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RESPECT AT WORK: SEXUAL HARASSMENT NOT ON!

Anna Pha

Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins released the Commission's *Respect@Work* report on sexual harassment in the workplace more than twelve months ago. The report sat on the then Attorney-General Peter Dutton's desk largely ignored! It took the recent turmoil engulfing Coalition ranks in Parliament over serious allegations of rape and sexual harassment and massive March4Justice actions around Australia to generate a response.

Under considerable pressure to act, the new Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison have now released their "Roadmap to Respect." The PM, clambering to be seen as supportive of women, said they would accept all of the report's fifty-five recommendations "wholly, in part, or in principle." But an examination of the Roadmap reveals this is not quite true.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALL-PERVASIVE

"Workplace sexual harassment is prevalent and pervasive: it occurs in every industry, in every location and at every level, in Australian workplaces. Australians, across the country, are suffering the financial, social, emotional, physical and psychological harm associated with sexual harassment. This is particularly so for women," the report says.

This conclusion is based on a survey of experiences of workplace sexual harassment in Australia conducted by the Sex Discrimination Commission in 2018. "The 2018 National Survey provides a clear picture of the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in Australia workplaces. The results indicate that 33 per cent of people who had been in the workforce in the previous five years said they had experienced workplace sexual harassment. Women (39 per cent) were more likely than men (26 per cent) to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in this period.

"Sexual harassment is recognised as a form of gendered violence. The social norms, structures, attitudes and practices that drive violence against women are the same drivers that enable sexual harassment.

"To be effective, primary prevention needs long-term sustained effort and a high level of leadership and political will."

"Yet most people who experience sexual harassment never report it. They fear the impact that complaining will have on their reputation, career prospects and relationships within their community or industry. Throughout the Inquiry, the Commission heard of the need to shift from the current reactive, complaints-based approach, to one which requires positive actions from employers and a focus on prevention," the Commission notes.

POSITIVE DUTY

This question of positive action from employers, what the report refers to as "positive duty," is one of the key recommendations of the report.

"Amend the Sex Discrimination Act to introduce a positive duty on all employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, as far as possible," the report says.

At present the onus is on individuals – the victims – to complain. The Report strongly recommends that this be changed, as most victims do not take action for a variety of reasons. The Commission recommends that "the Sex Discrimination Act is amended to include a positive duty requiring employers, with the possible exception of micro-businesses, to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, as far as possible."

"To support the implementation of this recommendation, the Commissioner also recommends that the Sex Discrimination Act be amended to provide the Commission with enforcement powers to assess compliance with the positive duty." These powers it sees as **"key to primary prevention efforts."** [Emphasis added]

The government does not agree with this recommendation. Rather, its Roadmap says, "Noted: The government notes that under the model WHS [work health and safety] laws, persons conducting a business or undertaking, such as employers, have a duty to ensure that all persons in the workplace, including workers, are not exposed to health and safety risks, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes the risk of being sexually harassed."

If reliance on WHS laws were adequate, then sexual harassment would not be the problem it is in the workplace. The government would, if it had the political will and respect for women, take this key recommendation seriously and adopt it. It has neither, as its response demonstrates.

Likewise, the government's lack of support for the Commission to be given the function of assessing compliance with the positive duty and enforcement, illustrate it is not serious in tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. This recommendation is also "Noted."

The report recommends that the Commission should be given powers to require the giving of information; the production of documents; and the examination of witnesses with penalties applying for non-compliance, when conducting such an inquiry. The government fails to agree with this important recommendation.

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Guardian

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GOV'T SPENDS BILLIONS ON MILITARY, BUT PEOPLE GET NONE!

It seems in every facet Australia is inching closer towards transforming into its transpacific cousin, the United States of America. This is all the more apparent with decisions made by successive Australian governments in their approach to military spending in the past decade.

The Abbott government was keen to award $50 bil for a new fleet of submarines with Japan, France, and Germany in the mix for the contract. So eager was then-Prime Minister Tony Abbott to get these submarines he stated that Australia would be receiving them by the late 2020s. According to former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, then-Secretary of Defence Dennis Richardson advised Abbott that this deadline was not achievable. Turnbull further commented, stating that Richardson, upon telling Abbott this reality, retorted to "leave the problem for another government." Before he was dumped as Prime Minister, Abbott entered into an informal agreement with Japan to manufacture the submarines.

However, when Turnbull became Prime Minister, the deal changed. Turnbull awarded France with the contract with the defence contractor Naval Group to design the submarines. Designed overseas, the submarines would be made locally in what was ultimately an expensive ploy by the Turnbull government to win votes. According to Turnbull, the submarines were now due to come in the early 2030s (now 2050s). Additionally, the contract ballooned from $50 bil to $80 bil. As if delays and increased costs weren't bad enough, the submarines are not even considered up-to-date. The Collins-class submarines are a diesel-electric submarine but have noise problems. Most fleets around the world are nuclear-powered; Turnbull opted to borrow an existing French-designed submarine and modify it to be conventionally powered, leaving many baffled.

The Morrison government, true to this tradition, is plunging more funds into our defence infrastructure. Last month the Morrison government announced that it would spend $1 bil on building a new weapons facility. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*), "the spending will upgrade Australia's capabilities at a time of rapid advances in guided missiles." All of this, of course, a response to the fictitious boogeyman – China. In order to "respond to rising powers such as China," states *SMH*, "The Australian Strategic Policy Institute estimates the country may have to spend $100 billion on missiles and other guided weapons over the next two decades."

Speaking to this new weapons facility, Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated: "It's an imperative we now proceed with the creation of a sovereign guided weapons capability as a priority, accelerating this process following the idea first being explored in the Force Structure Plan."

Why is it imperative? The only people who are stoking the Cold War flames are those in the US camp, and yet, time and time again, China has refused to engage in any alarmist rhetoric that one could misconstrue as fighting words. The only purpose this spending serves is to US imperialist agenda, in particular against China (and communism generally). That Australia needs to build its defence against this "Big Other" is the narrative used to sell this spending. And yet, from the Cold War until today, not one socialist nation has invaded a sovereign nation, but still, this myth of communist invasion prevails.

What is most sad is this near $200 bil, used for all sorts of weapons, could have been spent in virtually any other sector and would have helped millions in need: education, healthcare, research and development, infrastructure, arts, etc. The ways these funds could have been used are endless, and their benefits immeasurable. Instead, the government has decided to squander it to serve US imperialism and its pursuit of global hegemony.

Find out more
www.cpa.org.au

RESPECT AT WORK: SEXUAL HARASSMENT NOT ON!

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POWER DISPARITIES

"Through the Inquiry, the Commission heard about the way in which power disparities in society, as well as in the workplace, enabled sexual harassment. Overwhelmingly, the Commission heard that gender inequality was the key power disparity that drives sexual harassment. Gender inequality relates to the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between men and women in society, due to prevailing societal norms and structures."

The report notes that the nature of workplace sexual harassment has also changed over time. In particular, that women are increasingly experiencing online or technology-facilitated sexual and sex-based harassment.

PREVENTABLE

"Sexual harassment," the report says, "is not a women's issue: it is a societal issue, which every Australian, and every Australian workplace, can contribute to addressing.

"Workplace sexual harassment is not inevitable. It is not acceptable. It is preventable."

The report emphasises that it is "victim-focused to enhance outcomes for people experiencing harassment" and "based upon existing legal frameworks to avoid duplication, ambiguity or undue burden on employers." "It is consistent with the Australian Government's Deregulation Agenda of delivering more effective and efficient regulatory frameworks."

"ILO Convention 190 provides for a broader definition of violence and harassment, which includes physical assault as well as psychological and sexual behaviours. Importantly, ILO Convention 190 includes gender-based violence in the definition of 'violence and harassment,' acknowledging that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls," the report points out when recommending Australia ratify it.

The government says it will "consider this recommendation as part of usual treaty processes." It does not give a commitment, not even in principle!

A number of the recommendations call for additional funding for services such as working women's centres, hotlines, community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and a range of other victim support services. The government will engage with states and consider these. Once again, no certainty. Some will be considered in the forthcoming budget where the focus will be on cutting the deficit.

However, the 2020 budget last October allocated $2.1 mil over three years to fund the establishment of the Respect@Work Council (referred to as the "Workplace Sexual Harassment Council" in the Report) and the development of appropriate educational and training materials. These are for use with young people of working age, by unions and employers, and for personnel in various bodies such as the Fair Work Commission (FWC), Fair Work Ombudsman, Safe Work Australia, and workers' compensation bodies.

WHAT GOVT AGREED TO

The government indicated that it would:

- Include sexual harassment in the definition of "serious misconduct" in the Fair Work Act (FWA)
- Amend the act to include sexual harassment as a valid reason for firing someone
- Include sexual harassment in the context of a "stop bullying order" under the FWA.
- Extend the timeframe in which a complaint can be received from six to twenty-four months.

These are important steps and the government must be held to account on them.

The Roadmap indicated that MPs, judges, and state public servants would be liable for the first time for sexual harassment. This was despite the fact that Respect@Work made no such recommendation. It nonetheless is a welcome commitment.

Tackling the wider causes outside of the workplace will not be easy as they ultimately arise out of the gross inequalities and system of exploitation which defines capitalism. The cultural and social circumstances that capitalism deliberately fosters are what keep the working class divided and shore up its profits. Sexual harassment is one of the consequences of these power relationships.

The Inquiry, while not addressing the capitalist system itself, did point to the fact that not only women but minority groups are more likely to be subjected to sexual harassment.

It is important that the momentum generated by the widespread horror at the treatment of women in Parliament and the March4Justice actions be maintained. The government must not be allowed to let the Respect@Work report lie on the desk for another twelve months. ✪

Special Appeal Reds go Green

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising $10,000 for solar panels on the roof. The panels will not only make substantial savings in electricity bills but also put into practice our commitment to a sustainable future.

They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important. It is not enough to preach "green." We must act "green"!

We are looking to *Guardian* readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project. Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large. Send your contribution today. All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*.

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Send your contribution to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, email info@cpa.org.au or pay by PayPal on cpa.org.au

PRESS FUND

Numerous print media outlets have closed. At the Guardian we are determined to keep the print edition going as we know it is important to many of our subscribers. Printing and postage have increased considerably in price, and we need your support to keep coming out. The workers' weekly is your voice, the voice of the working class. Many thanks to those who so kindly and generously contributed over the past month:

D Bastin $100, J Ayres $30, J Hodgson $20, A Fox $120, $AF $130, M Smith $20.

This week's total: $420 Cumulative Total: $1,250.

VALE GILDA CHACÓN-BRAVO

Vinnie Molina*

It was with great sadness we received the news in Australia of the passing of comrade Gilda Chacón on the 8th April 2021. Born in the Cienfuegos province on the 4th of February 1960, Gilda was an excellent trade union, community, and communist leader.

She began her trade union work in 1981 while working as a high school English teacher. From 1989 she worked in the Cuban National Education Union and was promoted to the Cuban Workers' Central International Department in 1994.

Gilda was a champion in her community where she was elected as a delegate to the Assembly of People's Power.

On her several visits to Australia she established strong and lasting relationships with trade union leaders and rank and file unionists in Australian unions including in the CFMEU, MUA, ETU, AMWU, Teachers' Union and also with several parliamentarians.

Her knowledge of Australia was recognised in Cuba where she was seen as a person who had cultivated and grown the friendship between Cuban and Australian workers.

Her contribution to solidarity work, in particular against the US blockade on Cuba and for the freedom of the Cuban Five in Australia, was exemplary. Gilda encouraged and supported the tradition for trade union delegations from Australia to travel to Cuba to celebrate May Day and she always made us feel at home.

Gilda most recently worked at the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) headquarters in Athens and represented WFTU in Geneva.

Sadly, Gilda lost her battle to cancer on the 8th April. The Communist Party of Australia sends its deepest condolences to her son Marlon, her friends and comrades in the Cuban Workers' Central and the Communist Party of Cuba.

Vale comrade Gilda Chacon!

*Vinnie Molina is President of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and a trade union organiser with the CFMEU WA branch. ✪

WORKERS FORCED TO PAY FOR CRISIS

Casey Davidson

Australian government income support for the COVID19 crisis, JobKeeper and JobSeeker, has ceased and been revised from April despite ongoing hardships for workers in Australia relating to the pandemic. Vaccination targets have fallen significantly short, while many workers across the country remain unemployed or in volatile employment. The fact that the current government remains adamant that JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments should stop or decrease, regardless of recent outbreaks and lockdowns, demonstrates its clear lack of compassion or responsibility it maintains over working-class Australians.

The Australian government has fallen a shocking eighty per cent short of the March vaccination target. Four million Australians were promised to receive vaccinations by the end of March, but at this stage, only a little over 670,000 have. Even as recently as the 29th of March to the 1st of April, Brisbane entered a three-day lockdown after an outbreak of COVID-19 started amongst healthcare workers who were eligible for vaccines. While there is much discussion in the mainstream media about the efficacy of different vaccines, there are many other reasons for the massive failure in the rollout.

First of all, in what should most certainly be deemed an issue of public safety and concern, the government has made the outrageous decision to privatise the vaccination process. As in other industries, this often carries with it massive safety concerns due to ulterior profit motives of the private companies involved. For example, the contractor Healthcare Australia, has already been given a show-cause notice after elderly aged care residents were given incorrect high doses. Public hospitals with experienced healthcare workers and existing infrastructure to facilitate such a large scale rollout would more adequately ensure it was administered with more care.

And even though public health workers may offer more confidence in administering the vaccine, public facilities in Australia are still significantly understaffed, or without adequate skills, or experience. The reason for this? The push towards private health care insurance providers, while decreasing funding for public hospitals under a neoliberal government. The current lack of resources for providing an adequate rollout is the result of these cutbacks. On top of this, highly skilled nurses are unable to administer the vaccine without supervision from a general practitioner, despite being highly experienced at the task. This is rather ridiculous with regard to the lack of highly trained staff available.

Meanwhile, workers in Australia are forced to participate in society as normal with no government safeguards, regardless of the constant looming threat of another outbreak or lockdown. And these workers count themselves lucky to not join the army of unemployed after JobKeeper payments were stopped. On top of that, with JobSeeker payments being revised, many people who were previously in employment face serious concerns such as not being able to pay for rent and food, and as such, face the possibility of homelessness.

Those who believe the cutbacks on JobKeeper and JobSeeker are more important for the Australian economy than homelessness clearly are not in these situations. Additionally, the pandemic has created severely growing mental health issues which also strongly impact the ability to gain employment. Regardless, liberal leaders like Treasurer Josh Frydenberg blamed the JobKeeper termination on state and territory leaders closing their borders during outbreaks. Although taking these precautions is necessary to prevent the spread of COVID19, Frydenberg warned that the federal government would no longer "pick up the tab" for economic ruin caused by the closures. Instead, it seems the Treasurer would prefer Australian workers to pay for the crisis.

It is clear that JobKeeper and JobSeeker were never initiated to care for the Australian public, but rather to keep the economy afloat during the worst of the crisis. The inability for workers to organise has also given the ruling class the opportunity to further attack them through the introduction of the Omnibus bill. This bill takes away more rights from casual workers, and will lead to more casualisation, meaning less job protections and work hours.

The fact remains that while Australia remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the majority of Australians will continue to have their rights taken from them. Only by fighting for socialism can the Australian public truly see their conditions lifted long-term, and give them the dignity and appreciation they deserve. ✪

REPORT: STOP BLACK DEATHS IN CUSTODY RALLY – SYDNEY

L.B.

Warning: This article contains the names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have died.

On Saturday, the 10th of April, a CPA contingent attended Stop Black Deaths in Custody rally in Sydney. The rally marked thirty years since the handing down of the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Since the report, a further 474 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody, and many of the Commission's recommendations have not been implemented by the Australian government.

The rally started at Sydney Town Hall, where the crowd was welcomed to county by Gadigal elder Aunty Rhonda Dixon-Grovenor. We heard from many other powerful Indigenous speakers including MC Lizzie Jarret, Aunty Shirley Lomas, and Aunty Leetona Dungay, the mother of David Dungay Jnr. The speakers talked about the corruption and failures of the government and the criminal justice system and the ongoing impact of colonisation on the lives of Indigenous peoples. Many speakers emphasised the need for non-Indigenous people to listen to and support Indigenous peoples and for Indigenous people to reclaim their land, culture and autonomy. Although there was a strong police presence at the rally, fortunately, there was no police brutality or arrests, owing most likely to the size of the crowd and the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

The rally then proceeded through the Sydney CBD to Djarbarrgalli (known as The Domain), which has been a sacred place of gathering for Indigenous people for tens of thousands of years. At Djarbarrgalli, we heard more from many of the families who had lost a loved one in custody. Lizzie Jarrett delivered to the crowd a statement from the family of Nathan Reynolds, an Anaiwan and Dunghutti man who died in prison of an asthma attack. The statement spoke of the systemic failures of the prison system to provide adequate medical treatment to Nathan and the disregard and racist attitudes of corrections nurses and officers who were meant to save his life. Paul Silva spoke of the ongoing struggle for justice for his uncle David Dungay Jnr, and the failure of the Department of Public Prosecution in taking legal action against the corrections officers involved in his death.

Further actions for Indigenous justice will be held in the coming days and weeks to respond to the report of the NSW Parliament Standing Committee on Indigenous Deaths in Custody. The CPA will continue to stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities in their fight for justice. ✪

Many speakers emphasised the need for non-Indigenous people to listen to and support Indigenous peoples and for Indigenous people to reclaim their land, culture and autonomy.

PINOCHET DINA AGENT CONTINUES TO FIGHT EXTRADITION

Miles Fitzsimmons

For the people of Chile 11th September has a different significance than that in the anglophone world, September 11 marks the day on which the attack on the world trade centre took place in the United States. On the 11th of September 1973, the Chilean military, with the backing of the US, crushed the civilian government of Salvador Allende and bought in the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Australia's involvement in this sordid affair has always been somewhat murky and difficult to understand, but Australia did have involvement in the coup. It is known that ASIO agents in Chile that had been ordered to leave by then recently elected Gough Whitlam were still in the country and did not leave until after the completion of the coup.

Even all these years later and after the return of civilian government in Chile, an ongoing aftershock from 1973 occurs in Australian courts. Adriana Rivas was an agent of DINA, the Pinochet regime's secret police, that was responsible for the "disappearances" of opponents of the regime like communists and trade unionists, and was secretary to the head of the agency Manuel Contreras and his assistant Alejandro Burgos. Rivas has been living in Australia since 1978 and, at the time of her arrest in 2019 was reportedly working as a babysitter and cleaner in Bondi.

Since 2014, the government of Chile has been seeking the extradition of Rivas for the kidnapping of seven people who are among the disappeared, including the Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile, Victor Diaz. Rivas had been arrested in 2006 while visiting Chile, but while on bail in 2010 fled back to Australia. Information on specific victims of the Pinochet regime is often hard to come by, but the general activity of DINA is well documented. Horrific rape and torture of detainees was commonplace, with bodies disfigured and dumped at sea from helicopters. The victims are considered "disappeared" and not confirmed as murdered because the government disposed of the bodies in such a way that they would never be found and there is little record of detainees. Given the widespread and despicable crimes of DINA it seems ludicrous that Rivas' defence lawyer Frank Santisi would argue that DINA was not a criminal organisation because only some of its members committed crimes and the agency was set up legally. He argues that DINA's purpose was "to stamp out and to make sure this thing called 'communism' didn't take root in Chile."

Extradition proceedings are renowned for being lengthy and dense, and this case is no different. While a local court magistrate had ruled that Rivas was extraditable based on the information in the Chilean government's request, Rivas and her lawyer Santisi are continuing to fight her extradition by appealing up to higher courts. The case is currently in the Federal Court of Australia under Justice Wendy Abraham who is better known for ruling in 2020 that the AFP's warrant to search the ABC offices after the publication of the Afghan Files was valid.

We join our comrades in the Communist Party of Chile in calling on the Australian government and courts to deliver justice and extradite Rivas to answer for her crimes. Rivas played a role in brow-beating the people of Chile with fascism and her pathetic defence – indistinguishable from those offered by Nazis at Nuremberg – does not pass the most casual scrutiny. Rivas must answer for her crimes, as all fascists should. ✪

REPORT: PALM SUNDAY REFUGEE SOLIDARITY GATHERING – PERTH

Richard Titelius

On Sunday, 28th March 2021, the Social Justice Commission held this year's Palm Sunday Refugee rally indoors at the Wesley Church Hall Centre. It was a far cry from the outdoor gatherings in Perth in years gone held outside St Georges Anglican Cathedral on busy St Georges Terrace.

Impossible to satisfy the in excess of 500 people that normally attend this event, a seated event complying with physical distancing because of COVID saw about seventy people able to attend with an option to participate online.

Geoff Bice of the Uniting Church chaired the meeting and introduced various refugee and activist speakers online or at the physical meeting. One of the first speakers was Rohullah Hassam, a Hazara refugee from Afghanistan who was only recently allowed into the Australian community after years in mandatory detention. Hassam spoke via the internet from Melbourne as did the next speaker Abu Bakar, a Rohinga refugee from Myanmar. Abu Bakar, a stateless refugee, said after his eight-year ordeal with Australia's mandatory detention system, "It was a mistake to come here on a boat." Abu Bakar continued, "We have been moving through so many detention centres offshore and onshore." Bakar asked the same question of himself that most refugees ask when confronted by the crushing, soul-destroying labyrinth of mandatory immigration detention system: "Why am I still in Detention and what have I done wrong?" Bakar observed that few people obtain Bridging Visas to stay in Australia. Bakar ended up in hotel detention in Melbourne due to an accident on a motorbike on Nauru. He concluded by stating, "The Australian government is playing political games with our lives."

Ali, another refugee from the persecuted Azara minority of Afghanistan, said that Afghanistan is not safe for his people. It was this that had led him to undertake the ordeal of a 43-hour journey in a small boat with ninety-five other people. Ali added that the situation of COVID-19 had only made things worse for those people seeking asylum because it limited free movement between countries.

Joanna Josephs, General Manager of the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees spoke in person, stating it is, "a dark reality for people seeking asylum in Australia." Joanna posed the polemic of what happens when a government decides to return a refugee to a country of origin. "No one is responsible if someone who is returned is harmed [...] .". It is demeaning and frustrating for refugees never knowing when their application for asylum would be finished. The current government has made the task of seeking asylum more difficult. They have reduced resources and cut budgets by eighty-six per cent for processing refugee applications. There are also many obstacles for refugees wishing to obtain work limiting their means to support themselves. They do not have access to Medicare or adequate health care and are frequently denied procedural fairness in their numerous and voluminous applications for asylum – 66 pages with 108 questions all in English! With the Rental Moratorium now lifted by the state government it will become even more precarious and difficult to house those refugees who have been released into the community. One of those refugees was Farhad Bandesh, a Kurdish refugee who lost eight years of his life going through the immigration detention process. He said he has just been released from his cage and now lives with a friend in the community and works at a winery in Melbourne. Bandesh said the Australian government needs to look after the rights of refugees which should be covered by international covenants. The Australian government is cruel, he concluded.

The Communist Party of Australia calls for an end to offshore mandatory detention and for refugees to be housed and supported in the community once they have passed all reasonable health and security checks and balances. Not to do so is not only be cruel and inhumane but has proved to be immensely expensive including spending $6 mil to house just one refugee family at the immigration detention centre on Christmas Island. ✪

ANGELA DAVIS TALK "CENSORED" IN LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION

E Lennon

A Jewish group in the United States boycotted the author and academic's event at Indiana's Butler University.

Ms Davis' talk Joint Struggle and Collective Liberation was to discuss state violence against black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC), as well as advancements against racism.

In a Letter to the Editor, published in *The Butler Collegian*, the anonymous author hit back at the decision.

> "The administration abruptly and unilaterally cancelled the event without the input of – and without even notifying – the student leaders who spent four months of tireless planning, coordination and collaboration on the event."

The Jewish group behind the push to cancel the talk at Butler University cited Ms Davis' support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement; which is the demand for economic pressure in protest of Israel's military occupation of Palestine.

> "Butler staff and administration gave an array of inconsistent and unfounded justifications for its racist and authoritative cancellation," says the Letter to the Editor. 'Failure to follow procedure,' 'too high of an honorarium' and 'inappropriate timing.'"

Ms Davis' intention to talk at the university on the topic of race in the United States comes with the trial over George Floyd's death and continuing global discourse and demand for action on racial injustices. The reasons given from the administration obfuscate the importance of allowing a woman of colour, who has spent her life fighting against systematic oppression, to speak to her expertise on such a topical and pervasive issue.

Earlier this year, Davis gave a talk at Northeastern University in Massachusetts. Jewish student group Hillel Northeastern released a statement that claimed Davis had made harmful comments to the Jewish community. However, this reference to a "checkered background" comes from the book *Chutzpa* by Alan Dershowitz, which faced criticism from the American Jewish Congress.

Columnist for *The Huntington News*, Noah Colbert, underscores how Davis' entire career has been dedicated to fighting oppression.

> "Netanyahu's government can sign all the arms deals he likes," writes Mr Colbert. "But they are merely emblems of a negative peace predicated on ignoring the perpetual state sanctioned violence against the Palestinian people. The oppression of any marginalised people is seen as unacceptable to Angela Davis, and it is this that she has dedicated her life to fighting."

> "Hillel's objection 'to the politicisation of the conversation of the State of Israel' is completely irrelevant, considering Davis' speaking event was not about the Palestine-Israel issue."

> "It is disheartening to see so much of our national discourse on anti-Semitism occupied by a fool's errand: the equation of anti-Zionism or Palestinian solidarity with anti-Semitism."

The politicisation around Angela Davis' talks casts a shadow over the depth of her experience and contributions from her long career.

"Angela Davis came to Northeastern to reaffirm her commitment to the destruction of all oppressive systems," says Mr Colbert. "Hillel's statement fails to comprehend the notion that to acknowledge the struggle of one group in no way minimises that of another. Indeed, if we are lucky, that recognition will be the beginning of solidarity between the oppressed people of the world." ✪

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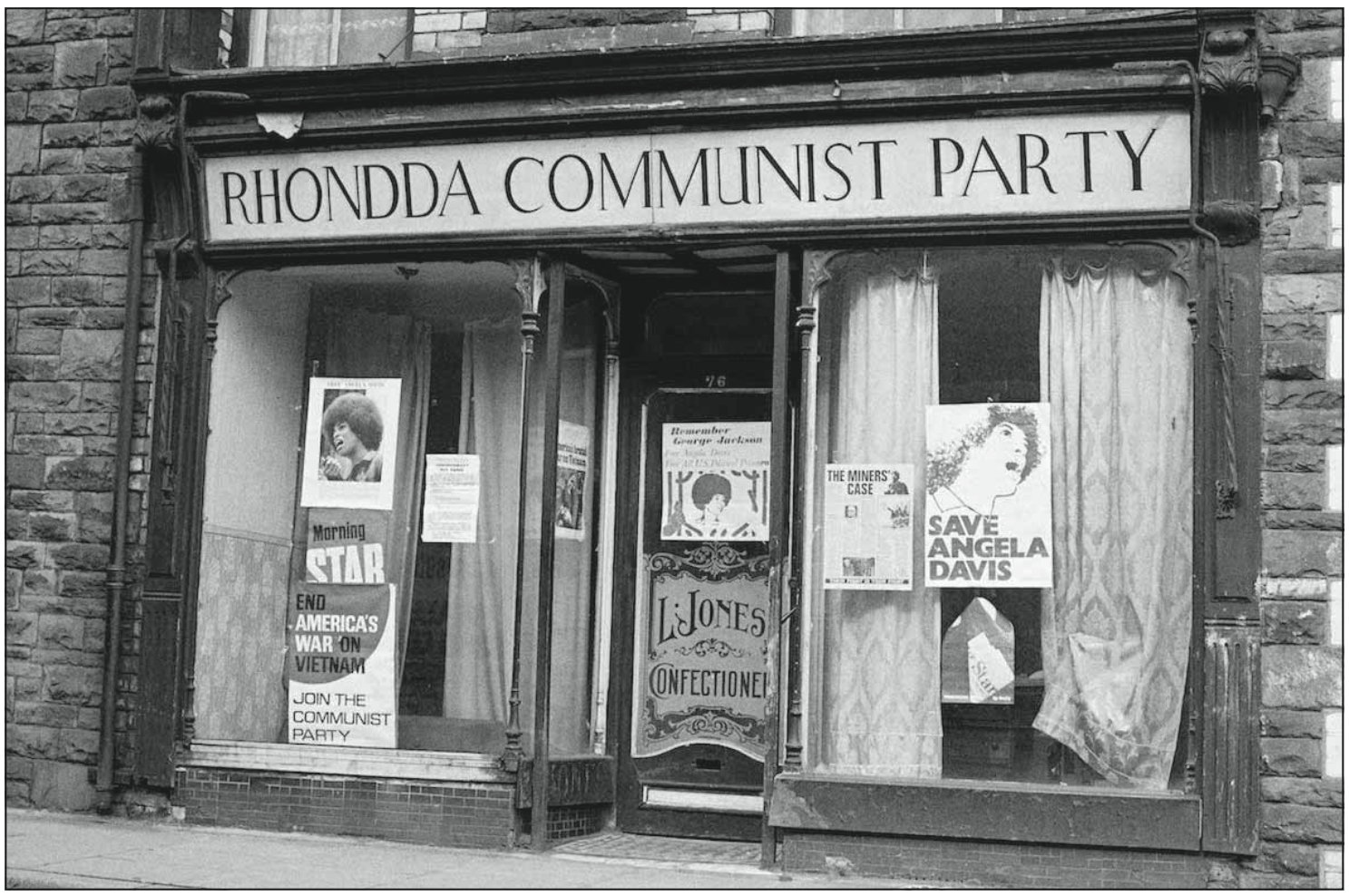
BRITAIN'S LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL SEE LARGEST NUMBER OF COMMUNIST CANDIDATES SINCE 1980S

On May 6, voters in Britain will go to the polls in local elections that will see the largest number of candidates representing the Communist Party (CPB) since the early 1980s. Candidates will be campaigning in the Welsh Senedd, Scottish Parliament, and London, Assembly as well as in English local councils.



The launch of the Communist Party's manifesto, or platform, for the May 6 elections on Tuesday night will reflect "the confidence and enthusiasm of a growing Communist Party," general secretary Robert Griffiths says.

The platform "Capitalism Is the Problem – Socialism Is the Solution" outlines the party's policies and accuses the "Tory government in Westminster and, to a lesser extent, the devolved administrations" of a "heavy responsibility for the carnage caused by the coronavirus outbreak," pointing out that "Britain has one of the highest COVID death rates in the world."

The government's mishandling of the pandemic and Britain's deepest recession in 300 years have led to a renewed interest in socialism. So far in the UK, there have been more than 126,000 COVID-related deaths, 400,000 have contracted long COVID, and hundreds of thousands of people are on National Health Service (NHS) waiting lists.

The Communists are hoping to show voters that there are alternatives. Millions of people voted for change in the 2016 EU referendum and the 2017 and 2019 general elections. Polls showed they were looking for a new politics and economics and an end to the richest ten per cent of the population owning more than half of Britain's personal wealth.

The Communist Party, which celebrated its 100th anniversary last year, advocates radical political change which includes activity in and reform of local, regional, and national governments in England, Scotland, and Wales. It advocates a devolved, federal Britain with proportional representation and other changes to make politics democratic, accessible, representative, and accountable.

Though the Labour Party is moving away from socialist policies, the Communists argue that "socialist measures are exactly what is needed as we emerge from a pandemic into a major economic crisis."

Griffiths said: "Hundreds of billions of pounds are being used to bail out the capitalist monopolies, but our candidates are campaigning for socialist priorities instead, such as investment in the National Health Service, public services, manufacturing, housing, and climate security in a federal Britain."

Lorraine Douglas, one of the Party's candidates on the Greater London Assembly list, told *Morning Star* that a stronger left voice is vital as we are "back to the early 1980s as far as unemployment goes," with COVID-related unemployment hitting the capital city especially hard.

She highlighted the CPB's manifesto's emphasis on rebuilding council houses and stopping the handover of land to property developers.

Official statistics suggest that nationally, 325,000 new houses need to be built every year just to keep up with changing demographics. The Communists are calling for radical reform of the housing and planning system, regeneration, affordable homes with secure tenure, local caps on private-sector rent levels, and the removal of incentives for private equity firms to make large profits with property developers and landowners.

In Manchester, Communist candidates are leaning heavily on the housing message. The party says its elected officials would work with a local housing cooperative to increase affordable housing and support the rapid expansion of the building of affordable housing across Greater Manchester. There is a huge imbalance in Manchester between luxury apartments in the glitzy city centre and housing in the suburbs.

To redress the wealth imbalance, the Communist Party advocates a minimum £10.40 per hour living wage (18.54 AUD), with additional supports for lower-income workers. It is also calling for an above-inflation pay rise for public-sector workers, particularly for NHS staff who have borne the brunt of the pandemic. The Party says that the government could fund much of the costs for the increase with cuts to military spending. The Conservative government of Boris Johnson recently allocated hundreds of billions of pounds to update Britain's nuclear weapons program.

Morning Star ✪

PERU'S ELECTORAL AUTHORITY DECLARES PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF JUNE 6

On a more than 10-hour election day, Peruvians went to the polls to elect their new president; however, the campaign will be extended until June 6 with the second-round runoff.

Pedro Castillo, known for leading a Peruvian teachers' strike in 2017, was the first-place winner in the polls, while Keiko Fujimori, the eldest daughter of jailed former president Alberto Fujimori, and right-wing economist Hernando de Soto, continue to fight for the other runoff slot after polls closed at 7:00 PM.

While Fujimori bets on continuing her father's legacy, alleviating pandemic measures, promoting large mining projects, and generating new jobs, Soto reiterated that he would continue with an expansive fiscal and monetary policy to help reactivate the economy, support businesses and strengthen border controls.

One of the elements that clouded Fujimori's campaign, according to Reuters, was the investigation against her for alleged money laundering and the receipt of more than US$1.2 million from Odebrecht, for which she may face a sentence of up to 31 years in prison. The candidate has always denied the charges.

The day passed without a clear favourite. However, candidates such as Pedro Castillo, of the Peru Libre party and Hernando de Soto, of the Avanza Pais party asserted throughout the day that they were the most favoured with 16.1 per cent and 12.9 per cent, respectively in the last survey conducted in the country.

Peru Libre has defined itself as a "Marxist-Leninist-Mariateguist" party, while its leader Vladimir Cerrón has asserted that due to the party's "provincial" origins, it would represent "deep Peru."

Castillo's party, explicitly anti-imperialist and internationalist, appears to promote robust state control and regulation of the national economy in favour of people's interests.

Similarly, the party that received the most votes supports a rewriting of the country's constitution, defends the state apparatus's decentralisation, and supports the revolutionary processes of countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua.

A significant element that disturbed election authorities and voters' tranquility on Sunday was the number of polls enabled in the country's different cities; these could not be set up by the National Office of Electoral Processes (Onpe).

San Isidro, Miraflores, San Borja, and Surco were the districts with the lowest number of voting tables in the morning hours, which forced authorities to call on young people to volunteer.

teleSUR ✪

OP-ED: A COHESIVE SOCIETY AFTER CAPITALISM

Eileen Whitehead

It seems that the capitalist way of living has been with us forever, but it has only come about since early global trading developed around the sixteenth century. Early societies were primitive and foraging communities and were the earliest form of communism. There was no class society as such and no money. Inventions helped humanity develop slowly, first with stone tools, the wheel, and pottery, etc. Men and women were considered equally important in a society where everyone pulled together for the common good.

But since the rapid development of machinery and the ability, with trains, ships and planes, to send food from agricultural regions to the cities and even to other countries, some parts of society began to enjoy a better way of life. Along with these advances came a better understanding and treatment of diseases.

Suddenly, we see the damage this is causing. The fossil fuels, which have been the bulwark of the industrial revolution, are now seen as the villains of the piece. The pressure put on the natural environment by so many people wanting an improved lifestyle has been destroying the planet. We have reached a point where the "good times" of capitalism seem to be coming rapidly to an end, or at least to a point where it can no longer continue as it has for the past 200 years. Engels was to hint at this in his *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*, 1844:

> "Every new crisis must be more serious and more universal than the last. Every fresh slump must ruin more small capitalists and increase the workers who live only by their labour. This will increase the number of the unemployed and this is the main problem that worried economists. In the end commercial crises will lead to a social revolution far beyond the comprehension of the economists with their scholastic wisdom."

Contemporary eco-socialists are recommending de-growth in opposition to the continuing capitalist mantra of producing more than we want. However, this is not a practical solution if pursued relentlessly. Given the current system of capitalism, it would only create even more unemployment, poverty, and suffering. But capitalism, as it stands now, will seal the fate of us all. Perhaps it's a case of deciding what industries we need to reduce and/or eliminate. It might even be beneficial if workers were actually in control of what is needed to be produced and given the flexibility of working where they are needed. If the workers are in charge of production, perhaps goods could be produced in less time. This was an important objective for Marx, who saw the potential for freeing workers from unnecessary labour with a reduction of hours and more leisure time, leading to a more complete development of the individual. A happy human works better with a happy heart.

We urgently need to replace all jobs in dirty fossil fuel industries with innovative, technological industries. Here, we would be providing "green" jobs and instead of subsidising the mining industries we can spend that money on better health and education. However, under our current system, the majority of the people have to rely on the decisions made by the few – the bourgeoisie. An ideal world would be where the working class make decisions. One of them would certainly be a shorter working week to enable workers to spend more time with their families. This will not happen under the present system of government legislating for the benefit of the wealthy, capitalist class.

The world has reached a tipping point where our future is at risk as climate change causes rapid vagaries to our present way of life. It is no longer possible to simply keep producing more stuff, cutting down more trees, or digging up more minerals, destroying our natural world. Capitalism makes us compete with one another: we have to grow, make profits, and accumulate capital. With the currently crucial function of fossil fuel and automotive capital within contemporary capitalism, there will be no remission in the economic growth affecting climate change while causing irreversible environmental damage.

All we've been hearing during decades living under neoliberal, imperialist capitalism is the importance of economic growth and increased monetary value. If production were to turn out to be for social need, i.e. the expansion of free services such as health, education, transport and housing, the need to measure monetary value would become irrelevant. We can't, of course, return to an earlier, simpler way of life, but we must strive for a more harmonious and sustainable relationship with nature.

Achieving zero fossil fuel industries necessitates an expanded production in wind turbines and solar panels and, possibly, more research into wave power. Reduction and eventual elimination of the production of petrol-driven cars must be supported by extra public transport and sustained working from home. The essential elimination of fossil fuels, cars, armaments, single-use plastics, factory farming, etc. will be painful, but can be offset with more jobs in the renewable industries, better staffed health centres and in education, including more doctors and nurses in mental health and welfare. I can only see a better quality of life for everyone once we're through this difficult transition period. But one thing is certain; we cannot continue with our extravagant western way of life as we have for the past 200 years without dire results. ✪

Under our current system, the majority of the people have to rely on the decisions made by the few – the bourgeoisie.

“ISLAMO-LEFTISM”

From conspiracy to policy

Valentin Cartillier

“Islamo-Leftism,” or *Islamo-Gauchisme* (in French), is the latest term in French political discourse to demonise the Islamic community and French universities. What otherwise would have remained an obscure academic term has now risen to the highest levels of the French government and contributed to the ideological landscape that allowed the French Senate to add and pass two amendments to President Emmanuel Macron’s “anti-separatism” law.

A brief explanation of the Senate’s recently passed law is warranted before examining the concept of “Islamo-Leftism” and its emergence. The proposed amendments to the bill that were passed are for the “prohibition in the public space of any conspicuous religious sign by minors and of any dress or clothing which would signify inferiority of women over men.” This baffling justification only lends itself to further questions because of its deliberately obscure language: would wearing a cross in public be banned? Which articles of clothing actually do “signify inferiority of women over men” and who gets to decide that? The police? The reality is that it’s just another dog whistle to target the Muslim population.

These amendments aim to ban the hijab, a headscarf worn by many Muslim women as sign of their faith, for women under the age of 18 as well as banning parents from wearing one to accompany their children on school trips. This move is part of France’s push for a so-called “anti-separatism” bill supposedly designed to bolster the country’s commitment to secularisation. However, once again, these amendments are definitively and divisively targeted at France’s minority Muslim population.

At time of writing, the ban is not yet law, the National Assembly (France’s Lower House) must sign off on the change before it can take effect. However, it is extremely unlikely the ban will make it past the National assembly, which has already expressed its opposition to it. The amendments barely made it through the Senate, with a margin of 177 to 141. Senators from both the Socialist Party and Communist party alongside a majority of Macron’s own Republic On the Move party voted against it.

Despite how unlikely it will be that these amendments will be turned into law, this is another instance of France’s long history of targeting Muslim communities, and particularly women, in the name of secularisation. From being the first European country to impose a ban on full-face veils in public areas in 2011 to attempting to ban Burkinis from beaches, France has consistently acted to disenfranchise its Muslim population.

So how does “Islamo-Leftism” fit in with this story? The basic idea behind “Islamo-Leftism,” in its current and popular form, is that because universities are teaching students about “critical theory,” “decolonialisation theory,” etc., students, and society more generally, are becoming too accepting and tolerant of minorities, particularly Muslim communities. Because these theories are generally associated with left-wing politics and activism, proponents of this conspiracy have tacked Leftism onto the end to glue some faux-fur onto this paper tiger.

This term is reminiscent of the “Cultural Marxism” conspiracy theory, originally coined by the Nazi party as Cultural-Bolshevism, which sought to discredit Jewish academics and Communist theorists/activists. Cultural Marxism is still being peddled by right-wing “thinkers” obsessed with the idea that universities are indoctrinating students by turning them into Marxist activists. If only that were the case!

The origins of the term and how it has been disseminated is a bit unclear. Interestingly, the earliest use of the term came out of England with Chris Harman from the self-proclaimed Trotskyite organisation, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). His theory was that political Islam could have progressive objectives that would line up with the SWP. In France, the philosopher and sociologist Pierre-André Taguieff from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (FNCSR) uses the term in his 2002 book *New Judeophobia*. He uses it to describe what he sees as an “Islamo-fascism,” which he holds is popular among “the new third-worldist, neo-communist and neo-leftist configuration, better known as the ‘anti-globalisation movement.’ ” As we can see from this jumble of words, Taguieff doesn’t seem to have a particularly firm grasp on the concepts he’s referring to. The linguistically vague nature of the term means it can be employed in whatever way the user sees fit.

However, rather than remaining an obscure, jargonistic academic term, it has recently entered into mainstream political discourse, not only amongst the French right-wing but also within the centrist government. Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front party, uses it “to describe what she considers an unhealthy alliance between ‘Islamist fanatics’ and the ‘French Left.’ ” The Minister for National Education Jean-Michel Blanquer used the term in a radio interview on Europe 1. He said:

> “What is called Islamo-Leftism wreaks havoc in the university, it wreaks havoc when the UNEF [the National Union of Students of France] gives in to this type of thing, it wreaks havoc when in the ranks of *La France Insoumise* [the Democratic Socialist party of France] [...] I will be very firm in the face of all those who, today, believing themselves to be progressives, are in reality enabling a form of tolerance to radicalism”

In June 2020, President Emmanuel Macron repeated a similar sentiment to journalists:

> “The academic world has its share of blame. It has encouraged the ethnicisation of the social question [...] But the result can only be secessionism. This means splitting the Republic in two.”

Strange words from a President trying to introduce a clearly sectarian law. “Islamo-Leftism” has also been used by Gérald Darmanin, the Minister of the Interior, who is in charge of the country’s national security.

Frédérique Vidal, the Minister for Higher Education, has come out most forcefully on the subject, stating that “Islamo-Leftism is the gangrenous blight of society and the university.” When asked about this statement during a television interview on *CNews* by host Jean-Pierre Elkabbach, Vidal doubled down and explained that “Islamo-leftism is in fact infecting the whole society.” A particularly

bizarre moment of the interview occurred when Elkabbach claimed there was “an alliance between Mao Zedong and Ayatollah Khomeini [the former Supreme Leader of Iran]”, which Vidal wholeheartedly agreed with, enthusiastically exclaiming “You’re right!”

These two figures (Mao Zedong and Ayatollah Khomeini) have absolutely nothing to do with one another outside of the bourgeois charge of building a “cult of personality” around themselves. One shudders to think that a person with this degree of historical illiteracy is the Minister for Higher Education. On the 16th of February, before the National Assembly, Vidal asked that the FNCSR, the very institution that inaugurated this conspiracy in France, launch a probe into the prevalence of Islamo-Leftism in French universities. Her stated intent was to identify “what falls under academic research and what falls under activism and opinion.”

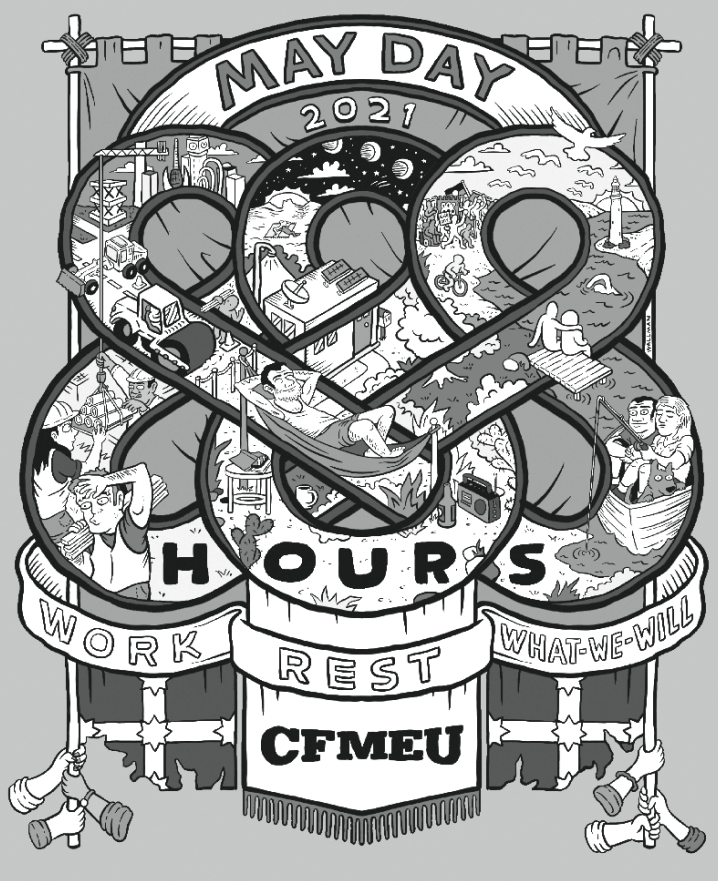
Universities, student unions, and Muslim communities across the country have responded fiercely. Perhaps most ironic of all was the FNSCR’s media release which explained how the term “Islamo-leftism” has “no scientific basis whatsoever.” It seems like the rest of the FNCSR doesn’t agree with their colleague Taguieff. Jean Chambaz, the head of Sorbonne University, also responded saying that “it is easy to blame an undefined ideological movement for social issues in the country,” further adding that the government was “trying to appeal to quite nauseating segments of public opinion.” The catchcry amongst the Muslim community has been “Hands off my hijab.” Najwa Zebian, a Lebanese-Canadian activist, in a show of international solidarity perhaps best expressed the general sentiment in France and internationally, tweeting that, “Forcing a woman to wear a hijab is wrong. Just like forcing her to take it off is wrong.”

While the proposed ban is unlikely to become a law, taken in conjunction with Macron’s ministers openly repeating the conspiracy of “Islamo-Leftism,” it shifts the political discourse to allow Macron’s centrist government to pander to the conservative and xenophobic elements of France in light of the upcoming 2022 election in hopes of picking up right-wing voters.

It is a fruitful exercise to stay abreast not only of the intellectual tendencies within universities, but also of charges laid against them. Intellectual trends and conspiracies from abroad tend to make their way to Australia in some form or another. In Australia, we arguably already have our own version of “Islamo-Leftism” that one could tentatively name “Sino-Leftism.” Australian universities frequently come under fire for having Chinese government funded institutions on campus such as the Confucius Institute. For a more detailed account of how anti-minority attitudes can lead to violence see *Guardian* “Anti-Asian massacre linked to anti-China hysteria” #1955.

Universities, as a bourgeois institution, ultimately only serve to produce and reproduce the next generation of the ruling class, whether they be politicians, lawyers, policy advisors, businesspeople, etc. Even the seemingly innocuous and apolitical STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) contribute to the contracts universities have with the Australian military. Universities often preach, for better or worse, their right to academic freedom, so it becomes imperative for the ruling class to ensure the university continues to function in their interests, to shut down the few intellectual trends allowed on campus that even question the foundations of the existing social and economic order. Terms such as “Islamo-Leftism” serve a dual function: not only does it attack trends in leftist thought and activism but also, more concretely, it serves as an arm to vilify Muslim communities. ✪

MAY DAY 2021



10AM SUNDAY 2 MAY FREMANTLE RESERVE

SURGING COMMODITY PRICES PUT PRESSURE ON CHINESE MANUFACTURING FIRMS

Surges in bulk commodity prices are putting pressure on China's manufacturing sector, pushing authorities and industry participants to seek plans to stabilise the market to fend off potential disruptions and risks.

The price of staple commodities such as copper, aluminium, steel and other manufacturing raw materials have jumped significantly this year, with futures prices increasing over fifty per cent compared to the same period last year and spot prices also seeing double-digit growth.

Specifically, steel prices have been repeatedly setting new highs during the same period, according to the China Iron and Steel Association.

Many factors are driving up bulk commodity prices: the US government's money-printing and bailouts for its faltering economy, rising global orders, and market speculation, experts said, noting that there is no sign of relief soon.

The price increases are likely to continue at least until mid-year, Hong Shibin, deputy executive director of the marketing committee of the China Household Electrical Appliances Association, told the *Global Times*.

Several industry insiders on the downstream end of the manufacturing sector told the *Global Times* that the price jumps are having a significant impact on their operations, further narrowing their profit margins.

For the home appliance industry, although this is usually the low season in China, instead of giving discounts, several large producers are hiking prices because of the rising input costs.

Price hikes started late last year across a wide range of home appliances and other commodities, with increases of 5-10 per cent or even more, data showed.

"Companies can hike prices as their costs go up, but this trend cannot last for long. After all, the end price is subject to contracts and other factors, which cannot be changed quickly," said Hong.

A general manager surnamed Du at Tianjin Juncheng Pipeline Industry Group Co, a steel product producer, told the *Global Times* that surging steel prices have significantly affected the company's business operations.

The price of strip steel, for example, surged from 4,230 yuan (849.71 AUD) per ton in February to a peak of 5,620 yuan (1,128.90 AUD) per ton in April, while the operating cost per ton has surged 30 per cent since February.

Du said that the company doesn't really have a strategy to deal with this situation and is losing money as a downstream processing company.

Some companies have made contingency plans. A source at a large electronics production company in Central China's Hubei Province told the *Global Times* that the costs of material are up about twenty per cent, but that's bearable at the moment.

"We have increased our prices only a bit because we have some stockpiles of basic materials," said the source, and the company is also cutting production costs.

High prices are drawing many new players into the steel sector. Data from market information online platform Qichacha showed that there are 18,000 steel companies in China, with 2,888 registered in 2020 and another 930 registered in the first quarter of 2021 alone.

With higher prices in the spotlight, the China Iron and Steel Association and other departments will hold an iron ore market research forum.

But instead of discussing soaring steel prices as some media reports assumed, a source with the association told the *Global Times* that this will be an internal meeting and the main agenda is to cooperate with relevant departments to investigate the market situation.

Experts said that prices could reach a turning point soon.

Demand is only part of the reason for the soaring prices, since many downstream firms are buying less, Ge Xin, a senior analyst with Beijing Lange Steel Information Research Center, told the *Global Times*.

"Market speculation worldwide plays an important part, contributing at least fifty per cent of the current high price," said Ge.

A recent meeting by the State Council Financial Stability and Development Committee paid particular attention to the trend of staple commodity prices and addressed the need to keep prices basically stable, according to a report from www.ce.cn.

China is reducing the expansion of unnecessary infrastructure and pushing steel industry participants to transform, which will also help to rein in prices over the longer term, said Ge.

Staff Reporters – *Global Times*

IRAN DEMANDS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE AGAINST "NUCLEAR TERRORISM"

The head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) has rejected an "act of sabotage" against the country's nuclear site in Natanz, noting that the international community, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), must deal with such "nuclear terrorism" that targets Iran's facilities.

The attack against the electricity distribution network at the nuclear facility came just one day after Iran's president Hassan Rouhani inaugurated new centrifuges there, complying with the gradual resumption of Uranium enrichment in response to the US scrapping of the 2016 Nuclear Agreement and the restoration of sactions against the Islamic republic.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, while condemning this despicable act, underlines the need for the international community and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to address this nuclear terrorism and reserves the right to take action against masterminds, perpetrators and conspirators of this [terrorist] act," Salehi said.

He added that the Islamic Republic will seriously pursue the development of its nuclear technology, on the one hand, and make efforts to remove the oppressive US sanctions, on the other hand, so that those who ordered the terrorist act would not reach their goals.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the AEOI, announced the incident earlier in the day, saying it did not cause any pollution or human fatalities.

Kamalvandi added that the cause of the incident is under investigation and that further information will be announced later.

Israel's public radio quoted unidentified intelligence sources on Sunday as saying that Israel's Mossad spy agency carried out a cyber attack against Iran's Natanz nuclear facility, Reuters reported.

Natanz facility is among the sites being monitored by the IAEA under a 2015 landmark nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between Iran and a group of world powers.

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GILDA CHACÓN:
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Yimel Diaz

"The physical disappearance of our dear colleague Gilda Chacón Bravo constitutes a sensitive loss for the Cuban and International Trade Union Movement. She was a true militant of the Revolution, with a high commitment to the workers and her country, she always shone for her professionalism, self-denial and perseverance," those were the words published on social media by Ismael Drullet Pérez, member of the National Secretariat of the CTC international relations.

"Gilda was an inexhaustible source of knowledge on complex issues of global unionism" he added and thanked the "the many friends around the world who have sent us their condolences, expressions of admiration, respect and appreciation for our unforgettable colleague."

Among those displays of affection, the general secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) stands out George Mavrikos, who on the same 8th April published on his Facebook profile: "Our dear Gilda has left us. An hour ago, the comrade, leader of the CTC of Cuba and the WFTU, died in Havana. Your loss is irreparable. The WFTU loses a great woman and a militant. In the years that she lived and worked with us at the Athens Headquarters, she earned the love and appreciation of all of us. We have lost a comrade and sister. She was defeated by cancer. We express our sincere condolences to her family members and to the leadership of the CTC."

Another page of the international class organisation asserted that "The WFTU family is losing a beloved member, a fighter, long-time militant, and internationalist who dedicated her entire life to the struggle so that the working class could have a better life. Gilda represented the WFTU on all continents, in many missions and in multilateral organisations, always protecting the rights of ordinary people who fight against social injustice and imperialism [...] she has served the WFTU from different positions always with efficiency, determination and orientation to the principles and objectives of the class-oriented trade union movement."

The Encuentro Sindical Nuestra América (ESNA), another of the articulating endeavours to which Gilda gave herself passionately, recognised that "a great comrade, a fighter, a revolutionary, a woman committed to the Cuban Revolution, to the continental and global struggle of workers. She accompanied the ESNA project and worked side by side with us. Her only objective was always to enhance our space of unity in diversity."

The *Trabajadores* newspaper, for its part, had Gilda's authorised voice on more than one occasion, always solicitous and professional, and answered each of our questions.

Trabajadores

Gilda Chacón Bravo (right) with Nidia García Berenguer, then General Secretary of the National Union of Tobacco Workers, during the International Congress of Women Workers held in March 2018 in Panama. (Photo: Yimel Díaz Malmierca)

FARMWORKERS NEED FAMILIES, NOT DEPORTATION AND EXPLOITATION

David Bacon

During the Trump administration, the US deported an average of 275,725 people per year, almost the same number of workers – 257,667 – brought by growers last year to labour in US fields. Contract labourers on H2-A visas now make up is a tenth of the US's total agricultural workforce – an increase of more than 100,000 in just six years.

Deporting people while bringing in contract farm labour is not new. In 1954, during the bracero program, the US deported 1,074,277 people in the infamous "Operation Wetback," and brought in 309,033 contract workers. Two years later 445,197 braceros were brought to work on US farms.

Farmworkers already living in the US were replaced by contract labour when they demanded higher wages. Farmworker advocates accused the government of using deportations to create a labour shortage and force workers and growers into the bracero program. Braceros were abused and cheated, they argued, and deported if they went on strike.

In response, civil rights and labour leaders of that era, including Cesar Chávez and Ernesto Galarza, pushed Congress to end the bracero program.

After ending the bracero program in 1964, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. A preference system for family immigration replaced the growers' cheap labour supply scheme. By no accident, the grape strike which began the farmworkers' union movement in Delano started the same year.

Today the Biden administration is seeking ways to undo the damage to immigrants and workers wrought by Trump's executive orders. For farmworkers, the worst of those orders came last April, when an infamous tweet suspended all the processing of family preference visas, effectively ending the program won by the civil rights movement. At the same time, Trump tried to cut the wages of today's braceros, the H2-A workers, and expand the program by making it even more grower-friendly.

In one positive move, Biden rescinded Trump's wage cut. But a deeper choice remains.

The H2-A program is even more abusive than the old bracero program. An opaque system of private recruiters and contractors brings in workers, extorting bribes for visas. Once in the US, these workers suffer wage theft and systematic labour violations. During the pandemic, their barracks and bunk beds have become centres for spreading infection, and several have died. When workers protest conditions and go on strike they are fired and sent back to Mexico and blacklisted for future employment.

At the same time, farmworkers living in the US have seen their wages stagnate. It is not unusual to see workers living in cars and under trees at harvest time. Legal cases document the replacement of resident farmworkers by H2-A workers. This is not legal, but only twenty-six out of over eleven thousand growers were temporarily suspended from the program last year for violations. Already in states like Georgia and Washington, more than a quarter of all farm jobs are now filled by growers bringing in contract labor, and the number is rising quickly.

Over ninety per cent of all farmworkers living in the US are immigrants, and half are undocumented. Yet there is no way for those without papers to gain legal status. The largest agricultural employers have responded to demands for legalisation with the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. It sets up the conditions for enormous growth in the H2-A program, and would likely lead to half the farm labour workforce in the US labouring under H2-A visas within a few years. The bill will prohibit undocumented workers from working in agriculture while implementing a restrictive and complex process in which some undocumented farmworkers could apply for legal status.

Instead of competing for domestic workers by raising wages, growers want H2-A workers whose wages stay only slightly above the legal minimum. This system then places workers with H-2A visas into competition with a domestic labour force, depressing the wages of all farmworkers.

For farmworkers trying to organise and change conditions, the H2-A program creates enormous obstacles. When H-2A workers themselves try to change exploitative conditions, employers can terminate their employment and end their legal visa status, in effect deporting them. Workers are then legally blacklisted, preventing their recruitment to work in future seasons. Farmworkers living in the US, thinking about organising or going on strike, have to consider the risk of being replaced.

Meanwhile, farmworkers who have visas or are citizens can't reunite their families here in the US. A mother who wants to bring her married daughter or son from Mexico City or Manila must wait over two decades because the family preference system has been starved for visas. Meanwhile, the H2-A program grows exponentially.

The time has come to do what Chávez and Galarza advocated, and won, half a century ago. The H2-A program must be ended. Family reunification visas should be made available to the families that need them. People brought by their families to the US will need work, and growers can hire them and others by raising wages and bargaining with farmworker unions.

Many people in Mexico need work in the US as well. Making permanent visas available that are not tied to work status, while prohibiting recruitment by employers and contractors, allows people to cross the border and settle here with families. Growers needing their labour can pay higher wages to make farm labour jobs attractive.

High wages and secure jobs for farmworkers can only come by discarding the old deportation/guestworker model, and instead supporting families with legalisation, family-based visas, and unions and labour rights.

People's World

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