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NO TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH!

Anna Pha

Labor leader Anthony Albanese and Shadow Treasurer Jim Chalmers shocked many in their own ranks when they announced that Labor would support the Coalition's tax cuts which overwhelmingly benefit the wealthy. The cuts will cost an estimated $19bil a year and do nothing to improve the living standards of workers or stimulate the economy. They will be paid for by low-income workers, pensioners, and the unemployed.

They are the third stage of three rounds of tax cuts which Chalmers had previously described as the "least affordable, least fair and least likely to be effective because higher-income earners aren't as likely to spend in the economy as workers of more modest means." Too true!

The economy is once again sliding into recession. Lockdowns and the forced closure of many businesses and the loss of thousands of jobs have hit workers hard. JobKeeper had retained the link between workers and their employers, and the JobSeeker supplement kept many families afloat. This time around, the Coalition has reluctantly agreed to a disaster payment of $750 per week but not with the maintenance of the link with the employer.

It still stubbornly refuses to increase JobSeeker to the level of a living wage or raise the level of other payments such as the Youth Allowance and Age Pension. It deliberately suppresses wage rates. It has failed to act on wage theft which has become an all-too-common business model, and it passed legislation cementing casual work, in particular for low-income workers.

INCOME GAP WIDENS

The Australian Council of Social Service estimated that the overall three-stage tax package would cost the public purse more than $35 billion per annum if the final, third stage of cuts, were introduced in 2024. It found that:

- Most individuals on $30,000 or less, and the lowest thirty per cent of households, do not benefit from the tax cuts because their taxable incomes are too low to pay income tax.
- A middle income-earner on $50,000 gains $1,205.
- A high income-earner on $200,000 gains $11,640.

Analysis for the Australian Greens by the Parliamentary Budget Office found that the one per cent of taxpayers on the highest incomes would gain $11.8bil in total cuts by 2031. The more than forty per cent of taxpayers on less than $60,000 would get just $3.1bil.

The modelling also revealed an alarming widening of the gender gap with women expected to receive $1 for every $2 pocketed by men!

FLAT TAXERS

The huge disparity between cuts for the wealthy and those on middle-to-low incomes reflects a flattening of the tax scale. The stage two cuts which were brought forward a year to begin this year increased the threshold where the 32.5 cent marginal rate kicks in from $37,000 to $45,000. It also extended the threshold of the thirty-seven cent bracket from $90,000 to $120,000.

Stage three would reduce the 32.5 cent rate to thirty cents and be expanded to cover taxable incomes of between $45,000 and $200,000. In the process the 37 per cent rate would be eliminated. The highest marginal rate of forty-five cents would kick in at $200,001.

As a result, a worker on $45,000 or more per annum would pay the same marginal rate as someone on $200,000. Albanese and Chalmers, hang your heads in shame!

There has been an insidious and regressive flattening of the tax rates for more than half a century by both Labor and the Coalition. Australia once had a fair and progressive tax system where the higher a person's income, the higher the percentage of that income that was paid in tax. The basis of this system was a made up of a number of marginal rates (percentage of income), each higher rate applying to income above a certain level.

Stage three would result in a tax-free threshold and four marginal rates including the tax-free threshold. Back in 1951-52 there were twenty-eight marginal rates which got progressively higher, rising from zero to seventy-eight per cent in small increments. In the 1970s the Fraser Coalition government began flattening in earnest and was followed by the Keating Labor government in the early 1990s.

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WORKING CLASS OVER-POLICED, WHILE THE RICH ENJOY FREEDOM

The response to the pandemic from Australian governments has revealed (perhaps more than any other event in recent history) their contempt for the Australian working class. This time, it manifested in the sharp difference between the policing of Western and Eastern Sydney.

Last week, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) deployed 300 personnel into Western Sydney for a COVID-19 suppression effort. Before the ADF's deployment, the eight Sydney LGAs were already heavily policed in stark contrast to their Eastern counterparts.

Photos and video footage captured by citizens and shared across social media have shown how tens of police vehicles and groups of police officers have patrolled the streets of Western Sydney. However, in the east, people have enjoyed relaxed conditions, with public spaces overcrowded as they exercised or queued up for coffee at cafés.

In an attempt to ease fears, NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller stated that the operation is "centred around the welfare of the community and ensuring that stay-at-home orders [...] are observed."

Supporting Fuller's claim, Brigadier Mick Garraway, who heads the ADF during the deployment, assured that military the presence will be "supporting in nature."

ALP MP Tony Burke spoke out against the deployment, stating that "there was inadequate consultation with community leaders in those eight LGAs" and that "[p]eople felt that they were in some way being not trusted. They were conscious that the government said 'don't lock down Bondi' but then sent the troops in on Western Sydney."

Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe also criticised the move, stating: "Mobilising the police and Australian Defence Force to treat a public health crisis is absurd [...]. Officers of the law are not experts in public health messaging, culturally accessible information and welfare support services that enable people to stay at home safely [...]."

This is not the first time that working-class areas have been over-policed during the pandemic. Last year, the lockdown of North Melbourne and Flemington public housing was found to be "not based on direct health advice and violated Victorian human rights laws," according to the Victorian ombudsman. Much like the military rollout in Western Sydney, residents in these communities were not consulted, leaving many without their medicines and food for more than a week. This contrasted against the response at a complex in Melbourne's Southbank, where two COVID-19 cases were found, with police less present.

If the military truly wanted to play a supportive role, they wouldn't be roaming the streets of Western Sydney. Instead, they could be building quarantine centres or administering vaccinations through their medical staff.

However, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian isn't interested in truly supporting the working class. Her voters aren't out there. It is easier for her government to make an example out of Western Sydney, pretending to be tough with the pandemic because those communities are so heavily othered.

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NO POLITICISATION OF COVID ORIGIN TRACING

Joint statement with CPC

As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc across the globe, the current situation is still grave. We, political parties and organisations from around the world bearing the heavy responsibility of improving the people's wellbeing, promoting national development and safeguarding world peace and stability, have noted with deep concern the recent noises to politicise virus origin-tracing in international anti-epidemic cooperation. With a view to further promoting international anti-epidemic cooperation, we hereby agree to issue a joint statement as follows:

I. We are of the view that COVID-19 has been the most widespread global pandemic inflicted upon humanity for the past century or so and entails a war that all mankind declares on the virus. We as humans live in a community in which we rise and fall together with a shared future. In the face of major crises, no single country can remain insulated and intact. Viruses know no borders or races. The only way to defeat them is for the international community to work together.

II. We are of the view that science is the force that can be relied upon to defeat viruses and wipe out diseases. As the coronavirus is a new virus still unknown to humanity and its origin-tracing a serious scientific issue that must be studied by scientists and medical experts around the world through cooperation before any scientific conclusion is drawn on the basis of facts and evidences.

III. We are of the view that origin-tracing is the shared obligation of all countries. The outline of the next step work plan proposed unilaterally by the WHO Secretariat has neither complied with what is stipulated in the relevant Resolution of the World Health Assembly, nor been consulted adequately with Member States, still less fully reflected the latest research achievements of the global origin-tracing. Hence it is not conducive to offering due guidance for future cooperation thereof. Many countries have expressed their concerns about this. We call on the Secretariat of the World Health Organisation to act on relevant resolutions adopted by the World Health Assembly to advance global origin-tracing study in cooperation with all Member States, while giving full consideration to the emerging new scientific evidences and faithfully following the recommendations of the Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019. We support medical experts and scientific researchers in carrying out thorough origin-tracing in a professional spirit covering multiple countries and multiple locations, so as to provide necessary reference experience for the prevention of the next possible pandemic.

IV. We are of the view that in the face of the grave threat COVID-19 poses to life, safety and health of all mankind, what the international community needs the most is to defeat the virus with greater solidarity and cooperation. Allowing the politicisation of the tracing issue to run its own course will seriously poison the atmosphere for cooperation on global origin-tracing and undermine the achievements of the joint international fight against COVID-19, which does not serve the interest of any party. We resolutely oppose any attempt of politicisation, geographical labeling and stigmatisation as well the obstruction by any political factor and political manipulation to the research process and the international anti-epidemic cooperation.

V. We are of the view that while advancing origin-tracing study, we should continue to redouble our epidemic prevention and control efforts. We need to ensure the accessibility and affordability of vaccines in developing countries and see to it that vaccines become a global public good. We appreciate the fact that China and other countries have taken positive moves in providing vaccines to the rest of the world, in particular to developing countries, making important contribution to the global anti-epidemic cooperation. We call on vaccine-capable countries to refrain from imposing export restrictions or resorting to excessive hoarding and to resolutely oppose vaccine nationalism so that the global immunisation gap can be narrowed, and a stronger international fence against the virus can take shape.

VI. We are of the view that political parties and organisations of all countries must shoulder their responsibility to enhance cooperation, work hard to facilitate global anti-pandemic cooperation, policy coordination and complementary actions, so as to inject inexhaustible driving force for the global fight against COVID-19 and the building of a global community of health for all.

VII. We believe that so long as members of the international community look out for each other in the most trying times, humanity will surely prevail over the pandemic, emerge stronger from this dark hour in history and embrace an even brighter future of human development.

14th National Congress Special Appeal

From October 29-31 this year, elected delegates representing Communist Party organisations from all over Australia will gather in Sydney for the 14th National Congress of the Party, COVID restrictions permitting. In the lead-up to the Congress, Party members have been discussing and submitting amendments to a draft Political Resolution. At Congress delegates will review the work of the Party and look to its future tasks. Congress will elect a new Central Committee to lead the work of the Party until the next National Congress.

The CPA has launched a Special Appeal to help defray the costs associated with holding a National Congress. We are appealing to Party members and organisations, all friends and supporters of the Party and *Guardian* readers to help fulfill our $10,000 target as soon as possible.

To contribute, please fill in the form below or write your details on a separate piece of paper to send with your contribution.

All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*, with the names of contributors unless otherwise requested. We look forward to your support for this important occasion.

(Name)_____ contributes $_____ to the above Appeal.

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So how exactly does it trickle down again?

BUSINESSES EXPLOIT JOBKEEPER SUBSIDY

Valentin Cartillier

It has been revealed that businesses have rorted the JobKeeper program during 2020, with many of them using it to turn a profit. Between April and June last year, around one million businesses and not-for-profits signed up. It was designed as a $1,500 a fortnight wage subsidy so businesses could keep paying their employees during the coronavirus pandemic and maintain their link with them.

But as it turns out, many businesses simply pocketed most of the money. $4.6bil went to businesses that were actually still making a profit and clearly not suffering financial hardship. A review by the Parliamentary Budget Office, which offers transparency around fiscal and budget policy issues, showed that 157,650 employers increased their turnovers in 2020 as compared to the same period (April-June) in 2019. The figures look even more exploitative when you look at the statistics from a broader perspective.

It is essential to keep in mind that this subsidy was to enable struggling businesses to keep paying workers, not go to the businesses' bottom line. To qualify for JobKeeper, businesses had to show that their turnover had fallen below a certain threshold or that their turnover was "projected to fall" beneath that threshold due to the impact of COVID-19. The federal government would then pay them $1,500 for each eligible worker which they were obliged to pass on to their staff regardless of whether they were still working or stood down.

"Projected to fall" is the sleight of hand that 365,000 businesses used to access the subsidy without suffering a downturn in revenue, but continuing to turn a profit. These businesses pocketed $12.5bil by claiming that their projected turnover was expected to decrease compared to the previous financial year. In most, if not all, cases it is plain to see that this was probably intentional.

Once "qualified", businesses continued to receive the payment until the end of September, which was when the next threshold test took place. The figures for the July-September period have not yet come out, though we can reasonably expect similar numbers. This incredible waste of taxpayers' money is just another example, in an increasingly expanding pile, of making workers pay for the crisis. Unemployed workers received a temporary supplement bringing their payment to $1100 a fortnight.

Best & Less presents a pretty egregious example of this profiteering. They received $46mil in JobKeeper subsidies of which only $15.7mil was passed on to employees. So, just thirty-four per cent of the money designed to keep workers employed actually made it to Best & Less employees. To add insult to injury, not only did Best & Less increase its earnings by sixty-two per cent in the 2020 financial year, with a third of that thanks to the JobKeeper payment, its earnings increased 100 per cent in the past financial year.

And this is just a single business. The entire JobKeeper subsidy has cost around $90bil though, as more of the figures come out, that number could end up at over $100bil. We will undoubtedly see many more examples of this rort being brought to light.

This is truly one of the finest examples of the absolute lie of so-called "trickle-down" economics. The wealth of businesses does not "trickle-down" to workers, it pools at the top. If we are to humour the capitalist economists and politicians who cling so dearly to this concept, we can proclaim, "Why yes! The wealth does trickle down. Into the bottom lines of your businesses and out to your shareholders."

Labor MP Dr Andrew Leigh has called for businesses to return the money they pocketed. Given how viciously Centrelink has pursued welfare recipients in the past – we need only recall the fatal Robodebt scandal from a few years ago as one example – it shouldn't be outside the government's capacity to recover the funds.

However, it is very unlikely that this demand will be met without a united front campaign by members of all areas of the working class. Since the government has been so hellbent over the years on forcing welfare recipients to pay back money to the government (money which people desperately needed and did not owe), then it is only fair that the biggest welfare recipients of all, private businesses, pay it back too.

This JobKeeper scheme may be the single greatest misuse of public money in the history of the country. However, misuse is not entirely the right word. Misuse implies a lack of intention. When you understand how this money has been allocated according to the logic of capitalism and the state, it becomes clear that keeping businesses in the green was what was intended all along. As Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution*:

"A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell [...] it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it."

The state aids and abets the expansion of capitalism, which is its economic foundation. Therefore, particularly in this case, it comes as no surprise that the government has once again aligned itself with private interests by handing out money to businesses while workers suffer and starve.

The value created by the working class through their labour is appropriated by business-owners who use it to increase their overall value and expand their businesses without any regard for the welfare of workers. The capitalist state will always be on the side of capitalism and the capitalists until it is brought under the control of the working class. The working class may demand that businesses pay back the money they took but this cycle will only keep repeating itself until there is a fundamental change in who controls the state. The "trickle-down" policies of the government should be met by the rising tide of working-class organisation. ✪

Party Badges

Port Jackson Branch has only 40 left of the original CPA badges, an elegant design adopted by the Central Committee some years ago after a Party-wide competition.

They are for sale at $5 each plus $2 pp.

Contact Port Jackson Branch via email

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Special Appeal Reds go Green

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising $10,000 for solar panels.
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.

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ANTI-MASK IS ANTI-WORKING CLASS

Casey Davidson

Thousands of anti-maskers have gathered in major centres around the country in opposition to COVID-19 restrictions. These rallies have been led by an assortment of far-right organisations, who have used the pandemic to draw in thousands of everyday Australians, who are justifiably angered by the government's poor management of the crisis, to a reactionary position.

While the far-right have hit the streets peddling conspiracy theories, such as the denial of COVID-19, vaccines being used to intentionally kill people, 5G health concerns, mind control, fears of Communist Party of China (CPC) controlling Australia, and anti-semitism; other protesters joined them for more material reasons affecting their lives, including the slow vaccine roll out, the removal of welfare safety nets, vague rules around restrictions and lockdowns, a lack of transparency, and continuous "passing of the buck." The very real issues which concern Australians have been co-opted by many of those on the far-right to shift the Overton Window, hence convincing people that discriminatory and dangerous policies should be deemed acceptable.

CLASS DENIALISM IS DANGEROUS

The anti-mask rallies in Australia are great examples of how denial of class society can be weaponised against the working class. To illustrate, if an individual is unable to grasp how the owners of productive forces under capitalism inevitably exploit their workers for profit (an undeniable and objective feature of capitalist society), and how this basis creates a negative ripple effect in several aspects of society, there is always the danger of crises being blamed on a scapegoat.

For example, many right-wing conspiracy theorists start from the position of blaming governments, or the "deep state," but may support a multi-millionaire tycoon such as Clive Palmer because he is also critical of the state. But whatever Palmer asserts about Australian freedom and sovereignty, his primary interest is to maintain control over the means of production – which is why he is hellbent on blaming the Chinese. Creating a scapegoat like China moves the focus away from how he has exploited everyday Australians and over to a misunderstood minority or outsider. This is the basis of how fascist ideology manifests.

Many of these groups have direct links to the dangerous anti-semitic conspiracy theory and cult QAnon, which has produced white supremacist material alluding to Jewish elites controlling the world – another scapegoat of the fascists that is historically used to justify the Holocaust – the murder of millions of Jewish people and other oppressed minorities by Nazi Germany.

CENSORSHIP AND OTHER RHETORIC

So why would Australia's Liberal government allow such rhetoric to be unleashed across the country by broadcasters and news outlets alike? Perhaps the government actually aligns with Western values of freedom of speech or anti-censorship? This, however, appears to be a doubtful assessment. Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd constantly battles the Liberal Party (LP) for allowing the Murdoch press to spread disinformation and lies about the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and left forces, while undermining or ignoring criticisms and misconduct of the Coalition government. News Corp's Sky News Australia was recently suspended by YouTube after spreading disinformation alluding to the COVID-19 pandemic as an intentional plot to change global leadership or a hoax, however, this suspension was not instigated or supported by the Australian government but a private company. If the government really took issue with right-wing commentators as they do with the left, they have no reason or moral high ground that would stop them from suspending or censoring them.

With this in mind, could there be another reason these forces are generally permitted a voice? Without a basic understanding of extremism, everyday Australians can be pulled into its lure. These kind of mouthpieces and movements use language to describe their agenda which may seem reasonable, such as "Freedom of Speech," "Bridging the gap," "Pro-choice," "Bodily Freedom," "Fundamental Democratic Rights," and "Protecting Liberties." The slogans are sprayed all over their placards, shirts, buses and propaganda. They may also support extreme right politicians such as Pauline Hanson for appearing to "stick it to the man." Australians who may have genuine criticisms of the government's poor performance, and subscribe to some fairly universal values, actually end up supporting forces against their own interests. This inherently gives the existing ruling class "freedom from" working-class resistance and revolutionary potential.

HYPOCRISY OF THE FAR-RIGHT

Activity and campaigning of the anti-mask forces takes a very different, and ugly form to their simplistic slogans. They do not in fact focus on liberties to build a more open, inclusive, and hence, democratic society, but for more control and exploitation of the working class, and for dominance over productive forces for profit. It is not about allowing "choice" for all of society, but for a select privileged few.

The hypocrisy of these slogans is also quite evident when analysing what these extremists and fascists do not say. There are no parts in their programs which aim to build democracy for the most vulnerable elements of the community such as First Nations people, migrant workers, people with disabilities and the elderly. Nowhere do they focus on oversurvelliance in poor communities – they would rather put the focus back on their individualistic desires, while undermining genuine struggle. They use language like 'pro-choice' when peddling the anti-vaccine rhetoric, while despising women's reproductive rights. They do not focus on the JobKeeper or JobSeeker cuts, which have moved more working-class people into homelessness and poverty.

FREEDOM FROM AND FREEDOM TO

The reality is that Communists do genuinely fight for liberation, freedom and democracy for all of the people, focusing on those who have been most exploited by capitalism and imperialism, and those who are in more precarious positions. It is only through understanding the dialectical and contradictory nature of classes under capitalism that freedom from poverty, freedom from oppression and freedom from exploitation can truly be achieved. The freedom to exploit, or to put a community's health at risk, is regarded as deplorable. Only with the experience gained through the recognition of class struggle can the Australian working class develop their understanding and make decisions which are in their best interests and perhaps one day, have the possibility of working towards a truly liberated, transparent and fair society. ✪

Fight for the Future

This attractive new booklet is a call to action to save our planet and humanity.

It argues that humanity is at a crossroads. The insatiable drive for profits by capitalism is leading to irreversible and catastrophic climate change. Capitalist governments – and the giant corporations they work for – are refusing to act on the warnings of the great majority of the world's leading scientists.

A popular movement for change is growing around the world. It aims to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs.

The stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape are immense and arise from the nature of capitalism. Capitalism is an unsustainable system.

The pamphlet insists that we must confront the reality that what we do now will forever alter the course of humanity and all life on Earth. Now more than ever we must fight for a better system. Our lives are more important than their profits.

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REFORM DRACONIAN VICTORIAN BAIL LAWS!

Bree Booth

A new report by Corrections Victoria has revealed that over half of women incarcerated in Victorian prisons are unsentenced, highlighting once more the deep flaws in Victoria's bail system. According to the report, in July 2021 there were 411 women incarcerated in Victoria, with 221 of them, or fifty-four per cent, unsentenced.

Following the Bourke St attack in 2017, the Victorian parliament introduced reforms to bail laws by creating a set of offences for which there is a presumption against bail. This shifts the burden of proof onto the accused, who now has to prove why they should be granted bail. This departs from the old system where a prosecutor had to argue why a person should not be granted bail. The offences which these laws apply to are mostly violent offences including domestic violence, sex offences, and terrorism. But they also apply to non-violent drug offences and some driving offences.

The bail laws are intended to keep dangerous and violent people out of the community while they are awaiting trial and/or sentencing. The reality is that the bail system disproportionately targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Feminist and Indigenous rights advocates have been campaigning hard for the Andrews government to enact a wholesale reform of the most onerous and dangerous bail laws in the country. But tough on crime policies win elections, and change hasn't been forthcoming.

Women, and Indigenous women in particular, are disproportionately affected by these laws because of the kinds of structural disadvantages that make it difficult for them to make a case for bail. A lot of the time, when women are denied bail it isn't because they pose a risk to the community. It is because they may not have a place to go if released on bail due to homelessness, mental illness, domestic violence or socio-economic hardship.

Put simply, rather than direct them to appropriate crisis resources in the community, the system's response is to keep these women in custody for low level offences without bail. When their cases come before a judge, they are often released on time served sentences or acquitted of all charges. This only goes to show that there was no good reason for them to be in custody in the first place.

Like most corrections policies, the bail system in Victoria doesn't even make financial sense. It costs around $300 per prisoner per day to keep people incarcerated. This cost would be greatly offset by allowing non-dangerous people accused of offences to remain in the community until a court decides their sentence. Not to mention that incarceration greatly increases the chances of re-offending, which only compounds the potential cost of incarceration.

As it stands, over 13,000 prisoners in Victoria are unsentenced. If the government is intent on spending this money, $300 per head for 13,000 people would go a long way to funding desperately needed community services like drug and alcohol rehabilitation, homelessness services, mental health support, and support for people experiencing family violence.

The current system has been described as draconian. A more apt description is hard to come by. The system is racist, misogynistic, and classist. It punishes some of the most disadvantaged in our community when they most need help. Not only that, it flies in the face of the 'innocent until proven guilty' principle that our criminal law is based on. Reform Victoria's bail laws now! ✪

FEDERAL COURT FAVOURS TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION GROUND CREW AGAINST QANTAS

E Lennon

Last year, the Transport Workers' Union instigated legal actions against Qantas over the airline's attempts to outsource 2000 jobs and the treatment of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of July, Justice Michael Lee found that Qantas' evidence was not sufficient to show motivation other than trying to disenfranchise union members.

Justice Lee concluded that Qantas' evidence failed to demonstrate a commercial gain and was made in a move against workplace rights.

"The key concern of making the outsourcing decision at the time that it was made was because of the vanishing window of opportunity," Justice Lee said in his final judgement. "The operational disruptions caused by the pandemic were, viewed as at November 2020, likely to continue for some time but not, mercifully, indefinitely."

While the Federal Court ruled Qantas' actions illegal, Justice Lee did not believe that the TWU's demand that workers be reinstated was a practical one. He found it "conceptually difficult" when the union proposed the move; however, he has told the TWU that it is not off the table if they come back with a more detailed proposal.

"We believe that not only is the move by Qantas management to kill off the jobs of 2000 workers morally wrong it is also illegal under the Fair Work Act," TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine said.

Qantas released a statement on the Federal Court ruling, declaring that it will "oppose any such orders" to "reinstate workers or pay compensation or penalties. The airline also said that it intends to appeal the court's decision.

Qantas Group executive John Gissing hit back at the Transport Workers' Union, victimising the airline company, and lamenting its lost revenue as opposed to the workers' rights.

"The TWU has put forward its persecution complex that our decision to save $100 million a year in the middle of a global downturn was really about stopping them from walking off the job at some time in the future," Qantas Group Executive John Gissing said. "The fact is, Qantas deals with the operational risk of industrial action on a regular basis given the 50-plus agreements across the Group.

"That risk pales in comparison with a pandemic that has grounded our fleet and our people for months, and has so far cost us $16 billion in revenue."

Beyond the union's frustrations with the airline's attempt at outsourcing, its workers have also been denied sick leave. Earlier in May, the High Court refused an application from workers that appealed Qantas' refusal to pay.

"In late 2019, I was diagnosed with stage five prostate cancer that had spread. I started treatment in early 2020 and as I was in treatment the company took me off sick leave, as I managed to cope with bills and so on, and [then they] put me on JobKeeper. I was too sick to work another job, so I ended up having to leave. I find it pretty disgusting that Qantas would do this to staff," said Peter Seymour, a former Qantas worker forced to take redundancy last year. ✪

NO TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH!

Continued from page 1

It is an example of quantitative changes leading to a qualitative change edging towards a flat income tax rate of thirty cents in the dollar. From progressive to regressive! The relatively small changes at a time deflect attention from the big picture.

It will not stop at a flat thirty per cent. Former Treasurer Joe Hockey let the cat out of the bag when he indicated the aim was for zero income tax. Instead, he advocated higher indirect taxes, meaning the GST. The GST is regressive, with those on lower incomes paying a higher percentage of their earnings in taxes.

ARGUMENTS DON'T STAND UP

Claims that it is to compensate for workers' incomes creeping up are nonsense. That doesn't explain the flattening of the marginal rates.

Likewise claiming the tax cuts will stimulate the economy are nonsense. They won't. Putting more money in to the pockets of low to middle income workers and social security recipients will. They will spend the extra money in the economy, unlike the extremely wealthy parasites.

The stage three cuts alone are estimated to cost $17bil in the first year and $130bil over ten years. This is at a time when the government has run up a huge budget deficit debt related to pandemic measures, military spending, and corporate welfare.

CLASS QUESTIONS

Taxation and budget spending are class questions. Tax revenue comes from the pockets of workers and company profits (if they pay them). Company profits are extracted through the exploitation of workers.

All wealth is created by workers through their labour. Capitalists do not create a single cent of wealth. Machinery on its own cannot create wealth. Even where robots are used, those robots were built by workers, by the working class.

When workers create wealth, there is a distribution of that wealth:

- profits (surplus value)
- wages
- taxation of workers and profits.

How much tax is paid, who pays it, and how it is spent are class issues. The proposed stage three and previous tax cuts benefiting the wealthy come at the expense of billions of dollars in spending. When the government sets about wiping the budget deficit and government debt, it will have tens of billions of dollars less in income because of the personal and corporate income tax cuts.

No prizes for guessing where the money will come from!

It will not be from cutting spending on future war preparations, abolishing fossil fuel subsidies, or phasing out the $7bil subsidy for private hospitals. No, the government will cry poor and make cuts to the NDIS, social security, Medicare, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, public education, and other services.

Labor must be persuaded that this is not a good electoral move with a massive campaign of social media, letter-writing, phone calls to MPs and Senators, etc.

At the same time we get on with the task of building a broad movement of left and progressive forces including trade unions, peace activists, environmentalists, and political parties to provide a genuine political alternative. ✪

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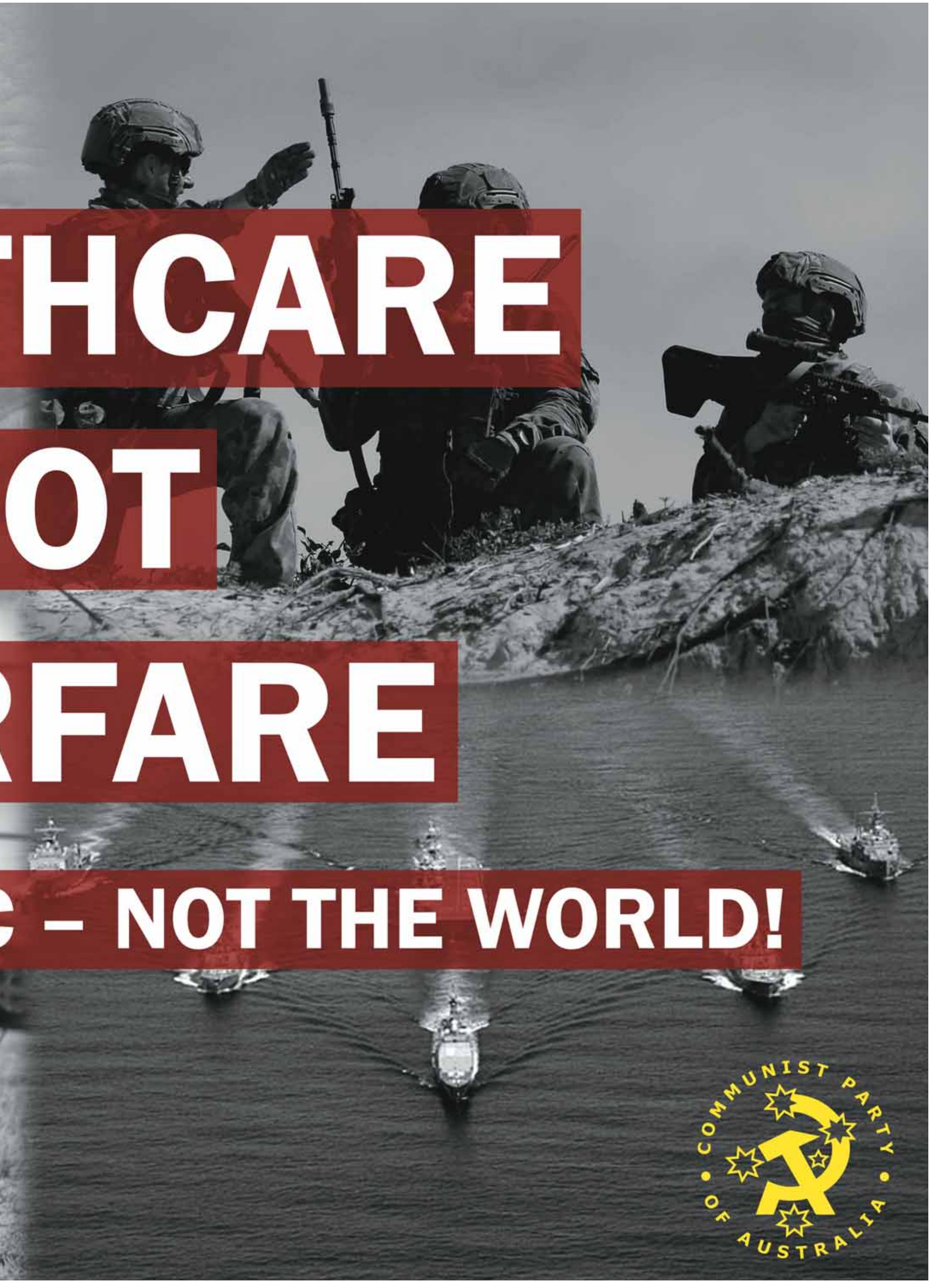
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EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF US

Kathryn Guerrera

People wait in line at a government-run grocery store in Havana, Cuba.

As a Canadian with family members that live in Cuba, who was in Cuba during the anti-government protests that occurred on the 11th of July, I found myself in a unique and disturbing position where I could see and feel the disconnect between what was being reported by the mainstream media back home and what was really happening on the ground in Cuba.

Approximately two weeks after Father's Day, the COVID-19 Delta variant began to take hold, particularly in the province of Matanzas. Mother's Day and Father's Day are important social celebrations in Cuban culture and, coupled with the level of contagion of the Delta variant, this led to a rapid escalation in new COVID-19 cases. Cuba had recently fully vaccinated a large portion of the population in La Habana province with their first approved vaccine candidate, Abdala. From there, the Cuban Ministry of Health (MINSAP) began focusing on Matanzas because it is the most popular province for tourism and this puts the population there more at risk. Abdala has an efficacy rate of ninety-two per cent, putting it in the same league as the most effective vaccines, BioNTech-Pfizer and Moderna.

At the same time that the number of daily reported new COVID-19 cases was spiking, we began hearing from many friends in the city of Cárdenas, Matanzas (a current hotspot for COVID-19) that their vaccination appointments were being cancelled due to a lack of syringes and needles. The government responded swiftly with a lockdown, allowing stores to only be open in the mornings so that people would be at home for the rest of the day. At the same time, the number of hospital admissions was increasing and health care workers and the hospital infrastructure itself were becoming overwhelmed. A large electrical power plant in Matanzas was operating at reduced capacity due to outstanding maintenance (the US blockade affects Cuba's ability to import parts and supplies) and the government had to resort to rationing electricity to households in order to keep people in the hospitals alive. This meant only a few hours per day to cook or turn on your fan or air conditioner in the July heat. No public pools were open and going to the beach was not permitted due to the lockdown.

So, nearly a year and a half into the pandemic and economic crisis, you can imagine the heightened level of frustration, fatigue and despair.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Cuba's GDP has rapidly fallen by over eleven per cent. The economy was already struggling before the pandemic. Since the Donald Trump administration tightened sanctions from 2017 to 2020, Cuban exports fell by eighty-two per cent and imports by eighty-five per cent. Trump attacked Cuba's sources of currency, cutting back commercial flights and eventually even banning charter flights in the summer of 2020. The US also imposed sanctions on tanker companies that delivered petroleum from Venezuela to Cuba which affected movement and logistics on the island.

With the huge losses to the tourism sector in 2020 because of the pandemic, the island has lost one of its most important sources of hard currency, plunging it into one of the worst food shortages since the Special Period in the 1990s. Basic hygiene products have become increasingly difficult for Cubans to find in stores – as have over-the-counter medications like Tylenol, Advil and antibiotic ointments. Pharmacies now lack vital prescription medications for manageable conditions like hypertension, diabetes and cancer as well as treatable, but potentially harmful infections. A 250-tablet bottle of Acetaminophen costs US$50 or more on the underground market.

With many medications currently unavailable, scarce, expensive personal hygiene products, and two to three-hour lineups for groceries with a 50/50 chance the store will run out that day before you make it inside, the Cuban people are suffering and generally exasperated and miserable under the current conditions. This is exactly what the sanctions are designed to do.

At the beginning of July, in response to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Matanzas province, we started seeing the #SOSCuba hashtag coming from Cuban American celebrities living in South Florida. This was less than three weeks after the Abdala vaccine was found to contend with the top vaccines in the world (with Soberana, Cuba's second candidate vaccine, not far behind) and right after 184 countries voted at the United Nations for the US to end the blockade. The #SOSCuba hashtag was an obvious smear campaign and meant to spread the idea that the Cuban government has "mismanaged" the pandemic.

Miami is home to 1.2mil people of Cuban heritage – many of whom are descendants of exiles that fled the Revolution. They have strong counterrevolutionary and anti-communist views and constitute a wealthy and politically powerful community. There is a multimillion-dollar counterrevolutionary industry based in South Florida with politicians, YouTubers, actors, and artists whose entire careers are propped up by telling lies about the Cuban government and lobbying Washington to maintain and tighten its blockade. Tens of millions of dollars are spent every year by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAID to fund "democracy" projects in Cuba. This is code for funding political interference, fake journalism, dissenters and protesters – all to promote regime change.

After the anti-government protests, Spanish social media expert Julian Macias Tovar spoke on the Cuban television news show Mesa Redonda ("Roundtable") and explained that the figures around the #SOSCuba hashtag are more than a little odd. Macias Tovar stated that between 5th July, when the hashtag was first used, and 8th July, there were just 5,000 tweets. This figure then exploded exponentially with 100,000 Tweets on 9th July, 500,000 on 10th July, 1.5mil the next day and 2mil on 12th July. Cuban TV journalists did an excellent job debunking the lies and fake photos and videos around the protests as they were being created and disseminated to keep Cubans correctly informed. Unfortunately, of course, this was not seen by anyone outside of Cuba. We now know that thousands of fake social media accounts were created in the days leading up to the protests and that bots were used to send out thousands of tweets per day and hundreds of retweets per minute on July 10 and 11. The purpose was to tarnish the Cuban government's reputation and to prepare and encourage anti-government demonstrations.

On 11th July, there were not thousands of anti-government protesters in any Cuban city at any point in time. There were barely hundreds in a country of over 11mil people.

In Cárdenas, where I was, the participants were not working professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, lawyers, licensed business owners or workers in factories or the tourism sector. Most of the protesters were those who choose to be unemployed and live off remittances from family living abroad. Many are well-known delinquents and are not positive contributors to the community. We personally know of the woman and her husband who created a widely circulated and entirely fake video – using pig's blood and tomato sauce – of a Cuban police officer shooting their child. The couple confessed to being offered "Moneda

Pharmacies now lack vital prescription medications for manageable conditions like hypertension, diabetes and cancer as well as treatable, but potentially harmful infections.

ATTEMPTS TO DESTABILISE CUBA

Bridges of love action in Perth on Sunday 30th May 2021.

Libremente Convertible" (MLC, meaning freely convertible money rather than Cuban pesos) from someone in the United States to do this. Another individual, who was also offered money to participate in the Cárdenas protest, created a staged video and has a history in town of running an illegal, unlicensed business and not paying taxes.

Protest participants are generally not respected in the community and are not known for their civic engagement. Nor do they seem to be interested in peaceful dialogue with the government. Compensation appears to be their primary motivating factors. These anti-government protests were also not ongoing as mainstream media claimed in the days that followed.

I want to note that most Cuban police officers do not have guns with bullets. They usually have blank guns, similar to starting pistols, that merely emit smoke and sound. There were multiple false claims on social media and in the Western mainstream media of police murdering Cuban adults and youth – especially people of colour. Many of these "deceased" people later went on Cuban public television to prove that they were in fact alive and well.

The Cárdenas protests were not characterised by police brutality and there are no missing people. There were however stores completely trashed by rioters who threw rocks through windows and at unarmed police officers, toppled police vehicles, and stole things like kitchen stoves and electronics. To make matters worse, some individuals even went into the Cárdenas hospital and vandalised the paediatric ward. Health care workers reportedly needed police to provide security from these rioters who were threatening them.

Several protesters, after demolishing stores and the hospital ward, gathered at Cárdenas Bay where they expected boats from Florida that would take them to the United States. They themselves were victims of US lies and manipulation – no boats came to take them away and most have been arrested for clear-cut violations of the law. Many of them have already gone public with the communications they received from abroad that offered to transfer MLC to their bank account if they carried out destructive or deceptive tasks to create civil unrest, provoke law enforcement, and fabricate videos or make false claims to foreign media and on social media. The Western mainstream media has not reported on this.

The Western media has also not given enough attention to significant human rights violations by governments and paramilitary forces in countries like Colombia, Chile and Haiti where massive anti-government uprisings have occurred and hundreds of civilians have been abused, murdered or gone missing. But the same media was instantly ready to cover, exaggerate, and downright lie about what happened in Cuba. Politicians in the US immediately called for "humanitarian" or military intervention in Cuba – including airstrikes. Media in the United States, Canada, and other Western countries deceitfully published a photo of the Cuban May Day march photo in 2018, claiming it was of the anti-government protests. Facebook determined that their "community standards" were not violated by the countless comments calling for armed invasion and bloodshed, assassination of elected Cuban government officials, nuclear war against Cuba and gun running from Miami to Cuba.

In response to 11th July protests, thousands – actual thousands – of Cubans came out in cities across the island to support their government and the Revolution. On 17th July, pro-revolutionary and pro-government demonstrators, estimated in the hundreds of thousands, gathered at dawn in Havana. There was zero coverage of this on CNN or CBC. The huge pro-government turnout in Camagüey was described on social media as being anti-government protesters who had "liberated" Camagüey from the "dictatorship." This was completely false.

Days after the protests, cyberattacks originating in the US targeted the websites of public institutions in Cuba such as Ministry of Public Health of Cuba (MINSAP) as well as Cuban news sites like Cubadebate through Denial-of-Service attacks. The foreign powers apparently did not want people being informed by the Cuban Ministry of Health during a health crisis or seeing on the news the disinformation that was being exposed and Cuban people describing how they had been offered money to cause civil unrest.

Most Cubans – even those who may be unhappy with the current administration – are vehemently against violence, vandalism, looting and foreign interference in their country. Almost everyone that we spoke with in Cárdenas was angry at the destruction in their town and ashamed of the behaviour of those who would sell out and smear their homeland and ask for humanitarian and military intervention from the United States. Many Cuban civilians took it upon themselves to observe, record and report to authorities those involved in the destructive 11th July protests. Cubans have long been resisting imperialism and most know that foreign intervention and neoliberalism would make them worse off and not improve their material conditions.

I do not know of any Cuban living in Cuba who does not want above all else an end to the repressive and dictatorial US blockade. This which would have an instant impact on every aspect of their wellbeing.

This situation has made it easy to see who the real allies of the Cuban people are. The majority of Latin Americans gave their support to Cubans and their government, affirming their right to sovereignty and self-determination. While US President Joe Biden chauvinistically offered to send vaccines to Cuba after the protests, knowing full well that Cuba has its own vaccines, Mexico's President sent 800,000 syringes and needles to Cuba on a Mexican Air Force plane.

People's Voice

I do not know of any Cuban living in Cuba who does not want above all else an end to the repressive and dictatorial US blockade. This which would have an instant impact on every aspect of their wellbeing.

REPORT

POLITICS IN THE PUB – PERTH

Richard Titelius

On the 22nd of July 2021, the Communist Party of Australia held their latest Politics in the Pub on the theme of revolution. The first of three speakers was Dr Christopher Crouch, CPA WA Branch Chair, cultural theorist, and writer. He spoke about Vladimir I. Lenin and his pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* (*WITBD?*) written in 1901. According to Crouch, *WITBD?* strategically outlined how to organise a revolution based on Marxism.

For Lenin, it was important to look at the context in which a society was located to develop the strategies necessary for it to take place. By asking: "How can we improve the conditions under which we live in a contemporary context?" Crouch stated that revolutionaries today reading *WITBD?* need to go beyond the Marxist jargon to be found in Lenin's analysis. Part of a movement for revolutionary change involves the demands which the working class can seek to impose on the ruling class. Lenin said a theoretical structure for revolutionary change would give a model for the working class to aspire to as part of the resistance to structures that oppress them and would assist them in bringing about revolutionary change. Leaving it solely to a struggle about improving economic outcomes of the working class would be to leave it up to capitalism to determine the outcomes.

Lenin also understood the need to control the media to provide the right information and news to the working class in the push to change the system as the capitalist media promoted a world view that would keep the existing capitalist order intact. There was a need for workers to understand the context they were located in and the process of which they were a part and also sought to change. Today as we look back at the ideas of Lenin, especially through the lens of *WITBD?* we need to ask ourselves what strategies are appropriate. We cannot rely on single issues, though climate change is a fundamentally important one that affects all living things, including the planet which bears life. Capitalism is still oppressing us, and it still seeks to substitute economic relations for social relations, which keeps us isolated, alienated and disempowered.

The second speaker was July Valentine, student and activist who sought to reflect on the role of women, especially working women, in the struggle against capitalism. Valentine argued capitalism creates categories amongst the working class to help isolate and divide people. These categories created by capital are either reactionary, apolitical, or reformist – sometimes all three, sometimes one or two. Valentine said bourgeois democracy is or tries to be seen as apolitical but is an instrument of the ruling class used to subdue the masses. Of liberal feminism, Valentine said it failed to address women's economic and material conditions and sought only to obtain concessions within the capitalist system rather than to challenge its oppressive basis. In the US and Australia, women often make up sixty per cent of workers on the minimum wage, and in the US, women have to work nineteen months on average for what a white man could earn in twelve months. Until the US women's soccer team successfully challenged being paid fifty per cent of what the men's soccer team were paid. Though a US Federal Court initially dismissed their lawsuit, the US Women's National Soccer Team has recently refiled their lawsuit alleging systematic underpayment. Valentine argues it would take a change of the economic system in order to lift the oppression experienced by women. A case in point being in July 1918 in Soviet Russia, under their new Communist Constitution, Russian women were made equal at work and workplaces were made more friendly to accommodate women in the workplace. The Soviet Union was also the first country to legalise abortion. In the legislatures of the Soviet Union, women made forty per cent of its representatives while in the USA, women made up only three per cent of elected representatives during that period. On the other side of the Florida Straits in Cuba, women before the Revolution did not have any status in the workplace and mainly undertook domestic duties in the home. After the Revolution, there was a year-long literacy campaign in 1961 instigated by Fidel Castro, which resulted in increasing numbers of women who took part in the campaign and helped lift many other women out of being illiterate. Today Cuba has one of the highest rates of participation of women in education at all levels and the highest number of women in a popularly elected legislature, the People's Assembly of Popular Power, with over fifty-three per cent of representatives being women. In Cuba's 2019 Constitution, under Article 43 in part says, "Women have equal rights and responsibilities under economic, political, cultural, labour, social, family and whatever other activity. The state guarantees that both will be offered the same opportunities and possibilities."

The third speaker was CPA National President Vinnie Molina who suggested that the class struggle has been with human society in one form or another since the introduction of private property, urbanisation, and agriculture.

With the Bolshevik uprising led by Lenin, the Soviet Union saw many social, political, cultural, and economic advancements in that bloc. History has shown us that the class struggle continues even under socialism.

In Cuba, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos and others led a popular revolution to overthrow the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista 1st January 1959. The revolution was inspired by the example of the national hero of independence Jose Marti who helped lead the people to defeat the Spanish colonial government.

The next revolution was the Nicaraguan Revolution which overthrew the US-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, who oversaw the majority of that country being owned by the US United Fruit Company. The slogan of the Sandinista Revolution led by Daniel Ortega was "homeland and freedom."

To bring about social or political change, people must choose between reform of the system or revolution. Molina said to achieve this we need a political party to represent the needs of the working class.

Molina concluded that we need to break the two-party system. Following with the quote from Marx which calls for change, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." ✪

Today Cuba has one of the highest rates of participation of women in education at all levels and the highest number of women in a popularly elected legislature, the People's Assembly of Popular Power, with over fifty-three per cent of representatives being women.

GOVERNMENT FAILING 6M RENTER HOUSEHOLDS FACING EVICTION 1ST AUGUST

Mark Gruenberg & John Wojcik

Unless somebody – specifically President Biden and Congress – does something fast, millions of renters from coast to coast are going to have their roofs fall in on their heads starting on 1st August. Literally.

That's because the oft-extended nationwide moratorium on evictions, imposed when the coronavirus pandemic hit in March 2020 and cost millions of people their jobs – and thus they couldn't pay their rent – ends at midnight on 31st July.

"With at least 6mil renter households still behind on rent as the expiration of the eviction moratorium nears, the Biden administration must work quickly and aggressively to avert an historic wave of evictions this summer and fall," the National Low Income Housing Coalition warns.

BIDEN WANTS AN EXTENSION

Several progressive lawmakers are pushing an emergency immediate extension. Biden wants one through the end of September. But, as might be expected, the Republicans oppose an extension and corporate interests would benefit from the evictions.

The depression the coronavirus caused is over, say some within the head-in-the-sand GOP, which can block just about everything in the evenly split Senate. At a House panel hearing on the coronavirus's impact, Minority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., declared the moratorium hurts "mom and pop" landlords.

But Jim Baker, the executive director of a non-profit housing group, testified corporate landlords – chains and developers – would be the big winners when the eviction moratorium ends. His examples: Corporate landlords filed for seventy-four per cent of all evictions in May in DeKalb County, Ga. (Atlanta), sixty-two per cent in Maricopa County, Ariz. (Phoenix), and fifty-three per cent in Hillsborough County, Fla. (Tampa).

As for the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, its advice on its website is to contact local legal aid and look up local protective laws.

The problem is simple: When the pandemic hit, and hundreds of thousands of businesses closed to battle community spread of the virus, millions of workers, most of them low-income and disproportionate numbers of them women of colour, lost their jobs.

Many of those jobs have yet to come back. Some never will. Joblessness, once above 20 per cent, is now 6.5 per cent or so, officially, and about double that once you count all the people who are – or were – getting federal unemployment checks. But the checks are running out, too, again thanks to the GOP.

To halt evictions, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) imposed the moratorium and Congress later extended it. It's not rent forgiveness, since the unpaid amounts will be tacked onto tenants' bills whenever the eviction freeze ends. But at least it kept people in their homes at the height (so far) of the pandemic. That peak hit last winter.

Some states, notably California, the nation's most-populous, stepped into the breach with their own eviction halts. Evictions are banned in the Golden State through the 30th September. But now the federal rent moratorium is ending.

"Communities with lower vaccination rates and higher Covid-19 (coronavirus) cases tend to be the same as those with renters at heightened risk of eviction when the moratorium expires," the low-income housing group said in a statement the last time, in mid-June, renters neared the brink.

"Allowing the moratorium to expire before vaccination rates increase in marginalised communities could lead to increased spread of, and deaths from, Covid-19."

"While Congress, the Biden administration, and state and local governments are working diligently to provide emergency rental assistance to renters at risk of losing their homes, ongoing roadblocks and new challenges prevented far too many renters from accessing these resources," it adds.

PUSHING IMMEDIATE EXTENSION

That understates the case. Three lawmakers pushing for an immediate extension of the moratorium before the clock hits midnight on the 31st July say the situation is much worse. Rental aid Congress approved, in the Cares Act and following coronavirus aid legislation, totals US$46bil, Reps. Cori Bush, D-Mo., Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., and Jimmy Gomez, D-Calif., report. Bush, herself, once was homeless.

The amount that's actually reached tenants? Only US$3bil of the US$46bil set aside for them. As with unused coronavirus mitigation and relief funds, the GOP stands ready to snatch the tenant relief money to pay for other legislation. Their approach is to take money away from anywhere as long as the wealthy are untouched. They have consistently opposed higher taxes on the rich and any efforts to empower the IRS to do more to collect unpaid taxes from wealthy Americans.

The other issue, of course, is that there really is no unused money. All the crises for which the funds were allocated are continuing, both the pandemic and in this case the evictions crisis. Using that mischaracterised "unused" money destroys the purpose of the allocations in the first place.

"As someone who has lived in her car with my two infants while I was working a full-time job, I know the daily trauma and stress that comes with the perpetual instability of not having a safe place to live," Rep. Bush said on the 28th July. In addition to pushing to extend the moratorium, she introduced an "Unhoused Bill of Rights and make the desperately needed investments to guarantee housing, health care, and a robust social safety net for our unhoused neighbours."

But her measure, and other pro-renter aid bills in the Senate, have one thing in common: They're long-term, not with the urgency of now. So Bush, Pressley, and Gomez, plus forty other reps, want Biden to move, now. "This pandemic is not behind us, and our federal housing policies should reflect that stark reality," they wrote him.

"With the United States facing the most severe eviction crisis in its history, our local and state governments need more time to distribute critical rental assistance to help keep a roof over the heads of our constituents. We urge President Biden to explore every option available to keep the federal eviction moratorium in place for as long as it takes to distribute relief to families most in need during this national emergency."

Biden's willing to go for a temporary emergency extension of the eviction moratorium through the end of September. But Congress must OK it, because the Supreme Court recently ruled, 5-4, that CDC exceeded its legal authority by imposing the moratorium in the first place.

"Given the recent spread of the Delta variant, including among those Americans both most likely to face evictions and lacking vaccinations, President Biden would have strongly supported a decision by the CDC to further extend this eviction moratorium to protect renters at this moment of heightened vulnerability," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement on 28th July. "Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has made clear that this option is no longer available."

There is one other option, her deputy, Karine Jean-Pierre, told reporters the next day: The Housing and Urban Development Department's US$52bil in emergency rental assistance for renters via states, cities, and Native American tribes. "We're going to make sure we get the word out so people know the rental assistance is out there and to support grantees in ramping up their efforts," Jean-Pierre said.

People's World

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• **Mark Morey,** General Secretary, Union NSW

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Global Times editorial

BIDEN INCREASES THREAT OF WAR BETWEEN GREAT POWERS

While visiting the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden highlighted growing "threats" posed by Russia and China to the US' national security. He stressed that a significant cyberattack on the US could lead to "a real shooting war" with a major power. This is more like a threat of war against China and Russia than merely a warning.

It is well known that the political nature of cyberattacks is usually difficult to clarify, and most cyberattacks come from IP addresses in the US. Biden's comments severely lowered the threshold for the threat of war between great powers, raising fears that the US war machine is run by a highly irresponsible team.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin gave a speech in Singapore. After having attacked China on all levels in his speech, he said that the US is not seeking confrontation and that he, as the defence secretary, is "committed to pursuing a constructive, stable relationship with China, including stronger crisis communications with the People's Liberation Army (PLA)." On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is visiting India, will meet with representatives of the Dalai Lama in New Delhi.

The US is carrying out a strategic "full-court press" against China. This makes its recent rhetoric that it does not seek conflict with China seem hypocritical. Austin's words actually aim to divide countries in the region into "China" and "other countries." Although the US says it will not ask ASEAN members to take sides between China and the US, it is trying to achieve this goal by roping in and coercing them. Washington's current statement of its position is just a stopgap. It really does not have the capacity to do so at the moment, because China is the largest trading partner of almost all ASEAN members.

The US' China policy contains the most virulent geopolitical objectives. Yet as long as the US is willing, at least for the time being, not to escalate the situation into a strategic confrontation, including military conflict, we may act according to the trend and maintain the bottom line of China-US relations – peace. Meanwhile, we have to discard any illusion and make comprehensive preparations for the worst in case the deterioration of China-US relations crosses the bottom line. We should ensure that we are calm in the hour of peril, and proactively accumulate strategic initiatives.

To break the US' containment, the key focus for China is to accelerate the expansion of China's economy and market. It is in line with China's long-term policy of reform and opening-up. It can be realised as long as we focus on doing our own things well. What we need to realise now is that economic development is the main battlefield of China's competition with the US and the biggest political issue for a period to come. Every county, city and industry in China is connected to the grand strategy of the competition with the US. As China's GDP approaches that of the US, it is a death knell for US hegemony.

However, the economy alone is not enough. China's defence strength is the lever with the most direct deterrent in the competition with the US. Whether the contest takes place in the Taiwan Straits or in the South China Sea, China must deprive the US of its certainty that it can defeat China. Our economic and technological capabilities have made this goal very realistic.

The US' confidence in defeating the PLA in the Taiwan Straits has drained away as the Chinese mainland's military preparedness in the Straits has created an ever-expanding real deterrent for the US and the island of Taiwan. With the US still attempting to demonstrate its superiority in the South China Sea, China must do all it can to bring about a credible reversal of the military balance of power in the region.

The US Navy's advantage in overwater power will surely persist for some time. China must not only catch up with the US, but also strengthen its land-based missile forces that can strike large US battleships in the South China Sea in a war. We can massively expand this force so that if the US provokes a military confrontation in the South China Sea, all of its large ships there will be targeted by land-based missiles at the same time.

Michele Flournoy, a former US undersecretary of defence for policy in the Obama administration, published an article in 2020 on Foreign Affairs. She advocated that the US needs to have "the capability to credibly threaten to sink all of China's military vessels, submarines, and merchant ships in the South China Sea within 72 hours," in a bid to deter China.

In the face of that, China, in turn, needs to develop a credible capability to immediately eliminate US forces in the South China Sea and nearby military facilities, so as to deter US military in a tit-for-tat manner.

All this is the basis for forcing the US to keep calm in the South China Sea. This is also critical to shape regional countries' attitude toward China-US competition. Despite having the strongest military forces in the world, the US cannot beat China at China's doorstep. This must become the reality in the region and the common expectation of regional countries.

China will not engage in an all-out arms race with the US, but in China's coastal waters, we need to be determined to outcompete the US in terms of military capability. China has sufficient potential to achieve this goal. China's defence budget is only about 1.3 per cent of its GDP, while that of the US is around 3.5 per cent. We need to convince the world in the near future that China is not going to provoke the US, but if the US comes to fight China in the Taiwan Straits or in the South China Sea, the PLA will have sufficient capacity to beat the hell out of them.

Global Times

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