time being drawn closer into alliance with the US. Nevertheless, the existence of the SCO and the large-scale participation of Russian and Chinese armed forces in joint exercises in 2005 and 2007 is a major manifestation of defiance of US imperialism.

The communist movement

The world communist movement continues to grow and gain in influence. Today 40 per cent of the world’s population live in countries where a communist party is in power or participates in the government. In elections held in 2008, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) became the largest party in the Nepalese parliament and proceeded to form a government. The monarchy that stood at the pinnacle of power in the feudal kingdom was forced to abdicate and an era of change and modernisation was opened.

Communication among fraternal parties has improved greatly as a result of the initiative of the Communist Party of Greece in hosting international meetings of communist and workers’ parties. Other countries are now taking on this role. Much still needs to be done to improve the coordination of the world communist movement but the current situation is a vast improvement on the situation prevailing in the aftermath of the destruction of socialism in the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe.

People want change

The global financial and economic crisis is leading masses of people to consider alternatives to the crisis-ridden system of capitalism and imperialism. Almost two decades after the setbacks suffered with the destruction of the USSR and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, socialism is taking a step forward in the battle of ideas.

The powerful people's movements in Latin America are teaching people that the struggle for sovereignty and sustainable development and against imperialist subjection is, at the same time, a struggle for socialism.

It must be noted that communist parties have not played the leading roles in the revolutionary changes taking place in Latin America in the recent period. The Communist Party of Venezuela is a very active and growing political force. It supports the Bolivarian Revolution and the leadership of Hugo Chavez. Many other communist parties enjoy considerable support and have had success in working in alliance with other left and progressive forces in their respective countries.

The parties concerned recognise this state of affairs and have sought with varying degrees of success to "catch up" with developments within the forces opposed to capitalism and imperialism. Social movements and an increasingly powerful movement of indigenous peoples have emerged on the political scene.

After the setbacks suffered by socialism in the 1990s and in spite of the progress made in many quarters, there is still the need in many countries to rebuild independently strong communist parties devoting attention to lifting the ideological level of their steadily growing numbers of recruits.

There is an urgent need on the part of communist parties to study recent breakthroughs achieved in the struggle against imperialism and to absorb the lessons that may be applicable to local conditions. Ties with the struggles of workers and other exploited people must be strengthened so that they can live up to their historic roles as vanguard parties. There is urgency to this task. The limits of an amorphous anti-globalisation movement in drawing together the various sectors concerned about neo-liberalism and imperialism appear to have been reached.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

Capitalism is in crisis and its impact is being felt in every corner of the globe. The present multi-faceted crisis facing humanity threatens the stability of not just the global financial system but the capitalist system itself. The full impact of the crisis is still to be revealed.

As capitalist governments go deeper into debt pouring trillions of dollars into the system to ensure the solvency of financial institutions and the corporate sector, questions of the solvency of governments and nation states arise.

Relatively prosperous Iceland reached the point of total financial collapse and was forced into the hands of the International Monetary Fund at the end of 2008. More states could follow. The situation even raises the prospects of corporate takeovers of poorer nation states.

Capitalism, which prefers to let people starve and go homeless in the street rather than diminish profits by providing the necessities of life, has been exposed for all to see. The myths of neo-liberalism (economic rationalism) and its proponents who claim that “governments should stay out of markets” have been similarly exposed. Not since the years preceding the Great Depression have governments stayed out of markets to such an extent as they have during the past twenty years of deregulation and privatisation.

The enormity and proportions of the current crisis have their roots in globalisation, in the massive amounts of accumulation and concentration of capital that are the product of monopoly capital’s growth and penetration of world production and markets. The largest of these transnational corporations have assets far larger than those of the many countries they stand over and dictate to. The situation has been compounded by the growth and domination of parasitic financial institutions which have diverted billions of dollars from the productive sphere into highly speculative activities and outright gambling.

The present crisis confirms the theories of Marx and Engels are as valid today as they were 160 years ago when they wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, a situation which brings no joy to communists midst the human suffering and tragedy involved.

Economic crises are inherent in the capitalist system. Try what they may, governments and their economists have not been able to eliminate them, and they never will while the system remains in place. At best they can delay the onset or soften the depth of a crisis.

Each crisis has its own specific features and contributing factors. The trigger for the 2008 global financial crisis was the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market in the USA. The billions of dollars of deliberate predatory, profit-making lending by the financial institutions fuelled a super-expansion of credit in the mortgage market and created a housing boom based on bad debt. Since the bubble burst, hundreds of thousands of people in the US have lost their homes.

The massive downturn in the housing market was the strongest signal that the boom phase of the economic cycle was coming to an end. The ensuing credit squeeze inflicted by nervous financial institutions greatly accelerated the downward spiral into recession, as corporations failed to gain the necessary capital to roll over loans and make new investments.

Neo-liberalism and globalisation

The mid-1980s saw capitalism launch a new offensive against workers and peasants around the world. This came in the form of neo-liberal (economic rationalist) policies. The aim of neo-liberalism was to enhance and facilitate the profit-making activities of the largest corporate monopolies – transnational corporations – and financial conglomerates, in particular those based in the US, Europe and Japan. Economic rationalist economic policies, backed by an ideological war and political and military actions, were successful in fueling record profits and further monopolisation and concentration of finance capital, industry and the world's resources.

These policies centred around:

- increasing the rate of exploitation of workers and repressive measures to curb resistance such as WorkChoices and the so-called anti-terror laws in Australia;
- trade liberalisation – such as removing or reducing tariffs, bans on imports and quota systems, unequal terms of trade (disadvantaging Third World countries);
- financial and economic deregulation – lifting or reducing restrictions on mergers and takeovers, on offshore borrowing by companies, on inflows and outflows of currency. Currency exchange rates were floated and official interest rates determined by “independent” central banks;
- privatisation followed by phenomenal price rises and reduction in services and deterioration in quality and loss of access for many;
- user pays for previously free or subsidised goods and services;
- cuts in payments and other assistance to the most needy including the unemployed, age pensioners and carers.

The philosophical underpinning of privatisation included the winding back of both government and collective responsibility for the well being of society and provision of services through central taxation revenue.

Neo-liberalism was pursued by governments of capitalist countries across the globe. It was forced on Third World countries by the likes of the IMF or, in some, by puppet governments serving the interests of US imperialism.

In effect, neo-liberalism wound back the role of the sovereign state in economic governance, effectively leaving many critical policy matters to the so-called “free markets”. This process has involved a significant transfer of power (and with it abdication of social responsibility) from elected governments to monopoly capital in its most dominant form – finance capital. It left many Third World governments helpless to determine and direct economic develop-

ment, protect jobs or direct areas of investment for the benefit of their people and the planet and created further dependence on the West.

These developments did not pass without considerable opposition and resistance. Economic globalisation saw the globalisation of mass movements against the effects of these policies under such slogans as “a better world is possible”. Workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, environmentalists, peace activists, and many other groups and individuals joined these campaigns. Governments were brought down and global campaigns had successes in restricting the operations of transnational corporations.

Financial crisis

One of the outcomes of these policies was an explosive increase in financial speculation. In their blind pursuit of profit, the most parasitic and powerful sector of capital, finance capital, shifted billions of dollars of capital (profits extracted from the exploitation of labour and people’s retirement savings) from productive investment into the sphere of pure speculation – a virtual economy operating in parallel to the real economy of productive investment. There were no limits to their creativity in developing new financial “products” such as derivatives, to be bought and sold on financial markets as commodities. New investment houses proliferated, many of them subsidiaries of banks and insurance companies, along with other secretive and publicly unregulated and unaccountable outfits such as hedge funds. It was boom times, and as long as the boom boomed, the profits flowed in.

Trading in shares on a stock market is a risky business, but the shares traded constitute some form of equity held in a company and bring income in the form of dividends as long as that business remains profitable. The holder of shares cannot lose more than they paid for their shares. Trading in derivatives such as futures and options need not involve owning anything, not even a share. It might be a piece of paper that can be bought and sold giving the owner the right to buy some product at a certain price at some time in the future. Or it might be a gamble on the movement in share prices or whether or not a particular company will go into bankruptcy. Debt itself became an investment product that could be bought and sold. Gambling carried out by hedge funds can leave the investor owing millions of dollars more than they invested if the situation backfires.

There are no precise figures on the volume of these speculative activities. The Bank of International Settlements (BIS) estimates that the value of derivative trade increased from US\$100 trillion in 2000 to more than US\$600 trillion in 2008. The BIS estimates relate to trade over the table through the various exchanges – many trillions more are probably traded outside these exchanges.

To give these figures some perspective, world trade in goods for 2007 was

around the US\$13 trillion mark. (UN Comtrade tables) This includes agricultural products, fuels, mining products and manufactured goods.

Total global gross domestic production (GDP) is somewhere between US\$50 trillion and US\$60 trillion – one tenth of that conservative estimate of derivative trade figures. The total trade in shares on the world's stock markets is around US\$100 trillion and that involves considerable recirculation of money and shares.

Capitalist parasites diverted billions from addressing people's needs into pure speculation and outright gambling. These funds, derived from profits from the exploitation of labour and people's savings (including superannuation savings) were withdrawn from human needs, from social development, basic services, infrastructure, and from food production. Their removal from the real economy of production, exchange, distribution and consumption, into the realms of what became known as the casino economy, has contributed to the present economic crisis. The money they siphoned off could have been invested in the real economy, in industry, infrastructure, schools, hospitals, community services, public housing, and so on, creating jobs, meeting people's needs and boosting demand.

Heightened exploitation

The economic cycle as analysed by Karl Marx in the 19th Century has continued uninterrupted to this day. It arises out of the basic contradiction of capitalism – the private ownership of the means of production and the social nature of production. Under the private enterprise system of production workers are not paid the full value of their labour. The gap between the value of their labour and what they are paid is what Karl Marx called surplus value – it approximates to what is commonly referred to as gross profit.

During the boom phase of the economic cycle the rate of exploitation increases and that gap widens. There are many factors which contribute to this process, they include:

- rising prices without corresponding increases in wages;
- increases in productivity which result in increased output without corresponding wage rises;
- wage reductions, sackings, unpaid overtime, discrimination on the basis of age, sex or race.

For the financial year 2007-08 in Australia, the wages share of Gross Domestic Product (a measure of national income that year) was 53.4 per cent. That is the lowest it has been since the early 1970s' recession set in. The other side of this coin is that the profit share of financial and non-financial corporations reached 26.5 per cent in the same year, the highest it has been since

in that same period, in fact the highest in the ABS figures which date back to 1959-60! The remainder of GDP, such as taxes and interest payments on corporate debt, are also derived from surplus value. These Australian Bureau of Statistic figures illustrate how successful neo-liberalism, accompanied by employer and government offensives on trade unions and workers, has been for the ruling class.

Crisis of overproduction

The term “crisis of overproduction” is used to describe the situation where unsold goods and unused capacity build up. Profits are squeezed, production even becomes unprofitable, investment halts, profit downgrades are followed by sackings, plant closure and even bankruptcies. It is not overproduction in the sense of what people need or want, but in the sense that they do not have the means to purchase those goods or services. For example, in the US there are millions of homeless people and thousands of empty houses.

The crisis of overproduction and gross inequalities of wealth are not confined to national borders but also operate between nations. The global food crisis is a glaring example. Food prices are beyond the reach of the poor. Prices were increased when hedge funds and other speculators turned to commodity markets to carry on their speculation. A similar process occurred with oil.

Food crops that provided basic sustenance in Third World countries have been turned over to export crops and used for bioenergy for the rich countries. They have become dependent on high priced imports from the industrialised countries. Farmers in Australia left crops to rot in the ground because they cost more to pick, pack and transport them to markets than they would be paid. This was as recent as 2008 in the midst the global food crisis.

The source of these crises is the drive for profits. The endless pursuit of larger and larger profits, of new sources of profit gouging and the accumulation of profits by whatever means possible including war and brutal dictatorships, has resulted in the number of people facing avoidable diseases and starvation growing at an alarming rate.

The failure of governments midst rising prices to adequately raise pensions and welfare benefits, also contributed to a reduction in demand. Every extra dollar spent on servicing home loans, credit card and other debt further reduces the capacity of people and small businesses to consume what is produced.

The present crisis has been in the making for some years, with purchasing power artificially sustained through heavy reliance on debt. In Australia, the crunch came in mid-2008 after successive hikes in the official interest rates when families were stretched beyond their limits making mortgage payments and trying to rope in credit card debt. When the financial crisis hit

and corporate failures and layoffs commenced, the focus on reining in debt became even more urgent.

The US economy, also riding on debt, was propped up by ongoing military expenditure – with the private sector raking in super-profits from military procurements and contracts.

As with all cyclical economic crises, production and capital investment have fallen, wages and working conditions have come under attack, people have lost their jobs, lost their homes and charities are stretched beyond their limits. Every wage cut, every job loss reduces demand for goods and services, leading to further cuts and bankruptcies. The big question is how to bring a halt to the downward spiral that has set in.

The late US political economist and communist Victor Perlo described the process in these terms: “Economic crisis is a time of rapid reduction of profits. But Marx saw that its function was to restore the rate of profit. This paradoxical result comes about by destroying part of the capital, enough so that even a reduced total profit represents a higher rate on the smaller capital values. How this loss of capital is distributed, writes Marx, is determined by a bitter competitive struggle among the capitalists. Some of the capital is destroyed simply by closing down entire factories. Another part is destroyed through non-replacement of depreciated equipment. Finally, there is a radical reduction in the market values of inventories of materials.” (*The Unstable Economy: Booms and Recessions in the United States since 1945*, International Publishers, New York, page 58)

The bitter struggle that Victor Perlo refers to has in the past developed into bitter inter-imperialist rivalries and war – the Second World War was such an example. With the loss of the Soviet Union as a bulwark against war, further wars cannot be ruled out.

Government responses so far

When the financial crisis developed, capitalist governments first ran to the rescue of the financial institutions, the US Federal Reserve printing presses ran hot. Some banks were effectively nationalised with a view to using public money to put them back on their feet and then returning them to private ownership.

There is no contradiction in a government using the state’s resources to bail out financial institutions or corporations, or take other measures to stabilise or bail out the capitalist system, which is what capitalist governments have been doing since the onset of the financial crisis. Neo-liberalism is the economic policy approach of ultra-conservatives, who seek to minimise the role of the state in the operations of capital. It still relies on states and international bodies to protect the capitalist system. The state has retained and

strengthened its role in the areas of repression of dissent and trade union activity, although some of these aspects are being contracted out to the private sector.

The old dictum, “privatise the profits, socialise the losses”, is alive and well. Neo-liberals strongly advocate budget surpluses – this is a means of arguing for cuts in social welfare and reducing corporate taxes. They can countenance budget deficits in the form of corporate welfare during times of crisis or when the stability of the global financial system is threatened.

In the USA, the very financial institutions that caused the crisis were not only rescued by governments, but they were left to operate in the same unregulated environment as before. This process was supported by all but the most short-sighted, ultra-conservatives under the Bush regime. Governments of the leading capitalist economies may be forced to take some regulatory measures, such as to bring hedge funds under existing prudential arrangements and reporting systems. They have no intention of resuming serious financial controls.

Policies for the people

R Palme Dutt, Editor of the British communist journal *Labour Monthly*, writing in June 1932 during the Great Depression spoke in terms of two possible approaches: “destructive” or “constructive” solutions.

The prime aim of the “destructive” solution, which is the one pursued by capitalist governments including in Australia, is to save capitalist class rule and restore the rate of profit. In addition to bailing out financial institutions and short-term stimuli to boost demand, it entails the freezing of or reductions in wages and social welfare, cuts in public services, handouts to the private sector and even war. It places the burden of the crisis and recovery onto the backs of working people, pensioners, unemployed and students. When these policies fail and inter-imperialist competition for shrinking markets intensifies, then capitalism looks for another solution.

Palme Dutt described it in these terms: “What is the ‘profitable’ direction? That is the real question. The prospect does not lie in the economic situation, in the trading situation, which grows worse. There is only one direction in which it can lie in the present situation... That direction is war. War is the supreme destructive activity of capitalism which can provide seemingly limitless markets, which can absorb limitless credits, which can raise prices and revive profits, which can utilise the productive power, not to supply human need, but to yield rich profits through slaughter and annihilation. Here all the conflicting tendencies of capitalism find their momentary solution. To this direction all the forces of capitalism increasingly turn... .”

As already stated, that is how capitalism eventually found its way out of the

ongoing crisis following the Great Depression – in the form of the Second World War. It also resorted to the use of fascism, the most extreme terroristic form of capitalism, to repress workers' struggles, another possibility that cannot be ruled out in the present crisis.

The “constructive” approach puts people first, seeks to relieve their suffering and ensure their future welfare and that of the planet. It involves measures that will increase the purchasing power of people, create jobs, provide social services, build the public sector and implement fundamental policy changes that put people first.

The ruling class has learnt some lessons from the Great Depression, hence the stimulatory packages with their handouts to increase purchasing power, but the call to restrain or reduce wages is back again. The infrastructure and other projects being funded by the stimulus package in Australia are forms of direct assistance to the private sector. The same funds, if in the hands of the public sector, could create many more jobs and provide more infrastructure and services as they would not entail layers of private profit.

Future prospects

There is no quick recovery in sight for the present financial and economic crisis. It could take a decade or more. The world will be a different place, with a realignment of forces, changes in relative economic and political power of nations, in governments and political forces.

The USA stands to be seriously weakened as an economic power and political force, although it could retain considerable military might, depending on the changes and direction of social forces within that country. Even before the crisis, the US dollar was being challenged as the international currency.

There will certainly be and there already are expectations and demands for an overhaul of existing undemocratic financial institutions such as the IMF. Its voting structure has colonial roots. The USA and European countries combined hold more than 50 per cent of the vote – the US alone has 16.77 per cent. China has only 3.66 per cent, Russia 2.69 per cent, India 1.89 per cent, Japan 6.02 per cent and Brazil has 1.38 per cent. Not surprisingly, IMF policies serve the interests of the imperialist powers – the neo-liberal conditions imposed on Third World countries for loans have hindered and distorted development of those nations, resulted in starvation, impoverishment and environmental destruction. Opposition to these policies will continue to mount and demands for a new or radically transformed international financial institution will grow.

The imperialist powers have failed to coerce and bludgeon the poorer nations into acceptance of new areas of deregulation through the Doha round of negotiations. Talks continue to collapse as new and stronger alliances of the

poorer nations with strong support from China, stand up for their interests and demand that the rich industrialised countries honour their previous commitments. Divisions between the European Union and the USA have also held up conclusion of the Doha round.

Whichever policy approach is adopted – the most profitable including war with all of its destructive consequences or policies that help people, or even a mix of these – the basis is being laid for the next boom and subsequent crisis of overproduction and recession.

The economic cycle cannot be eliminated under capitalism. Regardless of what might trigger a particular economic crisis, the underlying cause is the fundamental law of capitalism – the pursuit of private profit and exploitation of workers.

There is a certain irony that the Australian Government and corporate sector were looking to socialist People's Republic of China to initially provide Australia with immunity from the crisis and then when that did not happen, to soften the impact of the crisis. They overlooked the interconnectedness of China with the US, the European Union and other capitalist states experiencing recession. China is certainly in a stronger position with its socialist economy, and far greater controls over its currency and interest rates and economic policy.

The only economies to have eliminated the economic cycle over the past 200 years have been socialist. That is not to say that their development is not uneven or without problems. Under socialism, whatever is produced is reflected in the social and monetary wages of workers.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

A major feature of the multi-faceted crisis now besetting world capitalism is the climate emergency. It has its origins in the same heedless drive of capitalism for profits regardless of the social or environmental cost.

Capitalism is an unsustainable system. The scientific and technological progress which has occurred under capitalism is directed towards profiting from the exploitation of humankind and nature. This has been the major contributor to the development of the current environmental crisis, which has coincided with the crisis of capitalism in the era of the transnational corporations.

Unless environmental damage and climate change are brought under control, global catastrophe will result from a collapse of the planet's ecosystem.

The global environmental crisis has its origins in the heedless drive of capitalism for profits regardless of the social or environmental cost. The crisis is already causing immense human suffering and death, while diminishing resources threaten global peace and security.

Because of its faith in the ability of markets to continue increasing material wealth and profits, the capitalist class believes it is legitimate to enjoy the benefit of pillaging the planet now and to discount its cost to future generations.

It makes economic sense within capitalist logic to push costs of environmental change onto the poor and to dump industrial waste onto the least developed countries, because labour and human life there are almost worthless "surplus" from the point of view of capital. For capital, there is no environmental crisis so long as those with sufficient wealth can withstand or profit from its effects.

To the extent that capital does accept responsibility and has a strategy to survive an environmental crisis of its own making, it is through a market driven scientific and technical revolution. Technical change will address market failure by creating new "green" markets, while keeping the existing system of social relations intact. The assumption is that environmental crises will be addressed by energy efficiency and other technical fixes, without understanding that in a capitalist system growth of efficiency normally leads to an increase in scale of economy to maintain profits and this is likely to negate any ecological gains made.

Scientists warn that human-generated CO₂ emissions have grown about four times faster since 2000 than during the previous decade, and that indicators of global warming are increasing at almost twice the rate of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2006 Stern Review's worst case scenario, where average global temperature would rise by 5.8° C by 2100.

If the Arctic melt already underway triggers the melting of the permafrost, billions of tonnes of methane will be released into the atmosphere. Our planet will head into a runaway heating cycle, leading to widespread inundation, agricultural collapse, loss of drinking water for a third of the global population, and all the geopolitical and security implications that will follow.

The build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere now exceeds 450 parts per million of carbon equivalent and average world temperature is likely to soon cross the critical threshold of 2°C above pre-industrial level. Scientists believe rises above this level will drastically affect the world's ecosystems, with drastic impact on humanity.

Critical water shortages loom for global agriculture, because agribusiness is

part of a bubble economy based on unsustainable exploitation of ground-water. They increasingly threaten the water security of billions of people.

Most of the world's major fisheries are being fished out or are already exhausted, 90 per cent of the oceans' large predatory fish have been eliminated in 50 years through industrial fishing, and acidification of the oceans is threatening mass extinctions.

Land use, whether agribusiness, forestry, mining or urban development, is reducing intact ecosystems to remnants, driving one of earth's great extinction events. According to *Nature*, 15 to 37 per cent of all species on Earth will be committed to extinction by 2050.

The Himalayan glaciers which feed all the major rivers of Asia – the Ganges and Brahmaputra, the Mekong, the Yellow and Yangtze – are melting away. Once they are gone, a third of the world's people face a parched, hungry and, most likely, violent future.

Red Cross figures reveal that 242,662 people died in 2008 because of climate related heat waves, fires and other extreme weather events and spreading tropical diseases.

The response of the governments of the most developed countries to the climate crisis shows greater interest in safeguarding corporate profits than the environment. Unless challenged effectively, the financial and economic crises will lead these governments to weaken or abandon their already inadequate plans for dealing with climate change. The belated acceptance of the Kyoto Protocols will not be sufficient and even those commitments appear to be under threat from powerful corporate interests.

The present environmental crisis has been described by some as a “common crisis”, so serious that it transcends politics, is affecting all equally, and demands the submerging of class struggle in the interests of the “common good”.

The crisis is common to all who live on Earth, but in the current conditions it does not affect all equally. Those who are aware of the dangers and oppose them do not yet have the power to take control of the situation. Those whose actions have contributed most to the problem represent the dominant section of capital, and they show little inclination to change their present course towards disaster. In fact they have engaged in an extensive campaign to conceal their responsibility for the climate emergency from the peoples of the world.

The environmental crisis has been largely created by the rapacious exploitation of the Earth's resources by the capitalist ruling class. Ignoring present warnings, it continues to aggravate the crisis with a callous and reckless disregard for the consequences of its activities.

The need for a sustainable environment is overpowering. The struggle over

environmental issues within the capitalist system is crucial for the future of human beings and the planet.

If all the world's nations are to enjoy an equitable standard of living, the consumption of material goods in the developing nations will have to rise, but the level of material consumption in the developed nations will also have to fall.

This will not necessarily involve a fall in the general standard of living in the developed nations, because that standard is not determined by material goods alone. In future their economies will need to place a far greater emphasis on service industries, including education, culture, health, recreation and welfare, and will also need to focus far more on efficient use of resources, recycling and renewable industries.

Humanity faces the need to fundamentally change society, its purpose and motivation, advancing to a society that recognises humanity's place in nature and lives with nature on the basis of sustainability. Such a society is a socialist one. It means, in particular, the provision of renewable forms of energy, recognising that the provision of energy underlies almost all forms of production, transport and living.

A planned economy which has eliminated the private profit motive has the maximum potential for solving environmental problems.

Socialist society is interested in the harmonious development of nature and human society, and in the acceleration of scientific and technological development.

Socialist production is not a slave to the capitalist market economics and its vicious frenetic cycle of competition, advertising, consumerism and waste. It aims at satisfying needs, not over-producing commodities, many of which have little relevance to real needs and lead to gross over-use of energy.

Socialist Cuba: a leader for sustainability

Cuba is the world's most sustainable economy. Socialist Cuba's planning has produced stunning results because it focuses on human needs, not profit. Cuba is the only country in the world that rates higher than 0.8 (high) on the United Nations Human Development Index, and lower than 1.8 (sustainability) on the ecological footprint (measure of demand on the biosphere).

The island nation has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent compared to 1990 levels. It not only uses less energy, but has decentralised its supply grid. Cuba has 0.2 per cent of the world's population but now produces only 0.1 per cent of CO₂ emissions.

Cuba equals the United States in literacy and life expectancy, but Cuba's

energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are on average about an eighth of those of the US.

Since the collapse of the USSR, shortages, revised use of resources and more rational priorities under socialist planning have produced stunning results. Large scale production of organic produce has been a welcome by-product of the revised use of limited resources in Cuba.

While the country continues to battle a decades-long US-led economic blockade it still manages to have full employment and its people access world-class services.

Cuba simultaneously addresses its food and environment issues by encouraging the broadest participation by the mass of its people in driving and achieving these objectives themselves as community programs. Communist youth and Committees for Defence of the Revolution are active in mobilising communities in city, town and country.

This, along with other features of Cuban society, such as high quality, free and universal health and education systems, a vibrant culture and fulfilment of its role as a world citizen by providing doctors and teachers to other poor countries, shows the progressive and humane nature of socialist development even where it has had to withstand the embargoes and constant enmity of its neighbour, the world's mightiest empire.

Emissions trading

Global warming is an outcome of a capitalist productive system based on fossil fuels for its energy. It emits vast amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, yet counts these costs to the environment and humanity as “external” to its profit driven industry. Those apologists for capital who strongly deny the seriousness of the emerging situation, or claim it will correct itself through market mechanisms, show they do not grasp the nature of the catastrophe into which a system based on unrestrained profit driven growth is driving humanity.

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that global warming or climate change is caused by human activities that emit “greenhouse gases” such as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

These emissions trap the sun's ultra-violet rays in the atmosphere and thereby increase the average global temperature.

The major factor in climate change is the combustion of fossil fuels, particularly coal for power generation and petroleum for vehicles, resulting in the emission of vast amounts of carbon dioxide. Massive deforestation and land clearance has reduced the global absorption of carbon dioxide, and also contributed to the salination of vast expanses of land.

At the present rate of change the planet will warm by up to 5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. This will threaten the survival of species and the viability of agriculture, and will produce masses of refugees fleeing rising sea levels, food shortages, diminishing fresh water resources and other environmental problems.

The world needs to start the transition to a “net zero” carbon emissions economy immediately and to urgently make very deep cuts in emissions, if average global warming is to have any chance of remaining below the 2°C. Immediate large scale investment in low-carbon technologies and energy efficient systems is not only urgent and necessary from the environmental point of view but can be linked with recovery from the global economic downturn.

All countries of the world emit some greenhouse gases, and all carry some responsibility for reducing those emissions. The level of responsibility for emission reductions should not be assessed simply on total emissions, but rather on the per capita emission rate and level of development of each country.

The CPA supports the United Nations Framework on Climate Change and its Protocols, including the Kyoto Protocol. The UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol serve as the agreed, international multilateral structure to address climate change and the CPA supports their continuation and further development.

The Kyoto Protocol binds developed countries, including Australia which signed on in 2007, to collectively reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 per cent of 1990 levels by the end of the first commitment period of 2008-2012. Each country has its target and Australia is one of the few countries which is actually permitted to increase emissions during that period.

Under the Protocol, developing countries are not required to make a commitment to reduce emissions because of their special development needs and the fact that they made little contribution to the historical build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Developing countries did, however, make commitments to produce data and implement mitigation and adaptation and other measures. This commitment is conditional on developed countries honouring their agreement to supply them with the necessary finances and technology.

Developed countries have failed to provide this assistance. In the lead up to the Copenhagen conference in 2009, where targets and commitments for the next period should be decided, developed countries, including Australia and the USA, have demanded that developing countries make commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a condition for themselves agreeing to accept new targets beyond 2012.

Moves to shift the burden onto the poorest and least developed countries must be opposed. It is nonsense to compare the total emissions of developing nations such as India and China with those of industrialised countries and to demand of these nations similar reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

as highly industrialised countries. Such demands by the US and other countries are political in nature. They are aimed at holding back the industrialisation and improvement of living standards of nations that threaten their global economic domination and also at avoiding serious reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The richer nations, as the prime per capita polluters, have a responsibility to make substantial reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions and other practices that are accelerating climate change. This is particularly so with Australia, as the worst per capita polluter.

For any reduction in emissions to be achieved, emission caps must be stringent and must be reduced regularly. The assessment of actual emissions must be carried out scientifically and thoroughly.

Transnational corporations prefer policies involving emissions trading schemes under which they can buy the “right” to pollute. This is little more than a racket that perpetuates underdevelopment in poorer countries and reinforces the dominance of global monopoly rule. Trading schemes are also affected by the general economic cycle, so in recession their value falls and the incentive to trade in green credits diminishes. Hence calls to put off such schemes until any recession is over and the economy is back in positive growth.

The activities of the ruling class are defended by governments which facilitate the interests of capital and conceal the gravity of the environmental crisis. This is frequently done behind declarations that environmental protection measures will not be allowed to adversely affect the economic interests of the country – meaning, of course, the interests of the capitalist ruling class.

Some governments are pursuing emissions trading schemes under which they declare an initial limit or cap for the overall level of emissions. They sell, auction off or distribute proportionately a number of licences or permits to allow industries to continue operations. The permits represent a limited level of emissions for the industry concerned. Organisations whose plants operate below the level of permits held may sell off any excess permits to other businesses seeking to exceed their permit emission levels. Reductions in the level of emissions depend on governments periodically reducing the cap on credits.

Emission trading schemes in capitalist societies are in essence a licence to pollute – a pay to pollute licence that favours polluters in rich nations – and a cop-out for governments not prepared to tackle the issue of greenhouse gas reduction. It is a “leave it to the markets” approach, but the markets have failed badly and the corporate sector will pass on the additional costs and go on polluting as before.

Some say that something is better than nothing but small incremental steps are simply not enough in the face of the climate crisis.

Climate change cannot be stopped by doing five per cent or even 25 per cent

of what is necessary. If we trigger tipping points, the heating process will gather its own momentum and there will be nothing we can do to stop it. Doing too little to avoid those tipping points is functionally equivalent to doing nothing.

Addressing the environmental crisis: Australia

In Australia the climate nightmare is real and happening now. Soil salination, desertification and deforestation, pollution of the air and freshwater systems, destruction of waterways and a major loss of bio-diversity began after the country's occupation by Britain in 1788.

We are destroying the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu and the snow caps. We are eroding our beaches, and our coastal cities will face managed retreat due to sea level rise. We are drying our food bowl, the Murray Darling, beyond repair, jeopardising rural communities and our food security. Australia has experienced increasing rainfall and cyclonic conditions in the north, prolonged droughts and extreme bushfire conditions in the south, and new animal migratory patterns.

In government, Rudd Labor has treated the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia as a balancing act between the demands of the people for substantial action and the reluctance of powerful sections of the capitalist class to allow measures that curb global warming impact on profits. The interests of this and future generations are “balanced” against the interests of powerful corporations which have a vested interest in maintaining the continued use of fossil fuels.

The Labor and Liberal Party leaderships are recipients of huge donations from those sections of capital that are responsible for the nation's worst emissions, and not surprisingly are subservient to their wishes to the detriment of the environment.

The government commissioned the *Garnaut Report* in 2008 to establish the framework for debate on action on global warming in Australia. The report, which set a “politically feasible” greenhouse gas emissions target of 550 parts per million, and a 5-10 per cent reduction in emissions by 2020, to be achieved through carbon emission trading schemes, only “keeps open the possibility” of avoiding drastic climate change, which requires a reduction to 350ppm. The report shows the people of Australia are prevented from taking a pathway to sustainability, while ever governments and political parties will not challenge, and are subservient to the most powerful sections of monopoly capital.

The Rudd Government's emissions trading scheme is based on an appallingly weak 2020 emission reduction target of 5 per cent. Adding insult to injury, the Australian scheme offers compensation by way of free permits in the

initial stage for the heaviest polluters, thus allowing them to avoid reducing their emissions.

If the scheme comes into effect, it will mean Australia would have the same greenhouse gas emissions in 2013 as in 2009, making deep cuts by 2020 much more difficult and expensive to achieve.

Australia must achieve drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in a short time. If Cuba can achieve a 40 per cent cut in emissions in three years, then a similar effort can work in Australia, if the people determine to force the pace of change.

The CPA will work with all social forces that favour a rapid shift from fossil fuel to solar and renewable energy based economies as a key component in creating a sustainable society. We will work to build a strong alliance committed to curbing global warming and environmental catastrophe, that will challenge the status quo to get drastic reductions in emissions, support a massive increase in investment in energy saving designs and technologies and renewable, non-polluting energy sources, and be amenable to transforming existing social-economic relations to bring about a more rationally organised society.

Substantial reductions in emissions cannot be achieved under the present social and economic world order. The dictates of the profit motive and imperialist competition to corner resources and secure markets prevent any rational planning for the good of common humanity. A more far-reaching social revolution is needed to carry out a massive reorganisation of the global economy. This needs to be democratically planned and implemented to satisfy long term social needs and can only come about with the world working class, peasantry and their allies challenging this anti-human system and making a conscious turn towards sustainability.

The most immediate task is to wind back our use of coal and oil and to develop environmentally sound renewable energy sources. New coal mines should be banned. The energy industry – coal, oil, gas, production and distribution of electricity – is too important to be left under the control of multinationals and local capitalists. It needs to be brought under public ownership. Under public ownership not only can profits be reinvested in alternative energy development, but proper planning can be carried out for the phasing out of coal production with full consideration of the involved workers.

Trade unions should have a major role in programs to phase out coal mining and the existing coal-fired power stations. Such programs must include government support for rural and regional communities with the development of new renewable energy sources and renewable energy power stations, and the retraining of workers currently involved in coal mining to work in those new and other sustainable industries.

The Communist Party of Australia calls for massive investment in research

and development of alternative renewable energy sources under public ownership as the means of providing base energy load for industry, homes and other needs.

Nuclear power does not provide a safe, environmentally sound alternative to fossil fuels and must be rejected. The mining, treatment, transport and disposal of uranium's waste products constitute unacceptable environmental and health risks. Considerable damage has already been caused to Kakadu National Park and sacred sites. All uranium mines in Australia should be shut down and contracts for the export of uranium cancelled. The Communist Party of Australia strongly opposes the siting of nuclear waste dumps in Australia. The use of nuclear products should be confined to medical purposes and should remain in public hands.

The CPA is committed to ending Australia's role as a major fossil fuel based exporter in the course of achieving national sustainability goals, and to fulfilling its internationalist responsibilities by transferring appropriate technologies and applications to the people of developing and underdeveloped economies to achieve global equity of energy and resource use, and quality of life in the course of achieving global sustainability.

Urgent action is also required to protect our remaining old-growth forests and other largely intact habitats, redressing salination, desertification and deforestation, pollution of the air, soil and fresh water systems, encouraging recycling and energy conservation, halting the loss of bio-diversity and implementing a total ban on the introduction of genetically-modified crops and organisms except, in the latter instance, for necessary medical purposes.

In steering society through the transition from fossil to solar and other renewables based energy sources, as a core strategy to address global warming, the Australian people also need to address a host of associated environmental crises that stem from the profit-driven exploitation of labour and nature in capitalist societies.

These issues require policies that:

- control and plan development taking into account that environmental factors are the basis for a sustainable future;
- oppose the further privatisation of Australia's electricity generation, distribution and supply infrastructure;
- develop a national energy plan, with legislated timetables and targets, for transition to an ecologically sustainable energy system;
- make energy efficiency and conservation key determinants of urban planning and government economic and industry policy;
- provide incentives to encourage consumers to choose renewable energy technologies;

- reverse the destructive impact on global food production of the surge in production of bio-fuels as wealthier countries seek to ease their reliance on fossil fuels;
- transfer subsidies and government support from fossil and nuclear fuel sectors to energy efficiency and renewable energy, including research and development and conversion programs;
- introduce tax deductions for investment in sustainable energy technologies and allow accelerated depreciation on businesses making investments in research and renewable generating technology;
- establish and enforce efficiency and safety standards requiring the energy rating labeling of all residential and commercial buildings, motor vehicles, electrical appliances and power generating machinery, chemical processes including transportation, etc.;
- legislate for every enterprise to adopt energy conservation measures and waste disposal or recycling of glass, metal, paper, plastic and other products;
- encourage greater use and development of public transport. The power of the motor vehicle transnationals must be curbed so urban planning can be for people, not for cars. The provision of new public transport infrastructure, more frequent and more reliable public transport services that are publicly owned and operated, and new services to outer suburbs, would result in thousands fewer cars on the roads, and would also generate many jobs in areas of need. At the same time as reducing the number of cars on the roads, provisions should also be developed for cyclists;
- re-open country and regional rail lines for freight and passenger service under public control to make a substantial reduction in pollution as well as providing cheaper, safer and more reliable services;
- restore Australia's water systems and provide adequate safe drinking water for communities through co-ordinated national planning and a willingness to take on the powerful cotton and rice-growing corporations;
- accept Australia's responsibility for environmental refugees driven from their homes by the effects of climate change or other environmental catastrophes.

The concentration of vast economic and human resources on the arms build-up could be diverted to the development of alternative technologies, reforestation and other projects required to deal with the environmental crisis. Australia's current military budget of \$70 million a day should be cut by ten per cent immediately and the funds released directed into environmental and social needs projects.

Workers' rights

It is crucial that the working class becomes involved in the struggle to save the planet from environmental catastrophe. Workers must be confident that protecting the environment is in their interests and the interest of their children and future generations.

Society must ensure and the CPA advocates that no workers will be worse off as a result of environmental protection measures.

Workers whose jobs are at risk from measures to protect the environment must be offered employment in environmentally friendly occupations and new green industries without loss of wages or any conditions and with full involvement of workers and their unions.

Conversion to a more sustainable economy will bring a healthier economy as well as a healthier environment. Changes necessary for more sustainable production would require more workers, not fewer. Some of the “technologically advanced” but environmentally destructive methods in both mining and logging have been developed specifically because they use fewer workers.

Jobs growth in Australia's coal based electricity industry stalled in 1984 and has been in steep decline ever since – falling 60 per cent to 1998. Meanwhile, jobs and investment in the hi-tech sustainable energy sector grew in double digit figures during each year of 1990s.

Steps needed to ensure that the transition to a sustainable energy sector does not disadvantage workers include examining the regional employment and equity implications of shifts from fossil fuel use to renewable sources and establishing appropriate regional structural adjustment and industry re-orientation programs.

It is necessary to promote jobs growth in the sustainable energy sector and to ensure that job creation is equitable and targets geographic areas and economic sectors disadvantaged by the transition to a sustainable energy future.

As the impact of climate change is addressed, there will be new jobs and types of work in some industries. In some cases there will be entirely new technologies for existing jobs. In others, there will be new work activities related to reducing energy intensity and therefore reducing emissions.

The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australian Council of Trade Unions 2008 report, *Green Gold Rush*, estimates that more than 800,000 new green jobs can be created in 15 years.

Based on an analysis of 30 green industries globally, the report says Australia should focus on six sectors: renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable water industries, biomaterials, green buildings and waste recycling.

The maximum participation of workers, unions and community is needed for

this shift in industry and jobs to succeed. Job creation and good employment opportunities are central to sustainable development because workers and workplaces are at the centre of production and consumption in society and have a key place in transforming production at all levels.

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Australia lies in the Asia-Pacific region and our trade, political and security interests are inevitably tied up with our neighbours in this region. The region encompasses some of the world's oldest cultures and two of the most populated countries in the world. It is home to two-thirds of the indigenous peoples of the world.

Australia is a middle-sized imperialist power that is active economically, militarily, diplomatically and politically in support of its own imperialist ambitions. Australia is a strong supporter and loyal promoter of the interests of US imperialism. This is illustrated by Australia's role in wars waged by the US, including in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The new Labor Government has stated that Australia's alliance with the United States is "fundamental and indispensable" to the country's foreign policy.

Colonialism brought the nuclear age to the region, beginning with the US dropping the first atomic weapons on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The French Government used the Pacific islands of Mururoa and Fangataufa for nuclear tests. The US used the Bikini and Eniwetok atolls, and the British used Maralinga in South Australia and Monte Bello off the Western Australian coast for the same purpose.

In some cases wars of liberation against colonialism in the region were successful and the victors have begun building socialist societies as in the cases of China, Vietnam and Laos.

In others, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, the struggle for democracy and independence continues, in a variety of forms, despite brutal repression, foreign military intervention and occupation.

In Vietnam the people's liberation struggle has reunified the country after decades of war waged by the French colonialists and then the US with Australian involvement.

In the 18th Century India and China were much wealthier than Europe. British colonialism plundered the wealth of the country, driving the people into

poverty. Today, India is gradually developing economically and becoming an influential player in the region.

The recovery of China has been more rapid. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, China is expected to surpass the US in GDP by 2015. Economically and politically, China has become the major player in the Asia-Pacific region.

Military commitments

The maintenance of the ANZUS alliance with the US, the willingness of Australia to provide bases for the US military and its spying operations and its support for the US Star Wars program pose a threat of Australia's participation in war against Asian or Pacific countries, should the US commit aggression in the region. These military commitments turn Australia into a potential nuclear target in the event of conflict and could be a factor resulting in the substantial political isolation of Australia in the region.

During the thirteen years of the Howard-led Coalition Government there was an escalation of the process of integrating Australia into the US war machine. Interoperability with the US military was developed and massive joint military exercises held every second year. The exercises are continuing under the new Rudd social democratic government.

Australia's foreign and military policies are strongly influenced by its economic and political ties as part of global imperialism. Successive Australian governments acting in the interests of the capitalist class have made Australia a regional tool of their global interests.

The Howard Government signed up Australia as a frontline collaborator with US global war plans, providing specialist military forces and a secure base for US electronic and satellite spying activities. The Rudd Government is continuing these policies.

The Australian Government gave military and political support to the Bush administration's pre-emptive strike against Afghanistan and joined the "Coalition of the Willing", sending troops and opening Australian military facilities to US troops for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

While the Rudd Government has withdrawn most Australian troops from Iraq, it has increased its commitment to war in Afghanistan, sending an additional 450 troops in May 2009. It has also passed new draconian legislation to protect the US military facilities in Australia.

The US has over 30 military bases in Australia and under Howard began developing an additional three "training" bases. These facilities undermine Australia's independence and sovereignty, make this country a potential nuclear target and make Australians complicit in US aggression. The Australian

Government is assisting the US in its efforts to weaponise space and to dominate Earth from space.

The US “missile defence” project is the armed wing of globalisation. The US is planning to militarise, commercially exploit and to control space, to become the master of space and take corporate globalisation to a new and more terrifying level.

Air Force Space Command says it has the vision and the people to ensure the US achieves space superiority, adding that the US will not allow any other power to get a foothold in space. This includes allies as well as enemies. Space-based weapons are an essential part of this plan. The US military plans to base weapons in space and to control and dominate space and from there, the Earth below.

The space missile program is providing super profits for the armaments corporations including Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and TRW. This is corporate greed on a global scale.

Australia has been locked into the missile defence project through Pine Gap, the Jindalee Over the Horizon Radar system and three Aegius warships currently being built here. Australian universities are also locked in, carrying out research for the program.

There is no benefit for Australians in joining Star Wars. Our security will be damaged, trade and diplomacy will be undermined, we will suffer economically, relations with our neighbours will be hurt and our sovereignty will be diminished.

2009 Defence White Paper

In May 2009 the Rudd Government released its Defence White Paper (DWP), announcing the largest military build-up in Australia since World War 2.

The massive increase in sea and air power includes doubling Australia’s submarine fleet from six to twelve, 100 new F-35 fighter planes, three Air Warfare Destroyers equipped with SM-6 long-range anti-aircraft missiles (range of 370 kms); eight new frigates equipped for long-range submarine detection and operations; at least twenty-four new naval combat helicopters able to fire air-to-surface missiles; forty-six new MRH90 helicopters equipped with infra-red systems; twenty Offshore Combatant Vessels; a large strategic sealift ship to move stores, equipment and personnel; and six new heavy landing craft.

Australia will also be the first country in the region to acquire land attack cruise missiles. These have a range of 2,500 kms.

The *Defence White Paper* lays out the government’s foreign and defence policy perspectives for the next twenty years.

The US alliance remains central to Australia's foreign policy and military strategy. "Australia and the United States will continue to look for ways to deepen our defence co-operation," the *DWP* says.

"Both countries are also committed to fostering co-operation in other areas, such as strategic planning and war gaming; the harmonisation of capability requirements and interoperability; technology access and acquisition; combined operational planning; regional engagement co-operation; missile defence and space situation awareness."

"We will ... see changed strategic power relativities and an increasingly 'multi-polar' global order, driven by changing patterns of underlying economic power and political influence." References are made in the *DWP* to China, India, Japan and Russia as strategic powers but the focus for the Australian Government is China.

Australia's new military muscle is targeted at China, in support of US long-term plans.

The deployment of Aegis destroyers in the Asia-Pacific region, including on Australian warships gives the US greater ability to launch pre-emptive first-strike attacks on China.

Recently the US Space Command has been war gaming an attack on China, set in the year 2016. Using new space technologies during the computer simulations, the US hits China's relatively small retaliatory nuclear capability in the first-strike attack.

The expansion of missile defence systems in Japan, South Korea, Australia and on US military platforms near China are intended to assist with these plans, but it cannot do anything but create more regional tension and instability.

Australia's intelligence community has stated that China's current limited military build-up is not a threat to Australia. Rather it is China's response to a huge US military expansion in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Australian Government is helping to create the very threat it is using to justify a massive military escalation.

At the same time, concern about a possible decline in the US role in the region and the growth of China underlies the *DWP*'s stress on a massive increase in air and sea power.

"Australia's strategic outlook over the coming decades will continue to be shaped by the changing global distribution of economic, political and military power, and by the future role and weight of the United States," the *DWP* states.

Australia, according to the *DWP*, is therefore building the capability to wage war and exert its influence far beyond its shores.

The strategy outlines in the *DWP* “does not necessarily entail a purely defensive or reactive approach... we will need to be prepared to undertake proactive combat operations against an adversary’s military bases and staging areas,”

Australia seeks to “have greater strategic influence beyond our immediate neighbourhood ... to exert policy influence that is underpinned by military power.”

The *Defence White Paper* reveals government plans to spend an additional \$300 billion over 20 years at a time when unemployment is forecast to reach one million by 2010.

An extra \$600 million (less than two weeks’ military spending) spent on public hospitals each year would overcome their critical shortcomings. Similarly huge strides could be made in upgrading schools, reducing the cost of university education, supporting childcare, developing Medicare, assisting the needy in our community and maximising employment opportunities in Australia if a good portion of these finances were diverted from war preparations.

Australia’s military spending steals the resources needed to provide human and social needs and to stimulate the economy in the face of the deepening recession.

This has been recognised by the Australian people. Opinion polls in 2008 showed that 70 per cent of the community opposed increased spending on the military.

Increasing Australia’s military spending will convey a more threatening posture in our region. The military expansion will create fear and insecurity in some countries, encouraging them to devote even more of their wealth to their own military capabilities.

However, the armaments corporations are still raking in super-profits and are little affected by the global financial crisis. Lockheed Martin, for example, boasted of US\$5 billion profits in 2008. In January 2009 Raytheon predicted continued growth in its sales and earnings, and British Aerospace announced a 93 per cent increase in its profits in 2008, due largely to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Regional ties

The military relationships the United States has built with Japan are of concern. Australia is involved in a tripartite arrangement with the US and Japan and the foreign and defence ministers of these states meet regularly. The aim of this tripartite relationship is to make Australia the southern arm of US strategy against China and Japan the northern arm. “Central to ... enhanced Australian regional engagement is our partnership with Japan”, Australia’s

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said in December 2008. Mr Smith spoke of Japan and Australia as “close partners and key players in addressing regional and global security challenges”.

Japan and Australia host the military bases by which the United States hopes to re-establish its domination of the whole of Asia and reimpose capitalism in China, Laos, Vietnam and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Australia, France, the United States and New Zealand maintain intelligence and satellite installations that monitor email, fax and phone communications throughout the region.

Australian and Japanese forces have already co-operated in Iraq, East Timor and Cambodia. The two countries are developing military interoperability. Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force participated in Exercise Kakadu off the northern coast of Australia last year.

The relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam, involving 8,000 troops and about 9,000 of their dependents over the next ten years, will impact on regional relations far beyond the local impact on the Chamorro people of Guam.

In May 2008, the Government of Guam, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) signed a letter of understanding to determine how Pacific Island countries can benefit from the military relocation – a program costing over US\$15 billion.

Australia is involved in the US’s manoeuvres to pull India away from its growing ties with Russia and China and draw it under its umbrella. In 2007, just prior to Labor’s election, Australia’s Navy participated in multinational exercises in the Bay of Bengal. Australian naval vessels conduct visits to Indian ports. “Australia wants to further strengthen our defence links with India and we are particularly pleased to have reached an agreement this year that our Chiefs of Defence Forces will meet annually,” Stephen Smith told the Confederation of Indian Industries in Chennai in September 2008.

Trade and investment

Australia’s investments in India have grown rapidly in recent years, Australia is pushing for India’s inclusion in APEC, and the government sees great opportunities in India for the export of uranium, minerals and other natural resources. In 2008 there were 70,000 enrolments of students from India in Australian education institutions, a market that has been growing at an average of 41 per cent since 2002. India’s development, like that of China, offers vast new markets for Australian corporations, and many have transferred operations there, including call and data processing centres, to exploit cheaper labour and lower labour standards.

Historically Australia's trade was predominantly with Britain. Following the formation of the Common Market in Europe (now the European Union) in the 1960s, it shifted towards the United States, Japan and then more recently has developed rapidly with other Asian nations. In 2007, \$200 billion of our \$350 billion in merchandise trade was with Asia. The major recipients of Australia's exports in goods and services are Japan, followed by China, the USA, South Korea, New Zealand, Britain and India. When exports and imports are combined, China is our major trading partner, closely followed by Japan.

The overall production and trade of Asian countries now surpasses that of the European Union and, in time, will surpass the economy of the United States as well. An important feature is the steady shift in the centre of world trade from Europe and the United States to Asia where the rapidly developing economies of the People's Republic of China and India are playing an ever-increasing role. China and India are playing an important role, along with Venezuela and Brazil in the WTO assisting Third World countries and the people of the world to stand up to imperialism and defend their sovereignty and interests.

An important development in the region is the enlargement of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) which has now been joined by Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Burma. The DPRK has also been admitted with observer status. ASEAN's three principle partners are China, Japan and South Korea. All the countries of ASEAN strongly defend their right to independence and sovereignty and are developing their political and trade relationships. Australia is largely excluded from this grouping.

South Pacific

Most Pacific island nations achieved political independence later than developing nations in Africa and Asia and the legacies of colonialism are a vital influence on conflict in the region.

There are still many colonised peoples in the Pacific asserting their right of self-determination in line with UN principles and practice on decolonisation. In some cases, political parties or indigenous sovereignty movements are calling for greater autonomy within the nation state. In several others, the demand is for full political independence.

This issue affects many territories in the Pacific, under different political and constitutional arrangements: New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna (France); Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and Hawai'i (USA); Tokelau (New Zealand); Pitcairn (United Kingdom); Easter Island (Chile); West Papua (Indonesia); Torres Strait Islands (Australia); and Bougainville (Papua New Guinea).

Many Pacific island states are still trying to deal with the legacies of colonial

rule. These include national boundaries that arbitrarily divide linguistic and cultural groups, education systems that cannot guarantee employment in the wage sector, and systems of law, administration and economic development that have created unequal access to power and resources (particularly between kinship groups on different islands).

Talk of “the Pacific” encourages the idea that all island societies are the same – but there is in fact a vast diversity of social, political and economic circumstances across the 26 countries and territories in the islands region. Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, others are colonies of the United States and France. Papua New Guinea has 5.1 million people, Pitcairn has 47.

Many of the problems affecting the Pacific are global ones, not specific to the region: the HIV/AIDS pandemic; the problem of finding jobs for young people; environmental crises that affect development opportunities; or the impact of trade, debt and privatisation policies on the national economy.

Australian corporations have their own colonialist ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region and have been supported by Australian governments. Australian governments have promoted the economic domination and developed dependencies of neo-colonialism as well as military intervention and other forms of interference to protect the profits of Australian and other corporations.

The “failed states” theory has been used as the excuse for interference and direct intervention in the South Pacific. In much of the rhetoric about “failed states”, there is no acknowledgement of the way that post-colonial models of government were imposed on island societies or of the impact of the failure of a development model promoted by former colonial powers and overseas aid donors.

Instead, conflicts between ethnic communities in multi-racial societies are often cited as a source of state collapse. But the two examples of “failing states”, Solomon Islands and Nauru, could not be more different – the former is a multi-ethnic Melanesian society with 28 language groups, while the latter is a largely mono-cultural Micronesian state with only 10,000 people.

There are often sharper divisions within ethnic communities than between ethnic communities. The interplay of ethnicity and class is significant.

A significant factor in developments in the Solomons Islands, for example, was that the country suffered a 15 – 20 per cent drop in GDP in just one year in 1997-8, partly due to withdrawal of capital after the financial crash in Asia.

For indigenous peoples in the Pacific, land is at the centre of life: as a source of livelihood through subsistence activities; a source of power, authority and status through ownership; and above all as a source of security and identity.

Around the region, there are significant variations in land tenure systems, but issues of land ownership, usage or degradation are at the heart of many

conflicts in the Pacific. There are fundamental conflicts between land and resource owners, governments and transnational corporations over who controls the vast wealth of the Pacific.

There are extensive reserves of timber and strategic metals such as copper, gold, nickel and cobalt throughout Melanesia. The island nations' 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) give sovereignty and control over fisheries and marine resources around every islet, reef and archipelago. The ocean seabed also harbours wealth such as polymetallic nodules and oil and gas reserves.

The ways in which natural resources are extracted can devastate ecosystems and destroy indigenous cultures and livelihoods, as was shown with major projects such as Ok Tedi (PNG), Panguna (Bougainville) and Freeport (West Papua).

Clear-fell logging and the disposal of mining tailings have caused serious environmental damage and local landowners have fought back against this despoliation. In turn, governments have relied on police and military forces to control these enclave resource developments, sparking a cycle of repression, conflict and further militarisation.

Lying just a few metres above sea level, atoll nations in the Pacific are particularly vulnerable to even small changes in global climatic patterns. Many of them already face severe economic losses from extreme weather events like storm surges, cyclones, and king tides. Predicted increases in sea-level rise and the intensity of natural disasters such as cyclones will exacerbate existing problems.

Of particular concern are Kiribati whose land is now threatened and the Carteret Islanders of Papua New Guinea who have become the first climate refugees as they relocate to new sites on Tinputz (Bougainville) to escape the effects of climate change on their homeland.

In late 2008 and early 2009, there was a series of flooding events around the region that brought home the impact of these changing climatic conditions. Annual king tides combined with storm surges and heavy rain from tropical depressions to flood coastal areas in several island nations.

In some Pacific island nations police forces are becoming militarised and military forces are becoming involved in political life. The blurring of roles and responsibilities between military and unarmed constabulary is a major concern. In Papua New Guinea, for example, military troops have been used in the policing of industrial disputes, clashes with land and resource owners over mineral and timber projects, and crackdowns on criminal raskol gangs and unemployed youths.

Foreign governments have contributed to this process of militarisation. Australia, United States, France and New Zealand are all suppliers of military

equipment and training programs to the Pacific islands, although island nations are diversifying their military aid links beyond their former colonial powers. China and Israel have also supplied military aid to island states.

There are regular joint exercises, such as Australia's training of the PNG military and Kopassus troops from Indonesia. France and the US hold joint war games with the Tonga Defence Services, even though there is no credible military threat to Tongan. Australia has pursued a policy of offering military-oriented support to local police forces.

Aid policies

Australian intervention and aid have the aim of opening up economies to the unfettered operations of Australian corporations by such means as imposing trade liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation of foreign investment and capital flows, and the replacement of communal land ownership by private holdings.

Increasingly aid is being made conditional on such policies, which are pushed regardless of cultural, social, environmental and economic consequences to local communities.

Australian government aid is known as “boomerang aid” because it largely finds its way into the pockets of Australian companies and consultants as it is used for the purchase of Australian products and services.

In addition, after a decade of the right-wing Howard Government, there is a greater focus on good governance: strengthening machinery of government, justice and law and public administration in overseas aid allocations. In 2006-7 \$832 million was allocated to governance. Health and education received about \$300 million each.

There was a drop in rural development aid from twenty per cent of the budget for the Pacific in 2004-05 to thirteen per cent in 2006-07. By 2006-07 governance was receiving thirty-three per cent, health eleven per cent, education ten per cent and rural development six per cent of the aid budget. In the same financial year 56 per cent of AusAID funds were managed by ten private companies.

Of the roughly \$3 billion allocated for aid, \$993 million, nearly one third, was going to areas such as AFP law and justice programs, repaying Iraq's debt (i.e. bailing out Australian wheat industry) and overseas student scholarships (i.e. bailing out the Australian education industry). The significant contribution that aid programs can make to the security and defence of Australia is not acknowledged by Australian governments.

There is no sign that the Rudd Government intends to change these aid policies. At the August 2008 meeting of Pacific Forum leaders in Niue, Prime

Ministers Rudd and Somare signed the first of a series of “Pacific Partnerships for Development” – bilateral agreements that Australia is negotiating with all Forum island countries. By January 2009, bilateral agreements had been finalised with Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands.

Following years of lobbying, Pacific governments welcomed Australian and New Zealand programs to open their labour markets to unskilled workers from the Pacific. The August announcement of a pilot study for an Australian seasonal workers program means 2,500 Pacific workers will come to Australia over the next three years to work in horticulture and fruit picking.

Free trade push

Australia is engaged in a sustained drive, started in the Howard years and continued under the Rudd Government, for increased trade deregulation, structural adjustment, and public sector privatisation. According to Australia, Pacific island countries should reduce their public sectors, cut tariffs, encourage private enterprise, and allow maximum freedom to foreign investors in order to become more competitive in a globalising economy.

Duncan Kerr, Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Islands Affairs in the Rudd Government, claims: “In the long term, it is trade more than development assistance that will reduce poverty.” Supporting this position, a New Zealand official argued: “Private sector development will be key to the long-term prosperity of the Pacific region. Private sector development promotes economic growth and is a source of wealth, competition, innovation and knowledge. It is the private sector that will create the jobs and incomes that will sustain Pacific nations.”

Negotiation of regional free trade agreements was supposed to follow the completion of the WTO’s Doha Development Round (multilateral trade negotiations that began in 2001). But by 2008, global differences had led to the virtual collapse of the Doha negotiations.

The trade agenda in the Pacific is now largely being played out through regional pacts such as the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), PACER-Plus, and the European Union (EU)-African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

The potential to expand fair trade initiatives in the Pacific will be hampered by this clash between the interests of major corporations and those of marginal trading nations. The “free trade” mantra, which implies that all developing countries have the same opportunities for growth through trade, downplays the particular difficulties faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as they attempt to negotiate with major trading partners such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan or the European Union.

The 2000 Cotonou Agreement links the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grouping. The EU has tried to use the EPA process to open the way for European corporations to access the services sector and to introduce provisions on services, intellectual property rights, government procurement and investment that were rebuffed in the multilateral Doha negotiations by larger developing countries such as Brazil, South Africa and India.

The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), initiated by the Howard Government, aims to foster a single economic zone uniting the eight million people of the Pacific Island Forum (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) together with American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna Islands.

The Rudd Government wants to develop the agreement which is designed to advance the interests of the developed capitalist countries at the expense of the other developing countries and colonial territories. Its "PACER-Plus" is intended as a free trade deal in which Pacific islands will lower tariffs on Australian exports, allow unrestricted access to Pacific service markets for Australian companies, and remove regulations on Australian investment in the region.

Australian and New Zealand officials want to start moving on PACER-Plus, under pressure from corporate interests that see European companies moving in sectors that have long been dominated by the Oceanic powers.

The push for PACER-Plus negotiations has met resistance from some Pacific governments who are wary of the social and economic impacts of full regional economic integration. Some non-government organisations are also beginning to question the impacts on indigenous land, resource owners, and poorer sections of the community.

The Pacific Civil Society Organisations, meeting in Auckland in August 2008, released a Statement on Trade Justice which says: "The hard line approach taken by the European Commission on behalf of the European Union, and signals that Australia and New Zealand are likely to take a similar approach in putting their own economic and business interests ahead of the development aspirations of the people of the Pacific, in the view of Pacific NGOs, Churches and Trade Unions, is in direct violation of the principles of good governance. Such inequitable trade agreements pose grave risks for our people and future generations."

With PACER and other agreements, the Rudd Government is working for the conclusion of a free trade agreement with the ASEAN groups of countries. But it is in APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation) that Australia's role as imperialism's junior partner comes into its own.

Australia's Foreign Minister Smith made this clear when he said: "APEC has played a vital role in promoting trade and investment liberalisation and business facilitation. It is now engaging on the challenge of structural reform behind borders ... APEC reinforces the United States' engagement in our region, something Australia regards as essential."

Australia is also to become an observer to the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), a body composed of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Other observers are China, the European Union, Iran, Japan, Mauritius, South Korea and the United States.

Resistance

The drive for economic integration is at the expense of the vast majority of the peoples of this region and has imposed exploitation, unemployment, poverty, environmental destruction and loss of democratic and civil rights. The land and resources of food, water and fisheries and forests are being depleted by the transnational corporations that follow these inter-governmental agreements.

Most Pacific island societies have characteristics that assist their resistance to neo-colonialism and destructive neo-liberal economic policies.

One is communal land tenure, much derided by aid donors as a barrier to development. Communal land tenure continues to act in many countries as an informal system of social security, which is needed now and might be needed more if the Pacific becomes more marginalised in a globalised economy.

A second characteristic is cultural traditions of collectivity which oppose the individualism and private property ethic of capitalism.

A third is out-migration to New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States and the return flow of remittances to families in the Pacific.

A major issue for the island states is the preservation of their sovereignty and national independence in the face of the relentless efforts of the imperialist states to control their economies and their governments by both direct and indirect measures.

In recent years there has been growing resistance to Australia's colonial approach with Pacific states developing ties with other governments including those of China, Cuba, South Korea and Indonesia.

Indigenous communities have been fighting back, challenging the corporations and campaigning in different ways for self-determination and independence. Examples include:

- Timor where the people have had a long struggle to win their independence,

against Portuguese colonialism, then Indonesian military occupation and now against neo-colonialism. The Howard Government was a major player in the coup which ousted the elected Fretilin Government. At stake are the profits from huge deposits of oil and natural gas in the Timor Gap.

- Bougainville where a struggle by the indigenous owners to protect their land from Rio Tinto's mining and pollution was successful after years of savage war using the PNG Army as de facto forces for Australian, American and British imperialism. Bougainville landowners were successful in closing the mine and later won a degree of autonomy.
- Decades-long negotiations to create a regional Tuna Commission to regulate the tuna fisheries of the central and western Pacific worth US\$2 billion a year.
- Kanaky (New Caledonia) where the indigenous Kanaks have fought French colonialism for decades and struggled to break the French monopoly over New Caledonia's substantial nickel and other mineral resources.
- Tonga where there is a movement for democratic change, challenging the monarchy.
- Papua New Guinea is a former Australian colony which was granted political independence in 1975. The former colonialists had planted large coconut plantations in Papua that are now controlled by Australian-based transnational corporations, which also exploit vast tracts of land, minerals and forests. The struggle in Papua New Guinea is to maintain control and ownership of the land from the depredations of corporations and institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

There has been growing concern about the social and cultural impacts arising from the neo-liberal orthodoxy that underlies regional structural adjustment programs. Public sector employees, farmers' groups and university students have resisted government cutbacks and churches and NGOs have established a Pacific Action Network on Globalisation (PANG).

A regional Gender and Trade Network is analysing the impact of WTO policies on Pacific women and young people, and feminist scholars and activists have been documenting the particular impacts of debt, trade and reform policies on women and poverty.

An important step towards these aims would be to foster relations between Australian trade unions and those of the region. The CPA supports relations based on solidarity, mutual benefit and respect for the sovereignty of Australia's Pacific neighbours.

Lasting peace

Lasting peace with justice will only be guaranteed when the underlying causes of war – the drive for private profit and the racism, nationalism, poverty and oppression that the profit motive creates – are eliminated.

Under capitalism the threat of wars of different types will not disappear, but it is essential to adopt policies and support struggles which can significantly reduce the danger of war.

Australia needs an independent, non-aligned foreign policy, based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, self-determination and anti-imperialist solidarity which is effective, affordable and genuinely serves the defence of our country and the need for peace and stability in our region and beyond.

An independent, made-in-Australia policy for reduced military spending and respect for the sovereign rights of nations to independence, equality and self-determination would best serve the interests of Australia and our neighbours.

Policies for a just peace include:

- Adoption by the Australian Government of an independent foreign policy. The termination of the ANZUS Treaty.
- Withdrawal of all Australian troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.
- An end to the hosting of US war-fighting and spy bases on Australian soil and visits by foreign warships and military aircraft.
- No involvement in the US missile defence program.
- End government support for Israel and campaign to secure government support for the just settlement of Palestinian demands.
- An immediate reduction in the military budget of not less than 10 per cent, followed by further cuts over time.
- An end to the supply of military equipment to and the provision of military training or joint military exercises with repressive regimes in the region.
- An international treaty to reduce and finally eliminate all nuclear weapons by all countries.
- Freeing the Asia-Pacific region of nuclear weapons, particularly naval nuclear weapons, their support systems and bases.
- Setting up nuclear-free zones, with guarantees from the nuclear weapons powers.

The CPA has a key role to play in the labour movement and the broader peace movement to ensure that these struggles are taken up by all sections of the working class and that a class-based analysis of imperialism is projected within the movement.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN AUSTRALIA

The Howard years were a disaster for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The government led a stubborn rearguard action to deny the reality of the 1788 invasion, to deny the policies of genocide, to refuse to recognise the monstrous history of the Stolen Generations and, above all, to limit, delay and, if possible, scuttle the land claims of indigenous Australians.

Appealing to latent racist tendencies and a widespread perception that Aboriginal peoples received special treatment, the Howard Government denied the existence of the Stolen Generations and refused to consider an apology for the misguided policies of earlier governments, dramatically reduced spending on Aboriginal affairs, disbanded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), watered down Native Title legislation, and even attempted to interfere in the curriculum of schools and universities and the approach of museums in representing the treatment of indigenous peoples in Australia's colonial past .

In June 2005, Howard abolished the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the only national, democratically elected indigenous voice.

In June 2007, Howard launched his “emergency intervention” into the Northern Territory. Two months later the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act was passed, giving the government power to acquire Aboriginal land and hold back fifty per cent of all welfare payments for necessary items. The government scrapped the permit system which had enabled Aboriginal communities to control entry into their land and deal with social issues such as alcohol abuse.

Behind the intervention in the Northern Territory was the desire of the capitalist corporations to wrest control of Aboriginal lands from the local communities so they could better exploit the mineral wealth below.

A new Aboriginal activism began to develop in response to the ultra-right wing Howard Government's onslaught on Aboriginal rights and land ownership.

Apology

With the election of the Rudd Government in late 2007, a new sense of hope developed among Aboriginal people.

Responding to an overwhelming demand, expressed in the intense and broad struggle which swept him and the Labor Party to office, Prime Minister Rudd

made a full apology to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Federal Parliament on February 13, 2008.

This was an important symbolic act and a significant contribution to healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

However, little has been done since that first highly emotional act of the Rudd Government which continues to support the NT intervention. There is a growing sense of disillusion among many in the Aboriginal community about the effectiveness and intent of the ALP policies. Rudd's commitments will remain empty promises until people power forces real change.

The campaign for justice for Lex Wotton, a respected community leader from Palm Island, has become a symbol of the long struggle against racism and the killings of indigenous Australians, particularly young men in custody.

After the brutal death in custody on Palm Island of Mulrunji Doomadgee, Lex Wotton was arrested and charged for being part of the justifiable protests against the murder. The policeman charged with Doomadgee's death was acquitted. Mr Wotton has been jailed. The double standards are blatant.

The trial, conviction and jailing of Lex Wotton for six years is a national disgrace. He should be released and the sentence set aside.

Land Rights

Central to the fulfilment of Aboriginal rights is the possession by Aboriginal communities of communal and inalienable title to their land, including the minerals and other natural resources on and within it and in adjacent seas.

Conservative forces, above all the big (mostly foreign) pastoral and mining concerns refuse to recognise the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as the original occupiers and owners of the land.

For the ruling class of capitalist Australia private property is sacred, not concepts of justice or what is right.

The Communist Party of Australia remains committed to the campaign to win recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original occupiers and owners of Australian territory and their right to own and control their land and resources.

CPA Policies

The CPA recognises that the issues confronting indigenous Australia are complex, resulting from a long history of colonisation, dispossession and injustice and require long-term policy solutions.

The CPA also supports financial and other support for programs under

Aboriginal control to upgrade Aboriginal health, employment, housing and educational standards. Support must be provided for the maintenance and enrichment of the culture and beliefs of the indigenous people.

The CPA recognises the development of a new indigenous activism in response to the ultra-conservative policies of the Howard Government. In response to the continuing diversity of the Australian indigenous community the CPA encourages wide-ranging discussions and consultation in seeking support for its program.

More specifically the CPA supports:

- Communal and inalienable land rights for Aboriginal communities.
- An immediate review of the effectiveness of the Native Title legislation with a view to strengthening the powers of Aboriginal communities wishing to oppose developments such as the Kimberley's natural gas project.
- The immediate rescinding of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act and its discriminatory provisions for Aboriginal peoples and the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act in the NT.
- The restoration of the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) program to all indigenous communities that request it.
- The establishment as soon as possible of a genuinely representative national Aboriginal advisory body to be elected by registered Aboriginal voters at the same time as each Federal election.
- The ongoing campaign for the restoration of unpaid wages to Aboriginal peoples as a result of previous protection policies.
- A Federal Inquiry or Royal Commission into the death of Mulrunji Doomadgee and subsequent events on Palm Island including the imprisonment of Lex Wotton and reports of Queensland police harassment of his supporters.
- The establishment of a Federal Ombudsman with sole responsibility for investigating complaints by indigenous people of their treatment by the criminal justice system of the states, territories and Australian governments.
- The abolition of the current celebration of Australia Day and its replacement by a more meaningful, respectful and relevant national day that can be celebrated by all Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous.
- The introduction of compulsory Aboriginal Studies programs in teacher training courses and in the school curriculum and, where practical and applicable, the introduction of Aboriginal language programs in schools.

Many of the planks of this program would see the Commonwealth finally using the powers given to it in an overwhelming vote by the people of Australia in the Referendum of 1967. Action is needed now.

The working class, trade unions and community movements which brought about the defeat of the Howard Government must now unite with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander movements to win their rights.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is a developed capitalist economy, heavily dependent on the export of raw materials such as coal, iron ore, wool, and natural gas. It ranks 14th among the advanced capitalist countries.

Australian industries are controlled by large industrial corporations and over 2,300 affiliates of 680 transnational corporations operate in Australia. Large agri-business controls wool, wheat, cattle and livestock. Billionaire businessmen have accumulated large financial and business empires in agriculture, mining, media and gambling and exercise extensive influence over the Australian economy through a series of monopoly holdings.

Governments are dominated by these interests and also swayed by large firms through direct lobbying, links on company boards and other means which bind the government with the monopoly owners.

Between 60 and 70 of the top 200 companies operating in Australia are owned by US transnationals. Japanese, British, German and French companies are also involved. Foreign direct investment has played a major part in the Australian economy and this has influenced Australia's foreign policies.

The struggle against economic and political domination by British capital and now even more by American finance has been a key element in the long Australian fight for national independence.

Australian companies invest in the US and Europe, but the Asia-Pacific region remain the major economic focus. Australian intervention in Fiji, the Solomons, East Timor, Bougainville and Indonesia has been motivated primarily by the interests of mining and other monopolies and by oil and gas interests.

Trade with China, India and Japan forms the largest part of export driven commodities and the trade with China and India has been growing most rapidly.

Imports from China increased from just over \$10 billion in 2000 to over \$20 billion in 2005. Exports to China have risen in the same period from just over

\$5 billion to over \$15 billion. Imports from India have remained relatively constant at just under \$1 billion but exports to India have risen from the same low base to \$5 billion over the same period.

Australia is a middle-range imperialist state. It has been involved in wars in the region and acted as a base for British and American interests. Today US imperialism dictates Australian foreign policy, sending Australian troops to wherever the White House decides, to Korea, to Vietnam, to Afghanistan to Iraq.

Historically in the Pacific, Australia has worked to secure what were British or later American interests. Australia has a military force that is trained and equipped as a support for the US war machine.

The Australian people have a long history of struggle for national independence.

It began at the Eureka Stockade, when the diggers lost the battle but won the war against British troops. Years later, when the representative of the British Queen sacked the Whitlam Government, many thousands marched in protest, carrying the Eureka flag as a statement of independence.

When the US attacked Iraq, massive demonstrations demanded that no Australian troops be sent. It was a demand for a peaceful solution, a demand for an independent decision by the Australian people. The struggle for an Australian republic is another one of the many campaigns for national independence.

Twenty-five years of neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism represents the most conservative economics of the capitalist system, and arises out of the demands and needs of the process of globalisation. It is the economic arm of the transnational corporations in their pursuit of greater monopolisation of and control over the world's resources and markets. By necessity, it goes hand-in-hand with ultra-conservative politics and greater oppression and heightened exploitation of the working peoples of the world.

During the past 25 years of neo-liberalism, the working class of Australia, as elsewhere, has been subjected to an all out offensive and heightening of the class struggle by capital in almost every sphere of life. This attack has resulted in a serious weakening of the trade union movement, both in numbers and ideologically, and the loss of many important social and workplace gains won by trade unions and other progressive forces in over a century of struggle.

The economy has undergone a massive restructuring. The Whitlam Labor Government (1972-75) began the process of winding back tariffs and abolishing import quotas in the mid-1970s. This process, continued by the Fraser, Hawke-Keating, Howard and now Rudd Governments, has all but crucified the

clothing, textile and footwear and the vehicle industries in Australia. When the process began, the manufacturing sector employed over 35 per cent of the workforce. It is now less than ten per cent.

The failure of governments to engage in economic planning coupled by deregulation of the financial sector and free trade agreements has left Australia at the mercy of the corporate sector – the so-called market forces. They show no mercy in pursuit of profits.

Australia continues to be a resource basin for plunder by transnational corporations and export of primary commodities. Successive governments have encouraged the growth of the financial sector, tourism and hospitality, and the export of education at the expense of the industrial sector. Structurally, our reliance on these areas and an agricultural sector plagued by droughts and floods and climate change, has many similarities to a Third World country. Coupled with the floating of the Australian dollar by the Hawke Government, these developments explain why the Australian dollar collapsed so rapidly when the global economic crisis set in.

The source of investment capital has also undergone considerable restructuring with greater reliance on the retirement savings of workers. Prior to the global financial crisis the pool of retirement savings of workers and retirees in superannuation funds was larger than the amount held by banks in savings accounts. This transformation is the direct result and one of the prime aims of the system of compulsory superannuation. Another aim is to wind back the age pension – a gradual privatisation of the age pension. Superannuation involves a transfer of risk from the financial sector, which invests the savings, to the individuals whose savings are being invested. The financial institutions rake in their profits, at no risk, through the handsome fees they charge for their services. Meanwhile, superannuation funds are bleeding; it is not uncommon to hear of employees and retirees whose superannuation funds have lost 30, 40 or even 60 per cent or more.

The Communist Party of Australia raises the demand for a national superannuation scheme, which protects workers' savings and guarantees a specified income in retirement, which workers could join and roll existing funds into on a voluntary basis. The funds of such a scheme should be invested in the development of the public sector including the reintroduction of state public works departments which builds schools, hospitals, transport facilities and other public infrastructure. Currently public infrastructure money is given to private corporations who gouge large profits from the public purse.

Public better than private

The development of a large public sector, where enterprises and services are run on the basis of public need, not private greed, is a fundamental pillar of

CPA policy. Philosophically, successive Labor and Coalition governments have been committed to an intensive program of privatisations. Some have been by the direct sale of government assets such as the state insurance offices, the Commonwealth Bank, Telstra, real estate, water and energy plants. Other privatisation has taken place by less overt methods, where the private company or group have not been required to make any capital outlays. Instead they have been given long contracts to manage a government facility or service. The government foots the bill for the assets and in some cases guarantees certain profit levels at considerable cost to the taxpayer when these results were not achieved. Public private partnerships (PPPs) are another form of backdoor privatisation – the private sector reaps the profits and taxpayers carry the losses.

At federal, state and local government levels, government responsibilities are being gradually handed over to the private sector. A number of government departments have been quietly merged and dismantled, public servants sacked, and the work they previously did contracted out to the private sector. This includes the running of prisons, services for the unemployed, policy development, work of the Australian Taxation Office, and the use of private security companies such as those who stand guard at Australian Defence Force establishments. Privatisation results in a fundamental change in the objective of service provision from one of providing government or the public with a service based on needs to one where the service becomes a vehicle for making private profits.

As the commuting public are well aware, in those states where public transport has been privatised, services that do not turn a substantial profit are cut, maintenance declines, corners are cut, fares increase and governments can still end up subsidising services and picking up the pieces when the corporations concerned walk away, leaving a rundown system in need of billions of dollars of upgrading. Blackouts have become a way of life in Victoria and South Australia where private electricity companies find it more profitable to have outages than make the investment in capacity and carry out the necessary maintenance to ensure reliable service at all times including peak usage.

Apart from providing new sources of profit-making, privatisation involves a transfer of power from sovereign, elected governments to corporate board-rooms whose whole *raison d'être* is the making and accumulating of private profits.

The public sector was a major employer of apprentices; it offered relative job security and better working conditions to those often found in the private sector. As a job creator, it provides more jobs for the same outlay than the private sector. As a service provider it can be more reliable, more efficient and inherently cheaper because the layers of profit-gouging are absent.

Public housing has taken a hammering over recent years, with public housing

stock gradually being privatised or neglected. The former public works departments that built and carried out maintenance on hospitals, schools, public housing, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been dismantled and their functions privatised. The term “public service” has been redefined from meaning a service provided by the public sector to a service which is used by the public and increasingly provided by the private corporations.

There have been campaigns against some of the sell-offs of public enterprises but in other areas where the privatisation is less direct much more needs to be done to create public awareness. There is no doubt that the majority of Australian people still oppose the privatisation of basic public services such as Australia Post, electricity, water and transport and the introduction of private tollways, but have less awareness of where governments are taking the education, health and welfare systems.

Privatisation of welfare

A massive ideological war is still being waged to gain public acceptance for the privatisation of public services and areas of governance itself and for the withdrawal of the state from taking responsibility for the well-being of the people and society at large.

Without denying its weaknesses and inadequacies, the “welfare state”, as it has become known, to varying degrees contained certain important principles including:

- The state taking responsibility for the provision of basic infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the community and business.
- Universal access to services, with some, such as education, free, others heavily subsidised such as health, public housing, public transport.
- Support for those unable to provide for themselves on an ongoing basis or during specific stages of their life in times of need – e.g. unemployment, old age, disability, sickness, homelessness, poverty.
- The central raising of revenue through a progressive taxation system where those on higher incomes paid at a higher rate to fund public services.

The term “welfare” has been stigmatised, as though welfare recipients are a burden on society that must be eliminated. The political Right is pushing the line of “self-reliance” and “self-provision”, where people should take responsibility and provide for themselves during thick and thin. This philosophy goes in hand-in-hand with privatisation and the introduction of “user pays” for services that were once provided free of charge by government from general revenue.

Their aim is to destroy what remains of the welfare state, which has already

suffered a considerable hammering, and for the private sector to provide “public” services on a fee-for-service basis – a fee that turns a handsome profit. One of their aims is to reduce taxes on incomes as far as possible. Some even argue for the abolition of income taxes, with government relying mainly on the GST – a consumption tax. Those that cannot manage will be left to the philanthropists, church and other charities. Philanthropy, encouraged by the Howard Government, has become a big business in its own right with spin-offs for the corporate sector.

This is a long-term project. It is obvious that the majority of people would not be in a position to individually provide for education, housing, sickness, unemployment and retirement if the government suddenly withdrew from its collective pooling and use of resources as is done presently. The theory is that individuals contribute to special savings accounts throughout their working life; these funds are dedicated for particular purposes and cannot normally be used for anything else. The government makes special contributions to the accounts of low income earners. This is the model being trialled with superannuation, and was recently introduced by the Rudd Government for a first home savings account. The idea is to extend this approach into other areas so that individuals can provide their own income during periods of unemployment or sickness and for their own or children’s education.

One of the aims of the Future Fund set up by the Howard Government and those set up by the Rudd Government is to provide ongoing income through their investments for governments to assist individuals with payments.

Education

The CPA supports an education system which promotes collective and democratic values, co-operation not individualism, equality not discrimination, multiculturalism not racism, and the ideals of peace and progress.

The guiding principle and aim of the education system must be the provision of free, universal and secular public education for all children to produce a highly literate and cultured society. The public education system must be strengthened with increased funding for teaching and non-teaching staff, for the building and maintenance of classrooms, and the purchase of resources. State aid to non-government schools must be phased out.

Education is being privatised, much of it being carried out by stealth, in small steps. Each step in itself appears relatively innocuous, but when added together constitute fundamental change. The Federal Government now gives more money to church and other non-government schools than to government schools. States still spend considerably more on state schools than private ones, but the gap is being narrowed. State education systems are being grad-

ually decentralised and state schools given more autonomy to hire and fire teachers and greater control over their all too small budgets.

Competition between schools, league tables and fees are part of the process of commodifying education, of creating an education market where parents can shop around. A proposed voucher system, if it goes ahead, will give the parent of each child, regardless of where the child goes to school, a voucher worth the same amount to be paid to the school of choice by the government. Schools will be free to charge fees over and above the value of the voucher and “choice” will be limited by ability to pay. Many students are being disadvantaged by schools fees and refused necessary school books and equipment if they have not paid school fees. If the strong opposition by teacher unions fails to stop its introduction, the voucher system will be the final nail in the coffin of the free, secular education system with universal access that was established in some states as long ago as the 1870s, a system that has already suffered considerable stress through diversion of state funding to church and other private schools.

An Australian Education Union survey of 1,396 state school principals across Australia found the majority had to raise funds for basic classroom equipment and nearly 70 per cent of schools needed major upgrades. It is scandalous that there are schools where children and teachers are working in rooms and buildings that are a hazard to their health, where in this age of modern technology, some primary schools do not have enough computers.

The battle for the control of the curriculum continues with ultra-conservative forces, including the Christian Right, attempting to remove progressive elements of programs and instil a narrow conservative outlook of history and current developments along with values of individualism and competition. These forces oppose the teaching of Australian history prior to white occupation and promote the lie of *terra nullius* (the legal fiction that Australia belonged to no one before it was colonised by the British). They reject the teaching of history in an analytical manner that goes beyond dates and names of rulers. They strongly object to the teaching of indigenous culture and traditions, to the inclusion of environmental issues, or women’s and peace studies. They want creationism taught instead of evolution. This was the line of the Howard Government and amongst the present leadership of the Labor Government there are strong supporters of that narrow, conservative education agenda. It remains to be seen how far the Rudd Government goes down that path with its national curriculum. Teacher unions will need all the support they can get from the community and other trade unions if they are to defend the progressive elements of existing school programs.

Universities have been converted into businesses and are well down the path towards complete privatisation. They are run as corporations, competing for students on international markets, exporting education “products”. The development of universities as businesses has put pressure on the humanities

subjects and on the security and working conditions of academics. This has resulted in tighter links and increasing dependence of universities with the corporate sector for finance. Corporations have gained greater control over curriculum and research through such means as funding of chairs and research projects. Universities are also experiencing the same problems arising from the economic crisis as other businesses.

University fees continue to rise and student allowances are inadequate. Many prospective students, in particular women and indigenous Australians, and those from lower income brackets are unable to take up university studies because they do not have an adequate income to support them through their studies or because they fear graduating with a huge HECS debt hanging over their head.

TAFE, where many working class students choose to gain vocational and trade qualifications, is also on the path to privatisation. The Howard Government favoured the development of private training institutions in competition with TAFE and the phasing-in of fees has continued under the Rudd Government. New “training packages” are lowering standards in vocational training courses.

The CPA calls for the abolition of fees in public educational institutions at all levels, and the phasing-out of subsidies to private schools, colleges and universities. Voluntary student unionism should be abolished and universities should return to universal student unionism.

Health

The Communist Party of Australia supports a national health system in which the public sector offers all Australians high quality, free and accessible medical and dental treatment, hospital and community care and other health services. It is the responsibility of government to fund health care from centrally raised revenue through a progressive taxation system. The CPA places high importance on the use of preventative and early intervention strategies and the principles of universality and equity.

The public health system has become unmanageable as a result of privatisation, with public money being siphoned off with the ever increasing cost of private services. Over a long period of time governments have lost control of the cost of many services – diagnostics, pathology, catering, cleaning and linen services.

The increasing cost of pharmaceuticals and over-priced medical equipment also weighs down the public system. Private specialists, many who utilise public facilities, are a big drain on the health system. The private profits of corporations providing services to the public health system soak up the increasing amounts of money spent by taxpayers on the health budget.

The wasteful and ineffective private health insurance rebate should be withdrawn and the billions of dollars saved should be used to fully finance the public health system, including dental care, the PBS, the public hospital system, aged care services, special facilities for young people with disabilities, preventative community and outreach programs for the frail elderly in the home, and to train more medical specialists. It is scandalous that around forty per cent of Australia's doctors were trained overseas; a rich country such as Australia should not be draining Third World countries of their doctors, nurses and other health professionals.

With the release of the National Health and Hospital Commission's review, the government's "health reform" agenda has become clear. Following in the footsteps of its predecessor, the Rudd Labor Government has embarked on a program to firmly embed the private health sector as a central provider of health insurance and health services in Australia. It marks a major shift in the policy and philosophy that underpinned the original Medibank (Whitlam Labor Government) and its successor Medicare (Hawke Labor Government). It would take Australia down the same path as the far more expensive US-style health system and eventually leave millions of Australians without adequate care. The "reforms" would effectively hand over the Medical Benefits Scheme (Medicare), the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), a new dental scheme, and public and private hospital cover to the private health insurance (PHI) industry.

Under the new Medicare Select, every individual would automatically belong to a government operated health and hospital plan under a voucher system. They can then select to move to a not-for-profit or private health insurance fund of their own choosing and sign up for their own individual "health and hospital plan". The insurance fund would receive a "risk-adjusted" allocation of funds from the government for each member – the amount would depend on the age, medical history, and other possible risk factors of the individual.

The insurance company would then be responsible for paying hospitals, doctors and other providers with the money that Medicare would have in the past. It would guarantee a very basic minimum of hospitalisation and medical services, with most patients likely to be left with co-payments for out of hospital services. Those wanting a higher level of service beyond the very basic treatment would be able to top up with additional medical and hospital cover. The outcome would be a private managed health care system along similar lines to that in the US.

The government payment is attached to the individual – hence the term voucher. It is the government's contribution towards payment of medical and hospital services for that individual. This voucher covers a very basic level of cover, referred to as "universal service entitlement". It is economic rationalism (neo-liberalism) at its worst, where health care is treated as a commodity and the public sector is there to subsidise an unsustainable private system

and ensure its profitability. The new Medicare Select means that people will be able to “select” what medical services their health insurance company covers them for with their choice only limited by their ability to pay.

The health funds will shop around on the health market and purchase services from competing public and private providers for their members. A fund may buy places in public or private hospitals for its members. Dr Tim Woodruff, President of the Doctors’ Reform Society, sums it up: “Choice remains a taxpayer subsidised option for the minority of Australians who can afford PHI and can queue jump public hospital waiting lists, whilst the most needy just wait. They have no choice. Vested interests remain untouched.”

Currently public hospital funding is capped with the states and federal authorities negotiating agreements every five years, and roughly splitting the amount 50-50. The running of public hospitals is left to the states. The Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) which pays doctors outside hospitals (Medicare), and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) which covers much of (or even all of for some patients) the costs of prescriptions, are the responsibility of the Federal Government, and are uncapped. The government also subsidises the private hospital system by refunding 30-40 per cent of the private health insurance premiums paid by those who take out private insurance. This is uncapped and in the region of \$4 billion per annum, and rising.

Public hospitals

The states and our public hospitals are under tremendous pressure because of fixed budgets that fall far short of what is required to fund them. They are finding it extremely difficult to maintain the high quality of services they have provided in the past, due to lack of staffing, resources and bed shortages. This is a deliberate result of state and federal government policies that use fear and desperation to drive more people into the private hospital system. The 30-40 per cent private health insurance rebate was introduced to assist them financially.

The situation is compounded by the fact that public hospitals have become the “default” solution or place of last resort for many patients in the system. A shortage of GPs, lack of access to bulk billing, lack of community care for those with mental illness, and the privatisation of aged care mean more patients end up in emergency departments and expensive public hospital beds when they should not be there. Yet the Federal Government persists with its caps on the number of GPs and aged care packages as a means to cap health budgets.

The private sector contributes only 7.5 per cent of health funding and almost exclusively for elective surgery and at double the bed day cost of the public system. The privately insured are charged double for their bed days in private hospital for elective surgery but then almost exclusively depend on the public

system for major illness or injury. Private health insurance thus remains a big scam with the major cost borne by the taxpayer and the public system.

In the long term, funding issues can also be resolved by measures to improve primary care and frontline services, including community health and aged care so people receive care outside hospitals where it is much cheaper and so the sick and elderly do not languish in expensive hospital beds due to failure to find an aged care bed when it is needed. Some of these issues and the importance of preventative health care programs are acknowledged in the government review of the health system, but with its emphasis on the private sector providing these services it will remain more costly and less effective.

States should continue to run public hospitals but with increased funding and increased transparency in order to reduce cost shifting between the two levels of government. There should be no Federal takeover of public hospitals as this would reduce democratic running of the hospital system and also for practical reasons. The Federal level does not have the necessary expertise or legislative framework. The Mersey Hospital takeover by the Federal level, for example, was a failure for the latter reasons.

Primary care

Under the current walk-in, walk-out method of fee-for-service payment for doctors outside of hospitals, there is reluctance for doctors to work as a team or to tackle complicated or difficult patient health problems. The perverse incentive under the current model of payment is for doctors to “churn” patients through and that means the elderly, the chronically ill, the mentally ill and many others miss out on adequate care and can end up in expensive and often inappropriate hospital care.

We support a reformed and strengthened primary care/frontline health service, including general practice and the public community health system. Under the community health system introduced by the Whitlam Government, community health centres were built in local communities with ready access for the public. They were staffed by publicly paid community nurses, early childhood nurses, mental health workers, alcohol and other drugs workers, youth counsellors, family counsellors, allied health professionals and medical officers. In recent times this model of public primary care has been undermined with Medicare and other government funding diverted to private, fee-for-services providers. This process needs to be reversed. In addition GP practices should be encouraged to co-locate with existing community health centres. This should be attractive to GPs, many of whom now have to work in private practices run by entrepreneurs.

We should support trials of a limited voluntary patient enrolment scheme, especially for mothers and children to promote continuity of care and family care by GPs and health services.

This is not the same as the “patient-centred” health system outlined in the National Health and Hospital Commission’s recommendations which are a reincarnation of earlier proposals for an ID card. Under the Commission’s proposals the individual would have a “person controlled” electronic health record along with the centralised data. It involves the recording of unique personal identifiers for centralising and matching up of data by government agencies, not just medical records such as prescriptions, visits to doctors, hospital stays and treatments, but links to taxation, social security and other government records. The whole system is voluntary, but government payments are conditional on being part of it. It is the old ID smart card revisited in the name of “e-health”.

Rural and remote

Reforms are required to Medicare funding of rural and remote Australia, such as the inclusion of block funding to address lack of services and relatively lower volume of services due to small populations. Funding should be based on the health needs of the population and services organised to facilitate access. Special measures are required to ensure adequate coverage of services. In some rural and remote, even regional areas, many basic services are non-existent.

Aged care

Privatisation has led to a fall in quality of aged care facilities, including de-skilling of the aged care work force. An enrolled nurse is much cheaper to employ than a registered nurse and a nurse’s aid or unqualified person is much cheaper again and no nurse or carer is the cheapest! While some facilities offer wonderful services, these are few and far between and out of the price range of most elderly people and their families. The elderly frail are now receiving less care and are being ferried back and forth to expensive hospital care, even for basic health complaints because there is no qualified nurse or GP in attendance. It is estimated that at least 2,000 elderly Australians a day are occupying expensive public hospital beds simply through lack of an available aged care bed for them.

The CPA calls for increased funding of aged care and immediate scrapping of aged care privatisation policies as a means of improving care to the elderly and taking pressure off public hospitals and frontline GP services.

Mental health

There needs to be an increased emphasis on the role of primary health care in providing mental health for high prevalence conditions (anxiety and depression) as well as psychotic disorders. An integrated approach to providing both physical and mental health care is required to address the high morbidity/mortality burden of people with serious mental illness. This integrated

approach could be achieved with specialist support through shared care schemes. The mental health system is overburdened due to a lack of resourcing and support for community and primary health care. Increased funding through the provision of case managers and outreach workers is as important as funding the specialist mental health system. It is particularly important in rural and remote areas.

Dental health

It is criminal that in such a prosperous country as Australia hundreds of thousands of people remain on dental waiting lists, many of them in considerable pain. Many thousands go without treatment until a crisis situation arises and then are forced to seek radical treatment. Dental health affects the health of the whole body and preventative care, including regular checkups, should be an integral part of any scheme. For this to happen, the services must be affordable and accessible.

There is overwhelming support in the community for adding oral health to Medicare and bulk billing. The government's recognition that oral health should be covered by health insurance is important. The Howard Government introduced a scheme by which Australians with chronic illness can access dental care in the private system with refunds through Medicare. Dental coverage under Medicare should be extended to all Australians and public dental services expanded to make bulk billing universally available.

The CPA opposes the Denticare scheme being considered by the government because it would introduce a voucher system which relies heavily on the private sector and would only covers a limited range of very basic services. Dental care should not be treated separately from other aspects of a person's health.

Indigenous health

A substantial additional investment is required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care. We support the concept of an Aboriginal Health Authority funding Aboriginal primary health care equitably across Australia. The authority must be an independent statutory body rather than part of the Department of Health and Aging and governance of the Authority must be negotiated with National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

Aboriginal community controlled health services (ACCHS) must be the preferred provider of Aboriginal primary health care given that they are governed by Aboriginal people elected from their communities and have a track record of providing holistic comprehensive care, despite being chronically underfunded. This sector should receive the bulk of the additional primary health care investment. There also needs to be a mechanism to monitor the perform-

ance of the mainstream health system in regard to Aboriginal health with funding consequences if standards are not met.

CPA Policies

The CPA calls for nationalisation of the health system as the most efficient and cost effective way of delivering health services to the public. Steps in this direction include:

- Increased funding for Medicare based on the principles of universal access and bulk billing, centrally funded from a progressive tax system. Services rather than individuals to be funded.
- Scrapping of the 30-40 per cent private health insurance rebate and an end to the big tax subsidies for the wealthy who take out PHI.
- Fixing of public hospitals as urgent priority if we are to have any chance of fixing the health system. States to continue to run public hospitals but with increased funding and increased transparency in order to reduce cost shifting between the two levels of government.
- Inclusion of bulk-billed dental services in Medicare.
- Retention of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme by the Federal Government, with increased funding. Free prescriptions for age pensioners, the unemployed, other welfare recipients and other disadvantaged groups. An immediate lowering of the prescription fee and safety net for those who do not qualify for free medications.
- Increased funding and services for aged care, mental health care, special youth facilities and community care programs provided by the public sector.

Governance requires significant public input or even control in some communities and areas. The community health centre model with salaried general practitioners should be expanded with initial priorities being rural areas and low socio-economic areas. Funding for community health centres need to be simplified.

Recession in Australia

When economic crisis set in, governments turned to measures to increase purchasing power. In Australia, the first stimulus package in December 2008 took the form of \$10.4 billion in cash handouts targeted at families, carers and age pensioners. The message was “spend, spend, spend”, a recognition that demand needed to be increased or companies would go bust, more jobs would be lost, purchasing power would decline further and the economy plunge deeper into recession.

This package was followed by another three months later, again with a large

component of one-off payments to those on low and middle incomes. In addition there were a number other measures for the provision of infrastructure, insulation of homes and urgent maintenance in schools. The strategy aimed to stimulate spending and create mostly temporary employment with a life of two to three years. There was relatively little that looked beyond that period and the underlying neo-liberal policies of deregulation and privatisation remained in tact.

There is an impression that the Rudd Labor Government has abandoned its policy of economic conservatism (neo-liberalism by another name) and is reverting to the post-war era of Keynesian economics with its intervention (handouts and projects) in the economy. This is a false impression.

The Australian Government has not curbed the operations of the financial institutions and corporations receiving its support. It has not given any indication that it will take measures to regulate currency trading, foreign investment or trade. It is business as usual.

The Rudd Government is also calling for wage restraint or wage cuts because, it claims, higher wages will cause job losses.

The Rudd Government has allocated large amounts of public money to infrastructure spending. On the surface this may be appealing but when properly looked at it can be seen that most of the projects have been chosen to benefit the private sector. Examples are port and rail facilities for the coal companies, road projects which benefit developers by providing road transport to make their land developments for housing and industry more attractive and profitable. The contracts for the so-called public works will go to big corporations which then gouge large profits from the public money.

People first policies

A constructive solution to the crisis requires short-term relief and far-reaching changes that can only be won and defended by the united actions of the working class, all progressive forces and others such as small business people and farmers who share an interest in bringing an end to the domination of the transnational corporations and financial corporations.

It involves real change in government policies. Such policies should be centred around:

- state control of the financial sector, including re-regulation of interest rates and currency and tighter regulations;
- outlawing of the many highly speculative practices and unregulated financial institutions;
- revamping the taxation system to enshrine the progressive taxation principle;

- immediate rise in wages, in pensions, unemployment and other social welfare benefits;
- a shorter working week with no loss in pay;
- a halt to privatisation of essential services and a start to reversing the process;
- no evictions or foreclosures;
- promotion and development of the public sector with nationalisation or establishment of a state-owned insurance company and bank based on a strong and democratic social charter;
- immediate slashing of ten per cent of the military budget freeing up \$2.6 billion for health, education, pensions, etc;
- establishment of a national public superannuation fund that provides defined benefit payments (regular fortnightly payments based on contributions) above the age pension, guaranteed by government. Workers and retirees would be able to rollover their existing funds into this fund. All investments by such a fund to be directed towards social needs;
- increase in spending on public services and infrastructure – health, education, housing, pensions, unemployment benefits, as well as infrastructure for improved public transport, an expanded rail freight system, improved urban and rural water supply system and alternative sustainable energy, drawing heavily on the national superannuation fund;
- repeal of all legislation curbing democratic rights to protest and to defend people’s rights and interests, including legislation establishing the building industry police force (ABCC) and the ASIO and terrorism legislation;
- introduce laws guaranteeing basic trade union and workers’ rights including the right to strike.

The last two policy points are necessary to facilitate trade unionists, political activists and other community members to wage struggles against the policies that governments may be pursuing and to achieve change in the interests of the people.

Trade unions and industrial relations

Thirty-five years ago, around seventy per cent of workers belonged to a trade union; today trade union membership is approximately eighteen per cent. During that period the trade union movement has also undergone a serious weakening of its political and ideological position and militancy. Nonetheless, trade unions remain the largest and primary mass organisations of the working class.

The ruling class, with the assistance of successive Labor and Coalition governments and the mass media have waged an all out offensive against trade unions and their members. This has taken the form of an insidious ideological war, as well as more overt attacks on trade unions and their rights through such means as legislation. At the same time a general weakening of the communist and left forces during that period has contributed to a reduction in overall class consciousness and preparedness to take industrial action.

The ideological offensive began in earnest with the adoption of the Prices and Income Accord between the ACTU and the Hawke/Keating Government in 1983, just prior to that government's election in the midst of a serious recession. The underpinning philosophy of the Accord was co-operation with employers, that class struggle and conflict were to be replaced by co-operation in the workplace. Under the Accord the union movement agreed to restrain wages in return for social gains such as Medicare. The Accord organisationally and ideologically disarmed the working class. Regular, though not large, wage rises were delivered from the Industrial Relations Commission without struggle, and deals were thrashed out between employers and trade union officials on behalf of workers with little or no active participation of the rank and file. Demands by workers such as for larger wage rises were suppressed by union leaderships as breaching the Accord.

This period from the early 1983 until 1996 resulted in many workers not seeing the relevance of the trade unions because they seemed to have no role to play. The deals were done elsewhere, workers were disengaged and not required to activate themselves in struggle or industrial activity which therefore significantly declined as did real wages and working conditions. Instead of making demands for winning gains through struggle, unions set about trading off conditions for monetary or other gains. The 38-hour week was not won through struggle as an outright gain, but bought in many instances by selling off other conditions at no additional cost or even a profit to employers.

While class peace was being preached under the Accord, the employers were stepping up the class war.

Prior to the Accord, the prime vehicles for determining wages and conditions were union negotiated awards. Awards provided comprehensive and legally binding coverage of wages, working conditions and union rights, such as paid union meetings or union training. Awards covered workers and unions across an industry, trade or other occupation. They spanned many workplaces, even where there was little or no union coverage. They consolidated and preserved the gains won over more than a century of struggle. They were not on the table for renegotiation every few years.

Under the Accord and in the years that followed there was a gradual move away from the centralised system of awards to enterprise agreements and the introduction of the first individual contracts. When the Howard Government

took over in 1996, the process was speeded up, awards were stripped, non-union agreements and individual contracts (known as Australian Workplace Agreements or AWAs) were promoted. Bargaining was restricted to the enterprise level, weakening the ability of trade unions to protect workers in less organised or unorganised workplaces. Pattern bargaining, the negotiation or enforcement through struggle of mirror agreements across various enterprises or industries that bring about a common set of wages and working conditions, was outlawed.

Enterprise agreements in single workplaces have isolated workers and put fences around workplaces, diminishing solidarity and joint action around campaigns. The inward focus of enterprise agreements dulled the broader class sense of struggle for workers and generally fuelled the negative regression toward individual forms of employment such as AWAs and individual contracts.

Enterprise bargaining and individual contracts paved the way for wage reductions and a massive take-back by employers of hard won conditions. The negotiation of enterprise agreements and individual contracts, without a sound and comprehensive award underpinning them saw past gains on the table for renegotiation. Everything was up for grabs as far as employers were concerned.

At the same time as the determination of wages and conditions was being decentralised, successive governments, the Coalition in particular, passed an armoury of draconian anti-union, anti-worker laws. Strikes and other industrial action were virtually outlawed. Unions, union officials and workers could be fined for breaches of the law and sued for millions of dollars in damages by their employer and anyone else affected by their action. Legal industrial action – “protected action” – was limited to periods when a new enterprise agreement was being negotiated, and even then massive hurdles had to be jumped and protected action could be cancelled by the Commission. The crippling effect these draconian restrictions with their heavy penalties together with the ideological disarming of the union movement seriously curbed the capacity or preparedness of unions to act. This was a major factor in the decline of trade union membership.

The rampant drive and promotion of individualism is another key factor in the decline of unionism in Australia. The Howard Government drove this message with great intensity, deriding collective activity in all spheres of society and particularly amongst workers. This, linked with the promotion of individual contracts in industrial relations, played a significant role in undermining unions and their basic collective platform. Workers were told they had a choice – not to be in a union. Trade unions were presented as “third parties” that interfere in the relationship between an employee and employer. Unions were presented by the media and the government as being somehow divorced from their membership. Yet union members are the union, and unions

have democratic structures in which they participate and make decisions. Government and media also spoke negatively about “union bosses”, another attempt to alienate workers from their union.

Associated with the promotion of individualism and attempts to detach workers from unions, the use of contractors and sub-contractors was promoted. “Be your own boss”, had great appeal, especially if your boss was ripping you off. The hiring of contractors not only served to draw workers away from their unions but also removed basic conditions. Contract labour, not the employers who paid them, pay their own insurance, superannuation, sick and annual leave, etc. The destruction of the awards system saw the lifting of bans on casual and part-time labour. Casuals live a very precarious, insecure existence, not always knowing from day to day when they will have work, and any sniff of a trade union could mean no work. Casualisation has resulted in de-unionisation, loss of conditions, and it pits worker against worker – striking another blow at the spirit of collectivism and unity required by organised labour to defend working people.

Another factor contributing to the blurring of class consciousness has been the attempts by the ruling class to have workers see their fate tied to that of employers. As a result of the compulsory superannuation scheme introduced in the mid-1980s, almost every worker now has a monetary interest in the performance of shares on the stock market – the more profitable business is, the larger their retirement savings. The sale of Telstra and Commonwealth Bank shares to the “mums and dads” of Australia was a very clever ploy, adding to the impression that their interests were those of the largest corporations. Employee share schemes were another even more direct means – “go on strike or seek a large wage rise and you are hurting yourself”! With this, the lie is sold that workers are no longer exploited, they are also capitalists. This is the discredited idea of people’s capitalism.

The slide from the collective, union negotiated comprehensive award system to WorkChoices with its individual contract system represented a grave problem for Australian workers and required a strong response from the trade union movement. The focus of this response was on restoring some form of union-negotiated, industry-based collective agreements or awards. Pattern bargaining offers some opportunities in this respect and where possible we should be advocating and working toward the implementation of such a strategy for workers and trade unions. At the same time, it is imperative that basic trade union rights, including the right to strike and take other forms of industrial action, be fought for and won. Unions should be able to take action around working conditions, occupational health and safety matters, in support of negotiations, against injustices, in solidarity with other workers, on political questions, and any other matters they deem appropriate.

One of the significant features of trade union struggle over the last few years has been the increased level and qualitative change in the type of campaigning

as reflected in the Your Rights at Work Campaign. This well coordinated campaign across the entire union movement with community involvement was a major factor in the defeat of the Howard Government. The broadening of the trade union struggle against WorkChoices to include a broad coalition of forces within the community greatly strengthened the capacity of the trade union movement in building community opposition to WorkChoices laws and in the defeat of the Howard Government.

Another positive feature and qualitative development in the struggle was the attitude of a number of trade unions to the ALP. The Your Rights at Work movement campaigned in the name of the working people, the community and trade unions. The aim was to defeat the anti-union laws, and that meant throwing out the Howard Government. The focus on removing the Coalition as against electing Labor, although defeating the Coalition meant electing Labor, is a positive development. Some unions looked beyond Labor and made contributions to The Greens, another important development in the direction of seeking a political alternative to the two major parties.

When the Rudd Government was elected, many people had high expectations that WorkChoices would be torn up and replaced by more progressive industrial relations laws. Labor's new laws, Fair Work Australia, have fallen far short of those expectations. Fair Work Australia fails to address the real needs of workers or the aspirations of the community and Your Rights at Work campaigners. The most important improvement is that AWAs will be phased out, although employers will still have the option of common law individual contracts.

One of the major weaknesses in the legislation is its failure to legalise the right to take industrial action except for very narrow provisions for action during the negotiation of an enterprise agreement. Action during the life of an agreement, in solidarity with other workers or in support of political demands will remain illegal. Hefty penal provisions remain in place. Another serious failure of the legislation is that the anti-democratic Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) has not been abolished. It is being transferred into the Fair Work Australia authority under a new name. The danger remains that its provisions will be extended to other industries. The ABCC must be abolished. It denies workers and building unions fundamental democratic rights and is a major incursion on civil liberties for workers in Australia.

The Rudd Government is continuing with the destruction of awards through its "award modernisation" process. The main focus will be on enterprise bargaining – union or non-union – with a skeleton of an award, a set of legislated minimum conditions and a minimum wage underpinning agreements. The new laws contain numerous punitive restrictions on union rights, such as the docking of four hours' pay for even a moment's stoppage and bans on any form of industrial action in pursuit of multi-employer agreements. Pattern

bargaining has not been legalised as previously promised. Multi-employer agreements are in essence pattern bargained agreements.

CPA members should be active members of the trade union covering their occupation, industry or workplace. They should be doing all they can to build the trade union movement and develop unity within the movement. Party members have an important role to play in raising class consciousness and promoting policies in the best interests of the union, its members and the working class as a whole. Not all debates will be won, but the attitude and methods of work of CPA members in the trade union movement are extremely important and are decisive in the role that the Party can play. The relationship between the Party and the trade unions is extremely important. Trade unions are the property of their members. They are independent organisations that determine their own policies and actions through their own internal democratic structures. It is not the Party's role to dictate policy to trade unions.

The relationship between rank and file members of unions and the union leadership is vital. Effective trade unions have an organic link between the various levels of the union with a two-way flow of information. The policy of attacking all trade union leaders as being "bureaucrats" and "careerists" is dangerous and divisive. It does not build trade union or working class unity. There are negative elements in some unions, but struggles of principle, policy and direction should not become part of a blurred and perpetual criticism of everything that a union leadership does. This negativity is counter-productive and should be rejected.

Likewise trade union leaderships must build and develop the organisational capacity of the rank and file at workplace level. Workplace committees empowered with the responsibility of dealing with day-to-day issues are vital. The structures of the unions must include a robust and vibrant delegate structure which is united with the leaderships of unions. Top down leadership domination and unbridled rank and file control must both be rejected for a properly integrated unity between all levels of the union.

Democratic rights

The so-called war on terror was used by the Howard Government to launch a massive offensive on basic democratic rights. ASIO legislation gave Australia's intelligence organisation extensive police powers to detain and question innocent people. The anti-terror laws also extended powers of the state, removing long held fundamental principles of law, including habeas corpus (seeking relief from the unlawful detention), some of them dating back to the *Magna Carta*.

The provisions of these laws remove basic rights such as:

- the right to remain silent;

- the presumption of innocence;
- the onus of accusers to prove guilt;
- the right to a legal representative of one's own choosing;
- the right of the person detained and his/her legal representative to see evidence being used and to be present in court;
- freedom of speech after and during detention.

They also include:

- detention bypassing normal, public judicial processes;
- indefinite detention through repeated renewal of detention without charges being laid;
- silencing of media coverage.

The scope of the laws is such that, for example, under the amendments to the ASIO legislation, a person may be detained if he or she is believed to have heard something that might be of use to ASIO. If detained for questioning under an ASIO warrant, there is no right to silence even if the answer is self-incriminating, violating a long-standing fundamental principle of law. The penalty for not answering a question is up to five years in jail. ASIO act as police in deciding who is to be arrested or detained.

There is no legal requirement for ASIO to provide detainees or those charged with offences, or their legal representatives, with details of the evidence being used.

The whole process is shrouded in secrecy, and it is an offence to even tell anyone or report on what took place during questioning for two years after the event.

The case of Dr Mohammed Haneef illustrates the potential for abuse. An innocent man, he was detained without charges and his reputation attacked by state authorities, on the basis of totally unjustified suspicion by a politician or some executive of the authorities. The detention bypassed the laying of charges, hearing of evidence, judgement and sentencing in court.

The wording and scope of these laws is so broad that they are not only open to abuse as witnessed in the Haneef case, but have the potential to be used against any social movements or individuals protesting against or critical of governments, corporations or the Queen. They can also be used against other forms of dissent, including legitimate trade union activities.

The Communist Party of Australia is calling for the repeal of these laws and the inclusion of the fundamental legal and democratic rights, including those listed above, in any bill of human rights for Australia.

Women

The economic crisis has demonstrated the tenuous position of women in Australian society, particularly women workers. Gains made in times of relative economic prosperity are seriously threatened. Women workers are particularly vulnerable as they make up large numbers of the workforce in processing industries, small manufacture, retail, hospitality and financial institutions, which have adopted the practice over a number of years of employing casual and part-time workers. These are the areas experiencing the largest job losses during the recession. Migrant and indigenous women are the most disadvantaged in the community.

Women are still paid less than their male counterparts. They still have limited promotional prospects. They are still expected to be the main carers of children and to carry the main burden of housework. They still receive tougher sentences in law and are held legally responsible for children. These inequalities need to be addressed.

The immediate introduction of twelve months maternity leave on full pay for all women workers is overdue. So is the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The capitalist economic crisis, which has not prevented a lot of companies from making profits, or boosting the price of their shares or from laying off workers to cut costs and improve their inventories, is being used by employers to further delay the introduction of both these measures.

Employment on a part-time and casual basis does suit some women workers, particularly those with families to care for. However, it is in the interests of women and the workforce at large that the trend towards casualisation of employment be reversed and that employment, whether it is part-time or full-time, be on a permanent basis with full rights to all entitlements such as sick and other personal leave, annual leave and long service leave.

Equal pay for women workers continues to elude them. When equal pay was established in the 1970s it was necessary for the trade union movement to be able to prove that the work women did was equal to their male counterparts. This measure has been used ever since to deny women that right and the gap between men and women has increased. It remains a right for women and needs continuing campaigning to ensure it is achieved.

The CPA supports the right of parents to have paid parental leave. Along with the USA, Australia is the only country of the OECD which does not have paid parental leave as a right for workers.

The scheme announced in the 2009 Federal Budget is inadequate and inflexible. It absolves employers of any responsibility to contribute to this important institution and fixes payments at the level of the minimum wage. Eighteen weeks is too short a period for parental leave from the point of

view of bonding with children. Payments should support leave of at least 26 weeks.

Early childhood development for pre-school children continues to cost parents. Much of it is done through private services and by no means covers all pre-school children. It is recognised that the major development in children takes place in the period 0 to 5 years. Greater emphasis needs to be made of this important period of development and all pre-schoolers should have the right to such services without cost. It is part of the educational development of children and should not become a service for profit.

In the 10th annual *State of the World's Mothers* report, released on in May 2009, Australia ranked third last of 25 in its early childhood development, being ahead of only Canada and Ireland.

Australia met only two of ten nominated benchmarks, putting it among the lowest ranked countries. It provided subsidised and regulated childcare services for a quarter of children aged under three and having only fifty per cent of early education staff with relevant tertiary qualifications.

Benchmarks which Australia failed included the provision of a year's parental leave at half-pay, having priority plans for disabled children, subsidising early education services and spending one per cent of GDP on childhood services.

Women suffer in other ways from the economic crisis. A number of private childcare institutions have closed because of the instability of private enterprises. Many families are now without adequate childcare or forced to pay greater parts of their income for child care.

The provision of childcare is a common responsibility of our society and should not be open to private enterprise. The CPA supports the demand that all pre-school and after school centres be owned and operated by government or community based organisations as an integral part of the public education system.

Migrants

Australia is a country of immigrants and has one of the most diverse multicultural, multilingual, multi-faith populations in the world. In Australia, three million residents (16 per cent) speak a language other than English at home. Of these, 1.63 million (or 9 per cent of the total population) speak an Asian language at home. Of the almost 20 million Australians in the 2006 census, 29 per cent or almost 6 million were born overseas and almost one-third of Australians claim an ancestry which is not Anglo or Celtic.

Many newly arrived migrants are in low-paid jobs such as cleaners in hotels, factory workers, outworkers in the garment industry, hospitality and other in-

dustries. The policy of multiculturalism, which was introduced in the 1970s, was based on the rights of all Australians:

- to express their cultural identity and share their individual cultural heritage including their language and religion;
- to social justice, the right to equality of treatment and opportunity, the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender and place of birth; and
- to economic efficiency and the need to maintain develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians regardless of background.

However, in the last eleven years of the Howard Government, most of these progressive multicultural policies, access and equity and social justice were discarded and harsh, punitive measures were taken in practically all fields of government. Welfare, social security, immigration, industrial relations, child, aged care, family support, indigenous affairs, human rights and other international instruments were contravened by the former government. Economic rationalism with its philosophy of privatisation of essential services and user pays for government services, disadvantaged low income families and those who depend on pensions and other benefits provided by the government. As a result 2.5 million people live in poverty.

A big political issue, ruthlessly exploited in recent times by right-wing government, has been the increasing world-wide problem of asylum seekers and refugees. Forced migration is the result of political and economic instability, wars and other conflicts. The concentration of wealth in a few hands results in mass poverty in both developed and underdeveloped countries.

The result is often forced migration with millions of people exploited, discriminated, intimidated and living in abject poverty and separated from their families. Their terms of employment often resemble slavery. In this situation, people become a cheap commodity to be exploited in the global economy.

Capitalist governments put the interests of the market place, where the aim is to make huge profits, ahead of any human considerations.

More recently Australia's migration policy has emphasised skilled migration and migrants have to bear all the costs of migrating to Australia. In 1996, the Howard Government introduced and implemented General Skilled Migration (GSM).

In 2005, it expanded the scope of its temporary business visa system and included temporary work visas, which are now referred to as subclass 457. The Howard Government said this was designed to respond to the shortage of skilled workers. The current Rudd Government also acknowledges that there is a big shortage of skilled workers and there are plans to bring 300,000 skilled migrants here in the next two years.

The introduction of the new work visa system happened at about the same time as the changes to labour law when the Howard Government implemented WorkChoices in 2006. They wanted a workforce in whom they did not have to invest for education and training.

Skilled migrants spent thousands of dollars to attain their education and have saved or borrowed money to process their visa. Skilled migrants on average spend \$25,000 to process their visa application including airfares.

The Howard Government and big business said the temporary work visa system was meant to press down the wages of workers in Australia. Former Immigration Minister, Amanda Vanstone said the 457 Visa (temporary work visa) was introduced to do just this.

The Howard Government's policy on migration was based on neo-liberalism aimed at further exploitation of workers. With this perspective, big businesses and governments of wealthy countries such as Australia want a mobile workforce which they do not have to train and which could easily solve skill shortages in various industries. They legislate labour laws that clearly match the skilled migration program and the recruitment agencies are actually the mouthpieces for these labour law changes.

Some of the Howard Government's policy continues under the Rudd Government.

Many temporary work visa holders report that their employers and recruiters tell them not to become trade union members because their work visa could be cancelled. They pay taxes but are not eligible for welfare payments. Most live in fear of intimidation and harassment from employers. There is no adequate monitoring of employer responsibilities and individual awards are forced on them by many employers who also fail to inform them of their OHS rights.

Immigrants, refugees and guest foreign workers as well as internal migrants such as seasonal workers continue to be a source of cheap labour to enhance the profits of private enterprises. Migrants who enter Australia under the General Skilled Migration have to wait two years to access Newstart Allowance. They suffer a high level of disadvantage and are also forced into low paid jobs.

Employers benefit from such labour due to the low wages paid which in turn keep a brake on wages for the non-migrant sections of the workforce. Migrant workers are easily dispensed with in times of economic crisis and constitute a good part of the reserve army of labour for capitalist industries.

It is in the interests of capitalism to have migrants continue to occupy a low social status in Australian society. Racism is generally directed against the less well-off rather than the wealthier immigrants. Also for reason of geo-political ambitions, capitalism is currently directing racism and racist attacks

against Arabic speaking Muslim people using religion and differences in dress and customs as the basis for discrimination and racism at work and in the community.

The Communist Party of Australia demands that federal and state governments take stricter measures to monitor the conditions of immigrant workers and take strong action against employers who subject workers to harsh conditions and sub-standard rates of pay.

We fully support multiculturalism and those government and non-government agencies who seek to apply multiculturalism by helping ethnic communities retain their culture and heritage.

We welcome the goodwill of Australian residents who have taken steps to integrate immigrants and refugees into their communities.

We support migrant organisations which promote a progressive outlook and progressive actions in the interests of their communities and the broader social movements. Such organisations contribute by fostering a progressive ideology in Australian society, by campaigns for social justice and the rights of workers in Australia, as well as assisting the peace movement and struggles against imperialist intervention in various parts of the world.

Groups affiliated to and supporting overseas communist parties are part of the working class and progressive movement in Australia. Membership of the Communist Party of Australia by members of these groups and a collective effort by all to build and strengthen the CPA could further enhance their capacity and ability to extend their influence in their own communities. These groups demonstrate an internationalist spirit by participating in the Communist Alliance for the election of communists to Australian parliaments.

The CPA supports the following policies:

- A return to the philosophy of multiculturalism as the basis of immigration and social policy in Australia.
- Greater priority to be given to refugees, asylum seekers and family reunions in the total migrant intake.
- Biannual publication of the total immigration intake including its breakdown in terms of refugees and asylum seekers, family reunions, skilled migrants (by category of occupation).
- Abolition of the Immigration Restriction Zone established by the Howard Government.
- An end to mandatory detention and the abolition of immigration detention centres.
- Provision of appropriate support for refugees, including free counselling services.

- Increased funding to TAFE to overcome skilled shortages through increased training (both for current citizens and newly arriving migrants) within Australia.
- Increased government funding for other government agencies and community organisations supporting multiculturalism and migrant integration into Australian society, in particular the Adult Migrant English Service.
- The development of programs to encourage and assist migrants to settle in areas other than the major cities and densely populated areas.
- A public inquiry into the operation of 457 Visas that investigates abuses of this system, its impact of wages and the potential role of the trade union movement in its operation as well as its benefits to the migrant workers themselves and to local employers.
- Ratification of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers*.
- Abolition of the two-year waiting period for migrants to obtain social security and other benefits.
- Abolition of the present Citizenship Test and the reinstatement of the 1948 *Citizenship Act*.
- Implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Young workers

Young workers are disadvantaged by current workplace and training laws.

The introduction of traineeships has extended low wages for trainees across into non-traditional trades areas. These wages are based on an amount for time out of school and are well below the poverty line. They range from \$5.05 per hour for a school leaver to between \$11.96 to \$13.68 an hour for first year adult trainee and \$12.41 to \$14.20 for a second year trainee. These are payable for up to and even above five years. In some industries the rates of pay for young workers are so low that these are not the rates used. We should revive the call for equal wages for adult work and a ban on youth wages.

The vast number of youth in casual and part-time employment means that many young people have never known permanent employment.

The Rudd Government must lift these miserable rates and the trade union movement must move away from passive support for this exploitation of youth. This, coupled with the burden of HECS, places a whole generation of young people at a severe disadvantage for beginning their life and establishing their economic independence.

Political parties in Australia

The Australian Labor Party

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) is the oldest political party in Australia. It was founded by trade unionists as a response to the defeats and setbacks they suffered during the 1890s strikes in the pastoral and transport industries.

Although on paper the Labor Party retains a “democratic socialist objective”, it has never been a party of socialism. Instead it is committed to the maintenance and continuation of capitalism.

In past periods of economic growth, the Labor Party has supported reforms which improved the lives of working people. In periods of economic downturn, it has shown no hesitation in attacking workers’ conditions and rights.

The ALP leadership shifted decisively to the right in the early 1980s when economic rationalist policies were adopted. The conditions and rights of the trade union movement began to be attacked, public enterprises privatised, deregulation and competition policies introduced.

The ALP under Kevin Rudd identifies with New Labour in Britain and the Democratic Party in the United States and presents itself as the defender of a modern liberal democratic capitalism.

Under the pressures of the economic crisis, the ALP presents itself as a better manager of capitalism than the conservative parties, as the leader of a less greedy, kinder form of capitalism.

In foreign affairs, the Labor Party leadership strongly supports the US alliance and most of the foreign policies of US governments.

The ALP under Rudd continues to commit Australia to involvement with US military plans, to host US surveillance and war fighting bases and facilities for missile defence, and to US plans for the military encirclement of China. ALP policy includes support for Israeli aggression and dispossession of the Palestinian people. In the region, the ALP supports neo-colonialist policies to back the economic interests of transnational corporations.

While some environmental measures have been taken by Labor Party governments, generally the Labor Party put the interests of companies ahead of the environment.

The Labor Party remains a major force in the trade unions and there is a steady flow of union leaders into state and federal parliaments, representing the ALP. The Labor leadership still talks of the parliamentary and industrial wings of the labor movement.

Members of the Labor Party have played significant roles in many progressive mass campaigns and in the struggles of the workers. We must distinguish

between these ALP members and those party leaders who are integrated into the service of capital.

Communist Party members must build unity in action with such forces and encourage them to support progressive policies and struggles.

The Liberal Party

The Liberal Party is the party of big business in Australia. Always deeply conservative, in recent years it has moved further to the right.

The Liberal Party is committed to neo-liberal economic policies and the destruction of union rights and unions. In social policy it has undermined the public sector, restricted democratic rights, encouraged racism, and attacked Aborigines, women, refugees and other groups in our community. Its approach to the environment is exploitative and predatory, putting short-term profits before long-term human and environmental survival. The Liberal Party is a staunch defender of the US alliance and opposes the national liberation and revolutionary movements in former colonial countries.

The Liberal Party is a committed enemy of the progressive and revolutionary working class movement. It must be exposed and defeated if the working class and other anti-monopoly sections of the community are to make gains and implement progressive social, economic and political policies.

The Greens

The recognition of the importance of environmental issues by the community and the many struggles which have taken place provided the basis for the formation of the Australian Greens. The Greens have continued to increase their votes in elections at municipal, state and federal levels.

The Greens are a grass roots organisation encompassing a diversity of ideological positions.

The Greens party does not aim to replace capitalism but has many progressive policies on social and economic as well as environmental issues, including against war, privatisation and anti-trade union legislation, and for the environment, Aboriginal and Palestinian rights, public education, women's, gay and lesbian rights and democratic rights.

The active stand taken by the Greens against Howard's WorkChoices won them respect among union and workers. Some trade unions have begun to engage with the Greens as a way of pressuring the Labor Party to adopt better industrial policies. An increasing number of working people see the Greens as an alternative to the ALP's corporatist policies.

The implementation of their policies would contribute to bringing a new direction to Australian politics giving priority to the interests of the ordinary peo-

ple. The Greens' campaigns are contributing to the development of a people's movement and helping to break the two-party system.

The Australian Greens have come together on a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues, against war and uranium mining, against privatisation, against anti-union laws, for Aboriginal rights.

Communists call for the burden of the global crisis to be put on the shoulders of the capitalists, not the workers. On this issue a united front can be built with progressive elements of the ALP, the Greens and other left and progressive forces.

Socialist Alliance

The Socialist Alliance was formed in February 2001 by a number of small left parties influenced by ultra-left ideology and tactics, plus a number of non-affiliated members.

The Socialist Alliance has taken part in federal, state and some municipal elections but with little electoral success. However, many of its members are active in the various issue campaigns of the trade unions, solidarity and community organisations.

The CPA expressed its concern that the attitude of the Socialist Alliance towards "alliances and coalition building is flawed, focusing on capturing instead of building the movement."

The CPA also stated that "while the Socialist Alliance may build a level of unity, mainly among some left forces and raise consciousness about some of the pressing issues of the day, the structure of the Socialist Alliance and its political perspective is not sufficient to build the lasting movement needed to bring about fundamental change in Australia."

The National Party

The National Party is a conservative party that represents the large agri-business interests along with large farmers and pastoralists. Its voting base has been among farmers and rural town dwellers. It started life as the Country Party and was used to entice those living in the rural areas to take a position in support of big capital against workers.

The serious economic and social problems confronting many country farmers and workers have created widespread discontent among rural and agricultural workers. Unemployment, low prices for farm products, both drought and flood conditions, the closure of government and other commercial establishments such as banks and post offices in country towns and unsatisfactory telecommunication services, have created contradictions between the policies being followed by the leadership of the National Party and its voter base.

In Queensland the state branch has amalgamated with the Liberals to form

the Liberal National Party. In South Australia it has broken with its Liberal Coalition partners and is part of the State Labor Government.

The National Party has tried to differentiate itself from the other conservative parties but supports their neo-liberal and anti-worker agendas.

Small farmer members and some small town members of the National Party are sensitive to local issues and can be appealed to directly by workers and their organisations.

Family First

Evangelical church ideas now have a political expression in Family First, a party created on the fundamentalist Christian right.

Family First has a role in the balance of power in the Federal Senate and so is able to obtain concessions from the government.

Generally Family First members are conservative, offering simplistic, conservative personal “solutions” to the complex problems of modern capitalism. The party is also known for its attacks on women’s rights, in particular reproductive rights.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA

It is real life experiences which cause women and men to organise and take action around day to day problems and issues. Resistance to the intensification of attacks by the ruling class has increased, as was evident in the lead-up to the 2007 federal elections which saw the defeat of the Howard Government. There have been many progressive campaigns and movements around climate change and the environment, reconciliation, the rights of indigenous people, refugees, racism, democratic rights, public education, public hospitals, university fees, war, trade union rights, privatisation, pensions, childcare, fair trade, industry protection, local government, public transport, globalisation, and many other issues.

The Communist Party of Australia supports and participates in the many varied struggles of the people. These movements are diverse in their class composition, their forms of organisation, political outlook and demands. At the same time they share common threads. They are progressive struggles, seeking change in the interests of people and the planet. In one way or other

they challenge the profit-making activities of the corporations and the conservative politics and backward social outlook of neo-liberalism.

It is the Communist Party's view that an effective change of policies and political direction is needed and is possible. The alleviation of even some of the worst features of the present economic and social system with its drive for maximum profits requires the establishment of a new type of government such as has never been seen in Australia before. The potential exists to build a political force capable of forming such a government. Such a government, closely linked with the people's mass movements and struggles, could implement many of the policy proposals, which have been put forward in the ongoing struggles. To be effective, we believe that such a new type of government would have to implement policies to substantially curb the power of the big corporations and increase the democratic rights of the people, especially the working class and the trade union movement. To achieve such a goal it is necessary to build and develop a broad democratic movement that unites left and progressive parties, trade unions, environmental groups, peace groups, community, pensioner and other organisations and progressive individuals.

In struggling to change Australia, many different left and progressive groups fight for peace, justice and a society without exploitation. This is contributing to the development of anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist and in some cases anti-capitalist consciousness. Such work is necessary in building the social forces necessary to challenge the privileges of and eventually overthrow the capitalist ruling class which owns and controls Australia's means of production and natural resources. The capitalist state works in the interests of the capitalist class, ensuring the present balance of class forces is maintained.

While the Communist Party of Australia supports the many and varied struggles of the people against the capitalist class, it is clear that the only current viable means of building a force capable of challenging the mighty rule of the capitalist class and its economic and political dominance lies in the development of a broad democratic movement that unites all left and progressive parties, trade unions, community organisations and progressive individuals.

Coalitions and alliances

A place in the democratic front has to be found for all the streams of opposition to what is being done to the working people, the poor, the working farmers, small business, pensioners and the aged, the professionally employed, indigenous people, women, migrants and young people.

These varied social forces must be brought together to fight this struggle in a unified way. The Communist Party believes that a vital element of this broad front is an active and involved working class. Furthermore, the working class

must adopt policies which win the support of other anti-corporate sections of society.

A united democratic front remains the best chance of fulfilling the desire of the people for peace, security, jobs, for a first-class public sector, for environmental repair, worthwhile productive work and cultural enjoyment. Only a fundamental political change in society will see these issues dealt with in a positive fashion in the interests of the working class and its allies.

An active coalition of forces is possible. The well planned and coordinated Your Rights at Work campaign in opposition to the Howard Government is an example of the capacity of working people to unite. This can be held up as a beacon for positive political activity. The vast array of social forces and political groupings in that campaign shows that cooperation around issues is not only possible but immensely effective. When people with different political, religious, ethnic and occupational backgrounds join hands to achieve an objective that all agree on it is a powerful force to be reckoned with and the means to ensure positive social change in Australia.

The Communist Party must, as a matter of priority, work to draw together left and progressive parties and community organisations or elements in these organisations into an anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly democratic front transcending party and organisational boundaries. The aim of such a front is to build the widest possible unity of the people's organisations. At the same time, the working class and revolutionary parties must retain their independence and ideological integrity. Within the front, differences on policies and tactics will inevitably exist. It will be necessary to negotiate policy agreements with other parties and groups in the front, to integrate as many forces as possible. Unity and breadth will be of vital importance to the success of a democratic front. Compromises must not lead the people's movement into dissolution or towards "managing" capitalism rather than changing it.

The Communist Party seeks both short-term and long-term agreements for joint action with other left and progressive organisations, trade unions, progressive community organisations, social democratic parties, and other people's organisations. We lay stress on the development of mass action in which coalitions of organisations and individuals can play a major part in mobilising thousands and tens of thousands of workers and those in other social groups who are oppressed by monopoly and imperialism.

The two-party system

The two-party system, which has dominated Australia's political life for more than 100 years, has demonstrated that it cannot serve the interests of working people in this country. Experience over a long period of time has shown that whichever of the two major parties is in government makes little difference

as both give priority to the interests and demands of the big corporations – banks, insurance companies, mining, industrial and others.

Their “economic rationalist” policies have created an expanding web of social problems, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, inadequate educational facilities, lack of medical care and environmental damage. There is a growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Parliament

The parliamentary arena is an important area in which coalitions or alliances of organisations can work together against reactionary policies. At the same time, parliamentary work has to be based on work outside parliament which encourages and supports the activities of non-government organisations (NGOs), trade unions, professional organisations and others.

Many more left and progressive parliamentarians are needed at all levels of government. Respected, knowledgeable and active participants from left and progressive political parties, trade unions, environmental, peace, educational, indigenous and community organisations, health and democratic rights bodies, should be encouraged to stand for office. A government made up of representatives of these organisations must be democratic, multi-party and answerable to the people. It is important that representatives of the working class form the core of this new type of democratic peoples’ government.

The building of a government of people’s unity or a people’s government would be a positive step toward progressive change in Australia. The CPA sees this form of government as a necessary step which will make possible revolutionary changes to the capitalist system in Australia. A people’s government can only arise on the basis of united work in the mass movement, including mass campaigns in the interest of the working class. The CPA should be consistently working to build the unity of the working class (the united front) and the unity of the left and progressive mass movement. Patient and detailed work is needed to build and integrate both forms of unity. The CPA regards the development of the Communist Alliance as a positive step in both building the party and strengthening the left’s parliamentary campaigning.

The Communist Alliance

The Communist Alliance is an electoral alliance built from various communist organisations who work together in unity in the mass movement. The Communist Alliance will enable communists to have a presence on Australian ballot papers for the first time for many years. The Communist Alliance consists of various ethnic communist parties as well as the Communist Party of Australia. Its policies will be determined by the governing body of the

Alliance but will consist of policies openly advocating a socialist future and government in the interests of the working class.

Unity

Unity in action between the various sections of the working class and progressive movement is fundamental to the success of the struggle against capitalism. Unity is no easy task and must be worked for with patience and understanding. All forms of chauvinism and elitism within the movement must be eradicated and a genuine respect for the interests of the working class must be the fundamental prerequisite for success.

There are many forms of unity, all required, but all different and their applications must be understood to be correctly applied. The CPA recognises different forms of unity will arise in the course of the struggle. Different demands and forms of activity will be required depending on the prevailing conditions, the form of unity and the participants in any particular activity or campaign.

Forms of unity

Left unity

Left unity is unity between the left forces aimed at building and strengthening the position of the left. For this purpose we define the 'left' as being those forces which:

- recognise the class struggle;
- fight the class struggle in the interests of the working class;
- recognise that capitalist society must be replaced with a socialist society.

Working class unity

Working class unity brings together the working class which consists of the majority of people. The united front of the working class means the establishment of unity in action by all sections of the working class in support of their economic and political interests. Building the united front of the workers means advancing policies, demands and slogans which workers will actively support and which will strengthen the struggle and organisations of the working class. It means seeking the widest support and involvement of all workers to achieve the policies decided on.

People's unity

People's unity unites forces across broader sections of society than the working class alone. People's unity draws together the broadest array of forces exploited by capitalism including a range of allies of the working class such

as small business, shopkeepers, small merchants, intellectuals, professionals and farmers. In fighting together for programs in the interests of the working class and other social groups, a cohesive democratic unity can come into existence directed against the most reactionary big business circles.

Principles of unity

In strengthening the various forms of unity there are some principles that need to be adhered to. They include:

- Every organisation and the individuals involved must approach others on the basis of equality, mutual respect and honesty.
- There must be consultation at each step of the unity building process to ensure agreement on policies, tactics and actions.
- An atmosphere must be created in which the results of agreements and steps taken are frankly discussed and evaluated. Mistakes will be made and they should be recognised and corrected during the course of work.
- Agreements between co-operating organisations must be reached by consensus. Voting should be resorted to only as a last resort and be limited to procedural matters.
- Where agreement is not reached on an issue, this issue must be put aside with each organisation free to express its view on the issue using its own facilities.
- Once agreements are reached, all organisations must help carry them out.
- Ideological differences should not stand in the way of cooperation on issues held in common.
- A contest of ideas between co-operating organisations is natural and inevitable. This contest or any criticism of one organisation by another should be stated in a manner which does not undermine the unity achieved on agreed issues but should contribute to clarity and to strengthening the developing unity.
- Each organisation must be free to publish its views and independently carry out activities in support of policies which are not the subject of agreements.
- Discussion and agreement at leadership level must be backed up and deepened by co-operation at all levels of the organisations involved.

As the different forms of unity are integrated with each other, the stronger the progressive forces will become. Strong unity in action by the left, the working class and other democratic and progressive forces is essential if the economic, political and social problems facing the people are to be overcome.

In this way we can start to build a new kind of Australian society and bring about lasting solutions by tackling the root causes of the problems we face.

The CPA is confident that the above principles will greatly assist the working class and left and progressive organisations develop the unity needed to challenge the forces of big capital to ensure that society can progress in a positive, peaceful and democratic fashion.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

The Communist Party of Australia is an internationalist working class party that fights for the rights of all working class and oppressed people. We aim to build working class unity and develop the class struggle in the interests of the working class.

Our Party *Constitution* says: “The Communist Party of Australia is a political organisation established for the purpose of changing the order of society in Australia from capitalism to socialism. It is a voluntary union of people who support and actively work for this objective.”

From its first *Manifesto* published in December 1920 to our latest statements, internationalism and the struggle for a socialist society have remained the Party’s unwavering commitment.

The 1920 *Manifesto* said: “We hold it as a fundamental principle that it is only by the mass movement of the working class as a whole that our emancipation can be won... [and that Party members] take an active part in the everyday struggle of the working class.”

The Party emphasises its working class base because we see the working class as the only force capable of leading other social forces in the necessary actions to wrest political power from the capitalist ruling class. It is our aim to see the establishment of working class power so the revolutionary changes necessary to build a socialist society can be achieved. The Party has no aims separate from those of the working class and all exploited people.

Part of the mass movement

To effectively achieve its aims the CPA and its members must be an integral part of the day to day struggles of the working class and other oppressed

people. The CPA is an activist party which seeks to integrate theory with practice, drawing our theory from the rich Australian and international legacy of Marxism-Leninism and applying this to conditions in Australia.

All Party members need an ongoing education in Marxist philosophy, political economy and class struggle, as well as knowledge of history and culture and mastery of a range of practical skills. An educated party, skilled in political science, is essential for the achievement of a socialist society.

All Party organisations, from the Central Committee to the branches, should organise regular study of theory and organisational and administrative skills, to better equip the whole party membership to carry out its role in society.

Party members must be active participants in all spheres of the class struggle. In trade unions we must illustrate how the wider class issues are relevant to trade union members. In the peace movement we must highlight the class and anti-imperialist nature of the struggle for peace. In the solidarity movement we must highlight the class essence of internationalism and link that work to other local struggles. Without an activist party the communist movement will wither and turn into a sect of like minded theoreticians who expound great policy but for the good of no one but themselves. Our Party's immediate task is to develop the class struggle and build the movement for socialism.

Every Party member must be an activist and work in accordance with the direction of the various Party organisations. This work must be coordinated and have a purpose for the building and development of the class struggle and the fight to win a socialist Australia.

We need to have it recognised publicly that CPA members are known leading activists and are respected for their contribution to building the movement.

Working in the mass movement

Many Party members can and do undertake such activity and set a good example, winning the respect of others. The Party's leadership capability can only be demonstrated by involvement in the people's struggles on a daily basis.

Party campaigns are a main way of winning support for Party policy and encouraging others to be active with us and to join the CPA. Campaigning is more than just issuing a leaflet and should involve a series of activities which allow us to talk to people, to explain the issues and put our perspective. A campaign must be carefully planned, targeted and organised and must have an aim to which people are attracted and want to help achieve.

Working with others is a necessary skill that has to be gained by experience as the Party seeks to build alliances with other working class and progressive

organisations and individuals as part of the process of political change in Australia.

The present membership of the Communist Party of Australia remains far too small to effectively undertake many of the tasks and responsibilities that the Party faces.

Party branches and building the Party

Branches are established in workplaces, industries, localities, places of study, or other areas which unite Party members and allows them to carry on work and activities among workers and communities and build the Party's influence.

The CPA must give priority to the creation of workplace branches and workplace organisation on the job. This area of work is badly lacking within the Party and needs to become a priority issue moving ahead. Party members must become active in developing workplace activity and coordination. We need to focus on developing and building delegate structures within unions and showing communist leadership that will come back to us in terms of strengthening and building our Party for the future.

Party branches should be "centres of political activity" in the industry or locality in which they work. This means carrying out campaigns, building contacts with others who are struggling around similar issues, building each branch into a respected political force in the areas of its activity.

Branch members organise activities in support of people's political, economic, social and cultural needs. They popularise the CPA's policies and strengthen the links between the Party and the mass of people. A main way of achieving this is for Party branches to carry out campaigns in the CPA's name.

Party members are activists in non-party organisations (most importantly, trade unions) to strengthen and further the aims of those organisations and introduce relevant Party policies to such organisations in an appropriate manner.

Our ongoing principled activity, guided by theoretically sound policies, will encourage others to join the party. It is important to work in a principled and hard working manner to be able to win other activists not only to the cause or particular struggle we are waging but to the broader struggle undertaken by the Party. The key focus of our work in mass movements is to build and strengthen those movements. We aim to win new members as a result of our consistent and principled work in building the working class and people's movement for progressive social change in Australia.

Acronyms

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)
Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS)
Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC)
Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)
Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC)
Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRIC grouping)
Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)
Communist Party of Australia (CPA)
Defence White Paper (DWP)
Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)
European Union (EU)
Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)
Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS)
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
Non-Government Organisation (NGO)
Pacific Action Network on Globalisation (PANG)
Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)
Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA)
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO)
Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)
The Bolivarian Alternative for Americas (ALBA)

