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WHO RULES AUSTRALIA?

Anna Pha

One of the striking features of federal elections is their increasingly undemocratic nature and Americanisation. Much of the electioneering by major parties has been short grabs for the media pack and personal jibes between leaders.

The two issues that pose an existential threat to the survival of humanity – climate change and nuclear war – received little airing during the election campaign.

Scott Morrison attempted to make national security an issue but pulled his head in after his government's "failure" as the US's deputy sheriff for "letting" (media's colonial language) the Solomon Islands sign a security agreement with China. The Labor Party was all too eager to take a bipartisan approach on the US Alliance, AUKUS, and obscene spending on war preparations.

The cost-of-living crisis was widely aired by the media, but it was not until late in the campaign that the question of wages took centre stage. As for trade union rights that are essential to the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions, there was little on offer.

The election campaign was largely fought on personalities, one-liners, and a media scrum more focused on getting "gotcha" moments than seeing party policies aired. The so-called teal independents received an unusual amount of media exposure compared with of coverage of independents in past elections.

The democratic structures of the major parties were overridden, with members disenfranchised on the selection of candidates. Instead, Liberal Party leader Scott Morrison and Labor leader Anthony Albanese parachuted in their captain's picks against the wishes of local members.

House of Representatives. Photo: JJ Harrison (CC BY-SA 3.0)

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Along with the millions in tax-payer dollars dished out to Liberal and Labor Parties based on the vote they received, these parties have millions more dollars at their disposal to run expensive media campaigns and pay top consultants to design their campaigns.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) reports annually on political donations. As they cast their vote the electorate is not aware of donations from corporations and individuals who might be in a position to exert influence over politicians and political parties.

Under present law donors, candidates and Senate groups are required to disclose all donations over $14,500 not later than fifteen weeks following the elections. This $14,500 cap on donations enables large donors to split their donations into numerous below-threshold payments to avoid scrutiny. The parties also have fund-raising fronts and other means of keeping the public in the dark.

For 2020-21 the AEC reported that Australia's political parties collectively received $177 million in income but only nine per cent of it identified the true donors due to the extremely weak provisions of the Electoral Act.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (17th April 2022) reports that candidates and parties were expected to spend more than $500 million in the election campaign!

As the Grattan Foundations states: "Donations open powerful doors." But the public is kept in the dark as to who these donors are that wield so much power. The big banks, the resources sector, media magnates, the military industrial complex, and powerful corporate donors rule Australia.

This system based on theft is by definition corrupt through and through. It's no coincidence that the Australian Greens who are not beholden to the coal barons or war machine are given little airtime.

GREENS

Of all the parties and independents standing in the elections the Australian Greens have the most progressive policies in addition to their environmental policies and commitment to tackling climate change.

They reject the Coalition's climate target: "Net zero by 2050 is not a climate target, it's a death sentence." They are calling for a formal, legislated plan to reduce Australia's emissions by seventy-five per cent by 2030 and phase out coal and gas: "Our future depends on it."

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KEEP MONEY OUT OF POLITICS

Climate action has been at the centre of the 2022 Australian Federal Election. The two major parties are flexing their climate credentials, with the Coalition stating it will cut emissions down 26-28 per cent by 2030 and the ALP stating it will cut emissions down 43 per cent by the same year. The Greens – Australia's premier climate party – want emissions cut down 75 per cent by 2030.

Emphasising the importance of climate action, a new "group" – Climate 200 – have entered the fray promising to deliver action on climate change. Who is Climate 200? While not formally a group, Climate 200 purports to be a "community crowd-funded initiative" whose candidates – all of which are independents – are committed to "a science-based response to the climate crisis; restoring integrity to politics; and advancing gender equity."

During the election, the Climate 200 group made a name for themselves by challenging the seats of sitting Coalition MPs. These were real contests, especially in seats such as Kooyong and Wentworth, where MPs Josh Frydenberg and Dave Sharma tried to tidy up their image. Sharma went as far as not to campaign with Prime Minister Scott Morrison, scrubbing his campaign material of Liberal Party branding.

While most of the Climate 200 were new candidates, the group included current independent MPs such as Andrew Wilkie and Rebekha Sharkie, who they believed shared their values.

The group, however, is not as grassroots as it appears. While Climate 200 has had over 9000 donors and developed a war chest in the millions, it is the initiative of Simon Holmes à Court, son of Australia's first billionaire, Robert Holmes à Court. Holmes à Court claims that the money given to the independents comes with "no strings attached", but this is questionable, given he has conceded all candidates have "a shared philosophy on climate change, integrity and gender equity."

To see a multimillionaire use his wealth to primarily challenge the Liberal Party in a substantial way is a positive development. It has meant that the Liberals have had to spend more resources defending previously "relatively safe" seats and pressured them to commit to deeper reforms on climate. However, the influence of multimillionaires in our electoral process needs to end. We can only move past bourgeois democracy by limiting the ability of the ruling class to affect elections directly. Our politics should not be the hobby horse of Australia's richest, representing their values and ideas. We must demand reforms and better transparency on electoral funding. It is only when the political playing field is levelled that those who better represent the working class can have a real chance at transforming some of Australia's worst problems.

WHO RULES AUSTRALIA?

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They support trade union rights including the right to strike, Medicare with the inclusion of dental health, publicly owned services, Indigenous rights, and women's rights to name a few.

CLIMATE 200

Climate 200 describes itself as "a community crowd-funded initiative that supports political candidates committed to: a science-based response to the climate crisis; restoring integrity to politics; and advancing gender equity."

It brings together thirty grassroots community groups across Australia who have "the objective of supporting pro-climate, pro-integrity and pro-gender equality independents." In these elections, it supported twenty mostly middle-class candidates from a range of backgrounds including health, finance, business, law, and media.

A number of their candidates are former Liberal Party members who say they no longer recognise the Liberal Party as their Liberal Party since it was taken over by the far right. While likely to be conservatives on economic questions, they are socially progressive on a range of issues.

Climate 200 published the names of hundreds of donors in real time including members of the wealthy Holmes à Court family. Simon Holmes à Court is the convenor. There is no legal requirement to publish such information in real time, but the Climate 200 candidates acted true to their claims of standing for transparency.

The electoral system in Australia falls far short of being democratic. It works to maintain the "two-party" system, virtually ensuring government to either Labor or the Liberals in coalition with the National Party. Both the Senate and House of Representatives require reform to make them better reflect the wishes of the electorate. The "teal" independents, to the extent that they prove to be truly independent of the major parties – at this time an unknown – may well see more cracks develop in the two-party system as they capitalise on the many disaffected voters.

EXTREME RIGHT

Clive Palmer's United Australia Party (UAP) rides on populist and nationalist slogans.

It stretches the truth, promises outcomes that it cannot control such as capping all home loan interest rates at three per cent for the next five years, and runs with meaningless slogans like "Save Australia, Freedom Forever" targeting anti-vaxxers.

In 2019, the UAP secured only 3.4 per cent of the national primary vote and failed to pick up a seat, despite setting a new election-spending record by a party of more than $80 million. But that was not its aim. It set out to keep Labor out of office by directing preferences to the Coalition which it succeeded in doing.

Come 2022 Palmer announced electioneering spending of $70 million and he is, with a few exceptions, preferencing Coalition candidates. There are huge financial and registration barriers to smaller parties standing, let alone competing on funds for campaigning in their own name in elections.

REFORM NEEDED

Urgent reform is needed to make the electoral system more representative and democratic. Parties should not be excluded from having their name on the ballot paper because they lack the financial means or could not jump the hurdles to be registered.

The question of political donations also requires urgent attention, with strict limits on the amount that can be spent on campaigning. There should be equal time in mainstream media for candidates and their parties to present policies.

At present voting in the Lower House is based on a preferential system. Voters must indicate their order of preference. For example, if there are eight candidates, then the voter must put the numbers one to eight against the names of the candidates.

This is a system for the allocation of preferences where no candidate receives an absolute majority of primary votes. The bottom candidate's preferences are allocated, and so on.

Each electorate has a single member. The system is not proportional. In the 2019 federal elections the Greens polled 10.4 per cent of the primary vote for the House of Representatives but only won one out of 151 seats. A proportional, preferential system could be expected to have delivered around six or seven seats – far more representative of the people.

Even less democratic, the National Party with 4.5 per cent won ten seats. Katter's Australian Party gained 0.5 per cent of the primary vote and won one seat.

The Communist Party of Australia is calling for a system with larger electorates with four or five members to be elected in each. This would provide for a proportional, preferential system of voting for the House of Representatives. ✪

Politics in the Pub Perth
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US-Australia Alliance: the People's View
9th June, 6pm
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corner Hay and Barrack streets, Perth
Speakers:
Christopher Crouch, IPAN WA sec
Eileen Whitehead, IPAN
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Free Event
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BACK THE CALL FOR A 5.5 PER CENT WAGE INCREASE

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Earlier this month, amid predictable outcry from the Coalition, Anthony Albanese voiced his support for a 5.1 per cent increase in wages, to keep pace with the current rate of inflation. Albanese told ABC National Radio that he would "absolutely" support an increase of 5.1 per cent but refused to weigh in on the Australian Council of Trade Unions' (ACTU) call for a 5.5 per cent increase.

On the 31st March, ACTU published a press release calling for a five per cent wage hike in the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) upcoming Annual Wage Review. Minimum wages are set by a determination of the FWC on an annual basis, with key stakeholders being invited to make submissions as to the rate at which wages should increase. Twenty-five per cent of Australian workers will be affected by the Annual Wage Review.

By 8 May, ACTU had increased its proposal to 5.5 per cent, citing the "accelerating cost of living crisis" and soaring inflation rates

"When the ACTU submitted its initial claim on the 31st March Scott Morrison had just issued a budget which predicted inflation would peak at 4.25 per cent in the middle of this year. Inflation is already at 5.1 per cent and the RBA is now predicting it will reach 5.5 per cent by mid-year."

The ACTU's proposal would bring the minimum hourly rate of pay up from $20.33 to $21.45 and the minimum annual wage to $42,384.84. The FWC is set to publish the Annual Wage Review later this year.

Predictably, the Coalition has sprung into action to denounce Albanese for voicing his support for a 5.1 per cent increase "without a shred of analysis to back his position". But is it really true that a 5.1 per cent or even the ACTU's 5.5 per cent increase lacks basis?

The short answer is no. A 5.5 per cent increase will prevent wages from going backward in real terms by keeping up with the current rate of inflation. The RBA forecasts that without an increase, real wages will continue to stagnate so that by mid-2023, wages will remain in real terms at the same value they were in 2011.

So why is the Coalition so quick to dismiss Albanese's proposal as economically irresponsible? It is no coincidence that the Liberal government's submission to the Annual Wage Review, far from supporting a wage increase, actually touts the benefits of low-paid work.

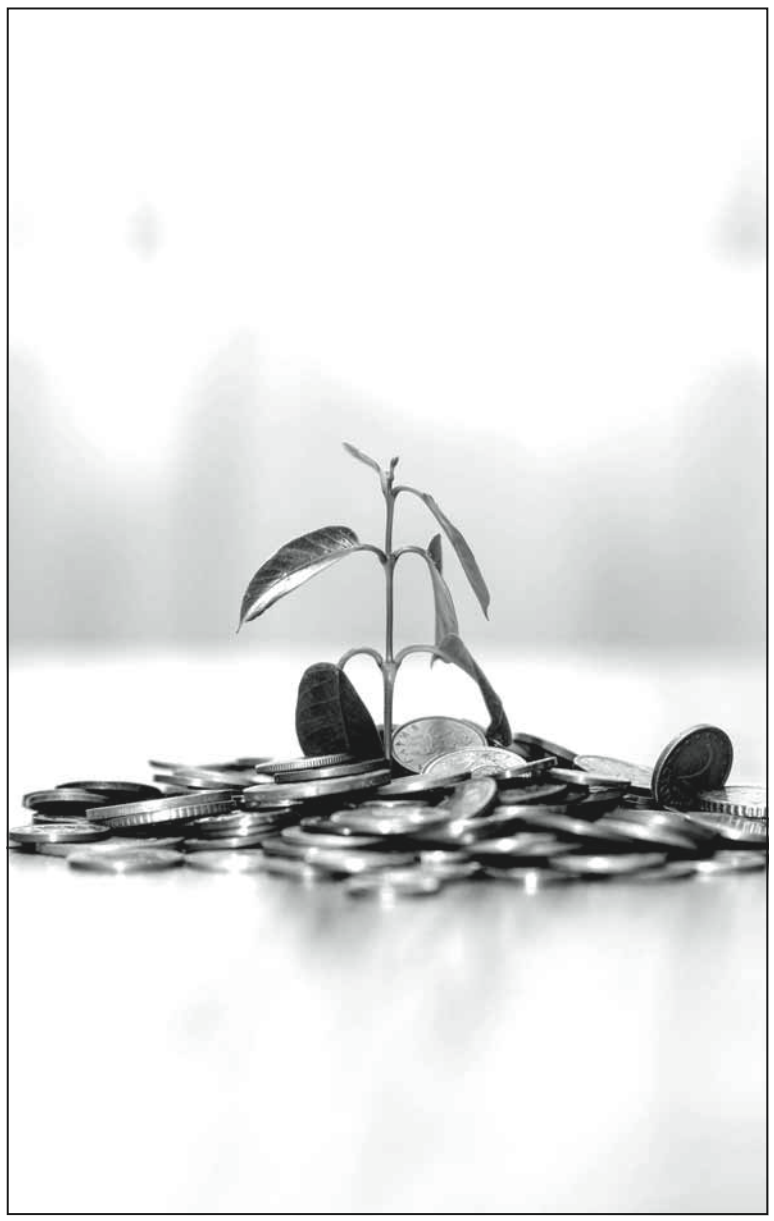
Morrison's hypocrisy runs deep. Throughout this election cycle, he has shouted from the rooftops about the alleged strength of the Australian economy, conveniently ignoring soaring inflation, and a housing market so broken that his government is actually proposing that people use their superannuation to buy homes. If the economy is doing so well, then why can't it support a wage increase?

As Sally McManus, ACTU President is quick to point out "[e]very dollar working people lose in real terms is a dollar not spent in local businesses." More disposal income is unequivocally a good thing for an economy, so why is the Morrison government pushing back on it?

The argument that Morrison relies on in his submission to the Annual Wage Review, is that a wage increase will lead to job cutbacks, pushing "low-skilled people, the long-term unemployed, people with disability, Indigenous Australians, and youth" out of the workforce. Too much of a coward to stand behind his own flawed argument, he is meanwhile telling the public that it is "inappropriate" for his government to take a stance on wages before the FWC.

The Morrison government knows that increased wages are not in the interests of its key voting base, the capitalist class. Paying workers more eats into the profit margins of industries with scores of low-paid workers who rely on the minimum wage, such as the hospitality and retail industries. This is why key stakeholders on the side of employers, the Australian Industry Group (AIG) and the Restaurant and Catering Industry Association have argued for a wage increase of two per cent or zero per cent respectively.

The Morrison government would like us to believe that a 5.5 per cent wage increase is economically irresponsible and divorced from all reality. Don't believe the rhetoric. Even the RBA supports a drastic wage increase to keep pace with inflation, which has skyrocketed under Morrison's leadership. If the Coalition has its way wages will continue to stagnate and workers will bear the brunt of a soaring cost of living while the rich get richer. Back the call for a 5.5 per cent wage increase! ✪



HOW UNIONS ARE BUILDING QUEER-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

Australian Unions article

If you haven't guessed from all the corporations suddenly adorning their websites and shop windows with rainbow flags, today (17th May) is International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

The IDAHOBIT is cause for celebration – and we're keen to do just that – but it's also a day that stems from a long history of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people that continues to the present day.

IDAHOBIT originated on 17th May 1990 when the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from the Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems.

More than thirty years later, we still encounter the consequences of stigma and stereotypes in our daily lives. That's why union members are working together to create queer-friendly workplaces.

We have had a stellar win for women and LGBTQIA+ workers only yesterday when we won support for ten days' paid family and domestic violence leave in our Fair Work case.

We've made some huge achievements this year and are striving towards even better workplaces to make sure no one is left behind.

TRANS RIGHTS ARE UNION BUSINESS

When the Morrison government attempted to pass a transphobic Religious Discrimination Bill earlier this year, unions pushed back hard.

The legislation would have allowed people to make discriminatory "statements of belief."

People would have been protected in making religious statements even if they were discriminatory, homophobic, sexist, harmful or hostile. Workplaces would've become even more unsafe for women, queer people and people with disability. Unacceptably, the Bill would have overridden hard fought protections in other states.

Unions, including the Victorian and Tasmanian branch of the Independent Education Union (IEU) of Australia, immediately put their foot down against the bill.

The IEU had just won a huge campaign in 2021 that resulted in Victorian legislation preventing religious organisations and schools from sacking or refusing to hire people based on sexuality, gender identity or marital status. The religious discrimination bill was going to override these protections.

"This is a major boost for the rights of education staff. It'll help promote inclusivity, reform cultures and improve the lives of countless dedicated workers," IEU Victoria/Tasmania General Secretary Deb James said at the time.

But the IEU was determined that the federal Religious Discrimination Bill would never see the light of day, especially because it would override what gains had just been made in Victoria.

Most of the IEU's 75,000 members work in faith-based schools. So the union launched a petition, took to the streets and IEUA leaders appeared at the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights along with the Australian Education Union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, and the National Tertiary Education Union to explain just how damaging the legislation would be for workers.

The bill was defeated thanks in part to the activism of union members who called out against the legislation every step of the way.

That's exactly what union members do – we stick up for our colleagues and make sure everyone has access to safe workplaces.

GENDER AFFIRMATION LEAVE COMING SOON TO A UNIVERSITY NEAR YOU

Although much of the media spotlight around trans issues has been on schools, universities also have their own challenges.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) is on a country-wide campaign to ensure all university staff can access paid Gender Affirmation leave.

Amy Sargeant is national convenor of Queer Unionists in Tertiary Education – what she describes as the "queer caucus" of the NTEU.

She distinguishes Gender Affirmation leave from Gender Transition leave, explaining that, "Gender affirmation is a years-long process that encompasses social changes, medical changes, legal changes."

A massive ninety-five per cent of trans workers transitioning in the workplace left their jobs – and it's a preventable figure.

Sargeant says the NTEU campaign for Gender Affirmation leave, "seeks to alleviate some of the challenges relating to remaining employed as a teacher or lecturer at a university when you're trans and need to transition."

"Workers can take paid time off to go do those things – whether those things are doctors' appointments, legal appointments – to alleviate some of that pressure."

It's a campaign that all NTEU branches across the country are working to make happen. Sargeant emphasises how much they want to see action and not just optics.

"It's one thing to have your campus with little rainbow flags and stickers and badges around. But it's hollow if it's not followed by action. So, this is one way university management can take action to support one of the most vulnerable groups in their worker base," she says.

"Trans and gender diverse people enrich our workplace." ✪

REPORT FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The 30th April marked a return to the city of Adelaide for the May Day March and Rally. Marchers assembled in Tarndarnyangga (Victoria Square) before proceeding to Elder Park for the traditional rally. Sally MacManus, secretary of Australian Council of Trade Unions spoke at the rally, making clear the urgency of removing the current anti-worker government in Canberra.

There were a number of May Day celebrations following the May Day March such as the May Day Dance held at the Semaphore Workers' Club with workers' songs being sung by the likes of Stephen O'Malley, Shambolics, and the Fiddle Chicks.

The commemorations continued with the adding of Ben Carslake to the list on the Workers' Memorial. Affectionately Known as Bennie, he was a forthright union leader most of his life. He selflessly helped many workers who found themselves in dire employment difficulties. Truly a workers' hero.

One of the important ceremonies associated with May Day is the presentation of the Silver Spanner Award which recognises comrades who make outstanding contributions to the advancement of the labour movement in South Australia. This year's recipient was a most worthy comrade in Sally Mitchell, currently secretary of the South Australian Branch of the Communist Party of Australia.

Mitchell began her working career as fitter and turner, one of the first women to quality in this trade in South Australia. As a union activist Mitchell rose through the ranks to become a union secretary, being in that position in the Food Preservers Union for many years. Her family has a proud union tradition. Her father and step-father are both listed on the Workers' Monument at Black Diamond in the heart of Port Adelaide. Her mother, Marcia Munn, has a been long-standing loyal member of the CPA in South Australia. Mitchell, who has worked tirelessly over the years to achieve improvements in workers' lives, professed that she was overwhelmed by the honour.

The presentation was made by assistant national secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, Jamie Newlyn, at a special ceremony in the Waterside Workers Hall, Port Adelaide on May Day.

The Silver Spanner Award began about twenty years ago to recognise outstanding achievements of working people striving for fair working conditions, a better society and a better world. Last year's winner, Ben Carslake, was urgently presented with his award just three days before May Day and sadly passed away on 30th April, 2021.

Members of the CPA in South Australia are very proud of Comrade Sally, and very honoured that a party member has received such a prestigious award two years in a row.

TRIBUTES TO LOST COMRADES

The South Australian union movement, indeed progressive politics and social advancement, has lost a loyal and forthright comrade in Martin O'Malley. In particular, the strength of his support for the brave nation of Cuba, an exemplary model of socialism.

With stirring oratory as a great strength, along with keen perception of the shortcomings of the capitalist system, O'Malley was a forthright unionist who had the capacity to inspire comrades to action.

During the controversy of the carbon tax in 2011, O'Malley as state secretary of the of the SA branch of CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union) went public declaring that carbon polluters should not simply be taxed, but, in fact, they should be jailed.

The loss of comrade Stephen Darley is equally sad. Many comrades knew Darley as an activist in the peace movement, possibly through the peace radio program, *Peace of the Action*, which ran for twenty years on Radio Adelaide. Darley also maintained his activism essentially in community environment programs.

More recently, he became a leader in the SA branch of IPAN (Independent and Peaceful Australia Network), and was active on the national board. Naturally, he was very much involved in the anti-AUKUS-anti-nuclear subs campaign as well. His last major demonstration would have been the Palm Sunday March only last April.

Darley will be remembered as a dedicated activist for peace and the environment. Many will remember his musical talents too and his enjoyment of life and companionship. Always positive and optimistic, Stephen leaves us all with an exemplary role model to follow in advocating for peace and the environment. ✪

Good to see Sally's smiling face, which I haven't seen since 1979 when we were both in the SA YSL!

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE AFTER A LONG TIME AWAY?

Photo: Garry Knight (CC BY 2.0)

Roland Boer

What is like to return to Australia after two years away? What do you notice? There is a brief time – maybe a month – when you notice things that are otherwise part of the "furniture."

Almost immediately upon leaving a still empty Kingsford Smith airport in Sydney, I noticed the bedding on the streets. A pile of blankets, an old doona, a shopping trolley filled with items a homeless person has managed to scrounge here and there. Staying in Parramatta for a few days, I kept coming across someone's temporary shelter: beneath an overpass, sheltered near the railway station, and in many other places. There seemed to be more than before, and that is saying something. Later, I was to hear first hand accounts of the housing crisis in Australia. Few places to stay, exorbitant prices, unaffordable even for those with a job and modest pay.

Not long afterwards, I found I needed a sim card for my phone. Sure, there were plenty of options to bamboozle me, but I bought a simple version for which I pay monthly. Out of the five bars that are meant to register the strength of the phone signal, I soon realised that the top two – the fifth and the fourth – were pretty much aspirational. Three bars is great, two bars normal. Now this brought back old memories! The signal drops out as soon as you leave town. On the train between Sydney and Newcastle, there are long stretches with no signal at all. In Gordon – where stayed in a tiny basement for a couple of weeks – the host said, "the signal comes and goes, depending on the wind." You learn to live with it over time, but you certainly notice it on return.

Well, I thought, perhaps I should rely on internet connectivity. Like many, the work that I do needs pretty good internet coverage. For the first few weeks on returning, we had to stay in Airbnb's. In the first, I ended up switching to using my phone's hotspot, which at two bars was better than the WiFi. The second place boasted "internet" on its website listing. On arrival, the host had to call the technician to re-install the whole system. Even then, whenever I needed to download something, I had to stand in the old shed right next to the wifi router to get it to work.

By now some may be wondering whether I am simply a whinger. No, my point from these personal experiences is that infrastructure of all types is absolutely crucial. It provides a foundation for economic development, industry, governance, and thus jobs with adequate wages.

Two more experiences. For a few weeks, we stayed at Coal Point on Lake Macquarie. One evening, my partner and I were in nearby Toronto. It had been a long day, and the last of the few buses each day to Coal Point had well and truly gone. Uber? Taxi? We tried the latter, via their phone number and their online booking site. We waited and waited. In the end, my partner went into the local pub, where a person working at the bar told her that taxis and Uber no longer come this far out. Seriously, Toronto is not remote, and certainly not far out from anything much. But, said the publican, Donna runs a local "taxi service," which is actually her car. A handwritten phone number and then a call to Donna. She turned up in two minutes.

Public transport is probably the most well-known item of infrastructure, and I do not think I am telling the reader anything new by saying that it is pretty ordinary in this part of the world. By contrast, any modern city today (with the exception of the US) has buses, metro, heavy rail, and often light rail (trams). They cover the whole city and intersect in a way that means you are never more than a few minutes walk from a stop and you can get anywhere in the city. And they need constant up-dating, improvement, and expansion to meet changing needs. In the countryside, regular services between towns mean vital connectivity.

But infrastructure is much more than public transport, as my other examples show. I have mentioned housing, telephony, internet, public transport, and even taxis. My impression in those first few weeks after returning is that the infrastructure has not so much stood still, with little change, but that it is somehow degraded from what it was two years ago.

The first few weeks passed, and what I noticed clearly during that time soon began to fade and risked becoming part of the "furniture." Before I knew it, I was negotiating it in a way that I no longer noticed too much. But that is something I want to avoid. For a communist, homelessness and a housing crisis should never be part of the "furniture." Nor should crucial pieces of infrastructure that enable economic activity, stable jobs, and the well-being of all workers. ✪

Photo: Goran Has (CC BY 2.0)

THE COMMUNIST PART
THE COMMUNIST PARTY O

Roland Boer

As the Communist Party of China (CPC) prepares for its significant twentieth congress in 2022, we may ask how the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) views the CPC. The material presented here is more in the way of a number of notes, drawn from what I have observed of the CPA in more recent times, and I hope they accord with what is happening.

RENEWED GROWTH OF COMMUNIST PARTIES IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

Over the last few years, a good number of Communist Parties in Western countries have been experiencing growth in membership. In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disastrous events in Eastern Europe had a massive impact on Western Communist Parties. Some folded entirely, while others experienced a serious decline in membership. For the latter, survival was all that mattered. Times have changed, new Communist Parties have been established, and growth has returned to those that survived. Many are the reasons for this renewed growth, including the 50 years of decline, stagnation, and indeed fragmentation of capitalist countries, the obvious failure of neoliberal policies in Western countries leading to vastly greater disparity between rich and poor, between the ruling class and workers, and the consequent stagnation of capitalist political systems that are now facing major economic problems and significant social unrest.

A further reason, however, concerns the increasingly obvious achievements of the CPC's leadership in China. Dealing with immense hurdles, the CPC has led the Chinese people to abolish poverty, become a world leader in ecological civilisation, and offer alternative models for development and international relations. Indirectly, the clear presence of the CPC on the world stage has led in Western countries to greater attention, debate, and inspiration that socialism can achieve much and that it is in practice qualitatively superior to capitalism.

HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Let us step back for a moment and consider the historical experience of the CPA with the CPC, especially since CPA members have first-hand experience with China. One comrade is David Matters, who is the assistant General Secretary of the CPA. Comrade Matters has been on study tours to China, has long-term engagement with comrades from the CPC and has close connections with the Academy of Marxism in Beijing. He has written about his experiences in the CPA newspaper, *The Guardian – The Workers' Weekly*, and in the CPA journal, the *Australian Marxist Review*.

It would be useful to provide some quotations from an article in issue seventy-two of the *Australian Marxist Review* (2022), in which comrade Matters makes some observations concerning the 100th anniversary of the CPC. He writes: "The Communist Party of China (CPC) has made great political, social, economic and defence achievements for its people." It has "gathered the most developed, committed, and heroic elements of Chinese society" and has undertaken the "gigantic task" of "ending the colonial domination and division of the country," of liberating "the peasantry from centuries of bondage, allowing them to create a life free from poverty and endless toil." And the CPC has "liberated millions of Chinese Labourers, giving them the dignity to be masters of their country and their lives."

In providing an insightful overview of the century of struggle, from revolution and civil war to socialist construction and complex international challenges, Comrade David provides some key insights from Australia as to how Marxism-Leninism has provided and continues to provide the guide for action in China. He speaks of the "application of the theory and practice of Scientific Socialism to Chinese soil," that is, the experience and political development that created "the expertise to develop Marxist theory that produced the practical application of Scientific Socialism to the needs and reality of the Chinese nation."

Further, the article points out that the task for Communists is "to determine what is universal and what is specific to the reality that we encounter in society." The CPC has provided an example and a model as to how this Marxist dialectic works in practice. Comrade Matters observes: "While the CPC leads through its examples of Marxism in practice, with flexible and dynamic application to the reality of modern China, it does require Communists to not mechanically apply the model to realities for which it is unsuited." The approach of the CPC provides a model, but it should not simply be copied in other contexts. Instead, scientific socialism requires that each communist party "seeks truth from facts" in its own situation and develops an approach suited to those conditions. In this light, he writes of the need for communists in Australia to "resist the pressure of the Bourgeoisie and Left Liberals in the workers' movement," to oppose "colonialism, racism, war and all forms of oppression upon which our nation was founded." Positively, what is required is a "fraternal friendship and comradeship between our peoples to strengthen this struggle and campaign for our liberation." Indeed, it is from "friendship with the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people" that Australian Communists "find the strength to change our Nation."

Photo: Chris Phutully (CC BY 2.0)

PRC 70th anniversary. CPA delegation with Ambassador of the PRC

TY OF AUSTRALIA AND OF CHINA – A PERSPECTIVE

CONCRETE CONDITIONS AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

One point that arises from this article by comrade Matters is that Marxism-Leninism, or scientific socialism, needs to develop approaches in light of concrete conditions. To elaborate: Communism is, of course, an international movement seeking to unite the cause of workers all over the world. At the same time, the conditions for workers differ from country to country.

If I may be allowed a personal observation: in more recent discussions with younger comrades in the CPA, I have noticed a renewed awareness of the importance of taking into account the concrete conditions in Australia for growing the Party and for shaping its policies, strategies, and tactics. At one level, this is how scientific socialism should work: assiduously research of the actual situation, assess what can be done, and act. Occasionally, however, communists have assumed and deployed a one-size-fits all approach, like a template or perhaps a copy of what has been done elsewhere. This is where the examples of Lenin and the Russian communists, or Mao Zedong and the Chinese communists, provides a renewed lesson for communists in countries like Australia. Obviously, much can be learnt from methods and models from other parts of the world. But Australia – as a former colony and with unresolved matters relating to Indigenous peoples – is not the same as Russia, or China, or Vietnam, or Cuba, and so on. Ultimately, the concrete and actual conditions in Australia determine the approach of the CPA in light of Marxism-Leninism.

WORKING FOR PEACE

The CPA has historically been a Party at the forefront of initiatives for peace, since only through peaceful cooperation is it possible for countries – especially socialist countries – to flourish. This resolute policy emphasis has come to the fore again in the "Political Resolution" from the CPA's fourteenth national congress, held in February 2022. The resolution observes that the "US is escalating tensions in the Indo-Pacific region [...] by building up its forces in the region and pushing a narrative of China as an aggressive force that must be 'contained'." Australia has followed the US's directives and abandoned any pretence of independence or sovereignty in international relations. In particular, the "Resolution" notes the "militarisation of the Australian manufacturing industry [...] in partnership with US weapons companies," and that "Australian media has dutifully reproduced the US narrative of China as a 'rogue actor' and is increasingly aggressive in its calls for action against China."

The CPA's position in response to these aggressive and bullying approaches by the USA and Australia is clear: "Australia must devote its resources to protecting the health and wellbeing of the people." This includes the demand for "Australia's removal from the ANZUS treaty and other military alliances, and an end to military ties with the US regime." Given that the "Australian capitalist ruling class is divided over China" and that some sections "see that their economic future lies in trading with China," these business interests are "showing signs of backing off from blind subservience to US imperialism." Not only does this illustrate "the role that mutually beneficial economic cooperation and integration can play in preventing war and maintaining peace," but it also provides an avenue for the CPA "to exploit the splits in the Australian ruling class to agitate for peace."

WANTING TO KNOW MORE

As mentioned earlier, the CPA is experiencing a period of solid growth. Many of the new members are young workers from different professions, and they have a keen interest in both the history of communism and communist parties today. From experience, I have found that they are very keen to know more about socialist countries such as China, and especially how the CPC works, how it has met challenges and dealt with problems, and how it has developed Marxism in light of concrete practice.

The reality is that these younger members clearly want to know more. This is manifested in studying models of Party building and seeing how these lessons can be applied to Australia's context. For example, a recent article in the *Australian Marxist Review* (issue 71, in 2021) by comrades Christian and Dan seeks to draw lessons for Party building from the works of Chen Yun, especially a 1939 article entitled "Mass Work is the Central Task at the Local Level." The desire to know more also appears in moves to study the Chinese language (Putonghua, or Mandarin), to undertake study tours in China under the auspices of the CPC, and much more. This growing interest is, of course, a good sign of the strengthening fraternal relations between the CPA and the CPC. But it also means that Communist Parties throughout the world are developing greater cooperation, dialogue, and exchange.

Allow me to conclude by quoting the CPA President, Comrade Vinnie Molina, in the greeting sent by the CPA on the occasion of the CPC's centenary:

"The CPA appreciates its growing fraternal relations with the Communist Party of China, and the deepening relations amongst the international communist movement generally. The experience of the CPC in carrying out revolution and socialist construction, as well as the adaptation of Marxism to the complex circumstances of China, is a vast library of knowledge studied throughout the world."

to Australia at an official gathering held in Canberra on Monday September 23. From left to right – Elizabeth Hulm, Vinnie Molina, Ambassador H.E. Cheng Jingye, Andrew Irving, Romina Beitseen.

ISRAELI OCCUPATION FORCES ASSASSINATE *AL JAZEERA* JOURNALIST WHILE WORKING IN WEST BANK

On 11th May, the Israeli occupation forces killed *Al Jazeera* correspondent Shereen Abu Aqleh while she was covering events in the West Bank. The news of this horrific crime was met with widespread condemnation of the ongoing violation and lack of respect for human rights, and demands of the international community for Israel to desist.

Photo: Montecruz Foto – flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0)

HORRIFIC CRIME

The reporter was martyred when the Israeli occupation soldiers fired live bullets at her while she was covering the storming of Jenin city in the occupied West Bank. In a statement, *Al Jazeera* condemned this crime as intended to prevent the media from carrying out its work and stating that the Israeli government and the occupation forces bear the responsibility for the killing of Shereen.

Al Jazeera producer Ali Al-Sumodi was injured in this attack when he was covering the occupation force's incursion into Jenin with Shereen. The network said that it holds the Israeli authorities responsible for the safety of Ali Al-Sumodi who was shot in the back during coverage of the incursion.

An Israeli force had stormed the city of Jenin and surrounded the house of a Palestinian to detain him, which led to the outbreak of confrontations and armed clashes with dozens of Palestinians. An eyewitness explained that the occupation army fired live bullets at the demonstration and the press crews and shot the reporter, even though she was wearing a press jacket that distinguished her from others during the coverage.

SHEREEN'S LAST MESSAGE

In the last message that Shereen sent to *Al Jazeera* office at 6 AM, she said, "the occupation forces stormed Jenin and surrounded a house in the Jabriyat area, on the way there, I will give you news as soon as the picture becomes clear." But the news that came out later was "Abu Aqleh was martyred by an Israeli sniper." Despite Israel's attempt at first to claim that the shooting was against "terrorists", it again questioned the source of the shooting, and said that the journalists were shot by the resistance's youth, which was denied by eyewitnesses.

Shatha Hanaisheh, the correspondent of *Ultra Palestine* website, gave details of Shereen Abu Aqleh's shooting. News agencies quoted Shatha Hanaysha as reporting that the assassination of Abu Aqleh, and the movements of the journalists were in full sight of the sniper and in an open area, their journalistic identification was clear, and they were carrying media equipment.

PREMEDITATED MURDER

The testimony of journalist Shatha Hanaysha was confirmed by journalist Ali Al-Samodi, who was also shot in the shoulder: "The shooting was direct, and if the soldiers didn't ask us to stop or return, the first bullet was a sniper's bullet in the shoulder , and I retreated back when I heard Shereen's voice, Ali was wounded."

Al-Samodi continued: "we wore the full press uniform, and deliberately walked in the middle of the street which was empty and there were only journalists there." He stressed that what happened was a "deliberate killing." What happened was an attempt by the occupation "to stop the work of journalists and media professionals in covering what was taking place in Jenin.

Local and international bodies issued many statements condemning the crime and calling for an end to the ongoing Israeli criminal practices against the Palestinians.

Translated by Khalil Albawy, *People's Path*. Abridged for reasons of space. ✪

FERDINAND MARCOS JR, SON OF RIGHT-WING DICTATOR, ELECTED PHILIPPINES PRESIDENT

Ceren Sagir

The namesake son of the late far-right dictator Ferdinand Marcos has won the presidential election in the Philippines, succeeding Rodrigo Duterte, who became known for thousands of extrajudicial police killings under cover of a supposed war on drugs.

Vote totals indicated that Ferdinand Marcos Jr was the top choice for President against Vice President Leni Robredo more than three decades after largely peaceful "people power" protests overthrew the regime of his father and mother.

Marcos Jr popularly known as "Bongbong," was up more than 30 percentage points in the polls after he consistently led every poll this year. His running mate was Duterte's daughter, Sara Duterte-Carpio, who will now become the next Vice President.

Marcos Jr has presented no real policy platform despite the Philippines having a battered economy due to the coronavirus pandemic, rising poverty and unemployment levels, hyperinflation caused by rocketing oil and gas prices, and inflamed political divisions.

Turnout appeared to be high, according to election officials, favouring Marcos Jr. Police are investigating the killing of three people near a polling station, however.

Marcos Jr's win is seen as a huge hit to democracy in the country and risks the reversal of human rights gains made since Marcos Sr was kicked out in 1986. Under his father and mother's dictatorship, Marcos Jr was a provincial governor but lost his position during the revolution. The entire family fled to the United States and remained there for several years.

Marcos Jr became active in Philippines in politics again in 1992, and throughout his career he has defended his father's legacy and steadfastly refused to apologise for and acknowledge the atrocities under the dictatorship.

The former provincial governor, congressman, and senator has been accused of financing years of social media campaigns to harness online trolls to smear opponents and whitewash the Marcos family's history, including tax evasion.

His opponent in the election, Leni Robredo, was a participant in the massive protests that ousted the original Marcos and previously defeated Marcos Jr in the 2016 vice-presidential race by a narrow margin.

This article originally appeared in *Morning Star*. It has been supplemented with further material. *People's World* ✪

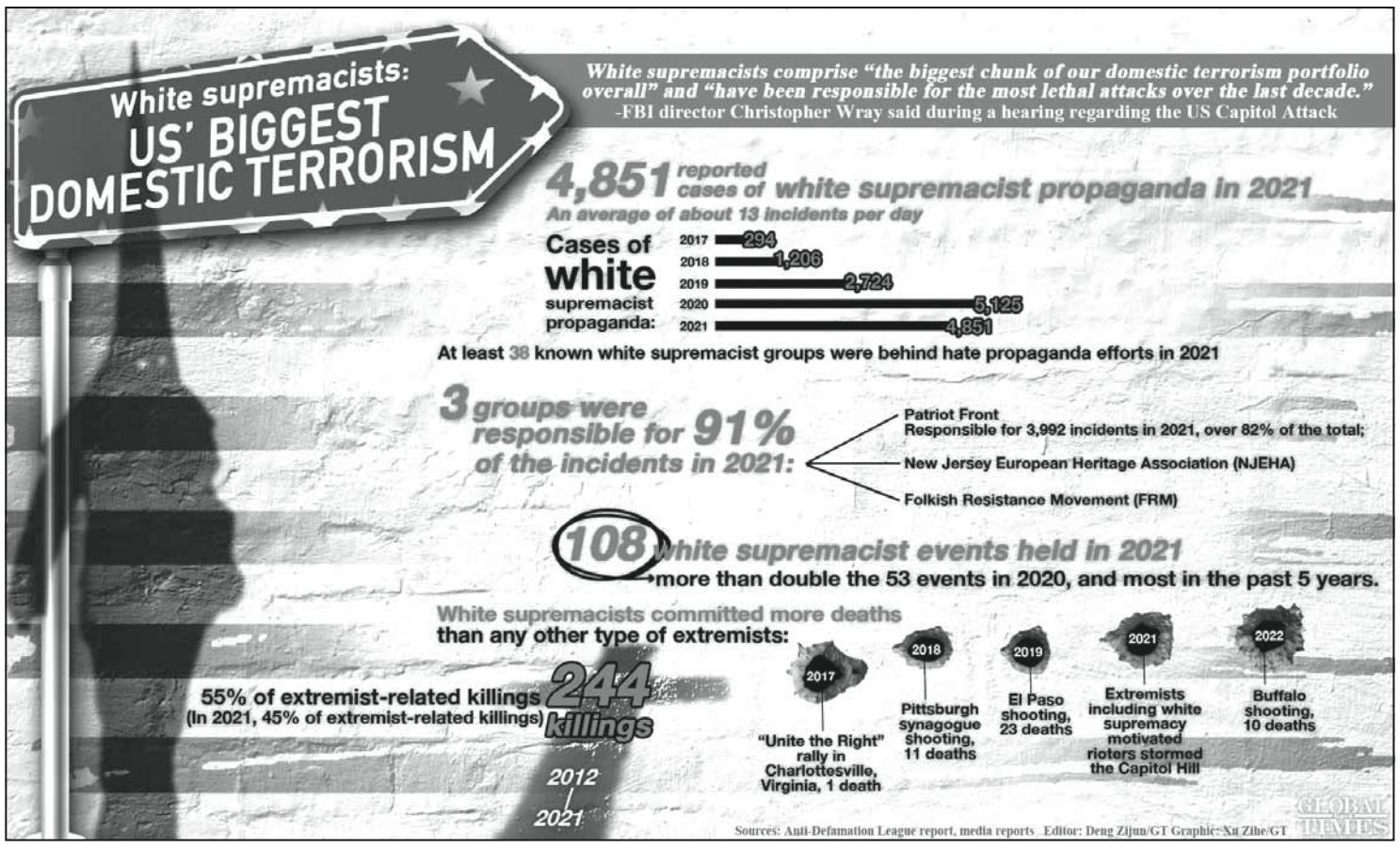
BUFFALO SHOOTING SHOWS "WHITE SUPREMACY, NEO-NAZI IDEOLOGY" WILL FURTHER TEAR WESTERN SOCIETY APART

Yang Sheng and Liu Caiyu

The shooting that left ten people dead and another three wounded at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, carried out by an 18-year-old white young man, is the latest sign that the dangerous white supremacy and neo-Nazi ideology tolerated by major Western countries could do terrible harm to Western society, with analysts saying that such "lone wolf" attacks could continue to emerge and even turn into organised crime and violence against non-white ethnic groups.

The US and other Western European countries with similar social and economic problems, such as immigrant crises and racism, as well as an increasing wealth gap, are failing to fundamentally solve the problem, and attacks like the Buffalo shooting will anger other ethnic groups with non-Western cultural backgrounds and motivate anti-Western or anti-white extreme ideologies among other races and cause them to retaliate, said experts on Monday.

More dangerously, as supporting Ukraine and opposing Russia has become the unchallengeable political stance in the West after the Russia-Ukraine conflict began this year, Western mainstream media and governments have tolerated or ignored the problem of growing neo-Nazism in Ukraine targeting Russians or Russian-speaking Ukrainians. With many teenagers from the US and other Western countries inspired by nationalist Ukrainian military groups and organisations like the Azov Battalion and Right Sector, this will make the trend of extremism in the West more and more unstoppable, analysts noted.



BREEDING GROUND OF EXTREMISM

Shooting cases are not rare in the US, but the latest one in Buffalo shows some special characteristics that proved that neo-Nazi ideology is growing and continuing to influence white people, especially teenagers, in US society.

The suspect in the Buffalo attack, Payton Gendron, had published a racist manifesto allegedly using the same "black sun" Nazi symbol used by Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov militia, which is reportedly being trained by NATO forces amid Russia's military operations in Ukraine, media reported.

The 18-year-old shooter also claimed in the 180-page document that he was "radicalised" on the internet during the early days of the COVID pandemic, and not by any people he had met personally. The self-professed white supremacist and anti-Semite said he had found through his "research" low white birth rates across the globe, and that the "crisis" would "ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people," according to media reports.

The document also stated that he "mostly agreed" with the Australian killer, who live-streamed his own mass shooting at a mosque in New Zealand in March 2019.

Another similar case happened in Europe in 2011, when an attack in Norway carried out by Anders Behring Breivik left seventy-seven people dead. Analysts said these cases are proof that far-right ideology and even neo-Nazism have continually influenced the West in the past decade, and that the governments of Western countries have failed to stop this trend.

The trend was caused by complicated and multiple reasons, including immigrant crises caused by military operations mostly driven by US hegemony that brought disasters to many parts of the third world such as the Middle East, failed gun control in major Western countries like the US, long-standing racial problems in the US and Europe, and economic problems that intensify the conflict between white and non-white groups at the bottom rungs of society, experts said.

Although these attacks motivated by white supremacist far-right ideology are being identified as terrorist attacks in the West, Western governments made very limited efforts to enforce the law against them.

Shen Yi, a professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University, told the *Global Times* that especially after four years of Donald Trump's leadership, white supremacists like the Proud Boys, which had been more of a marginalised group, are now more organised and undergo better self-training.

"The key problem is that the white middle and lower classes in the US found that their concerns have not been resolved, and see that the pro-establishment political elites in both the Democratic and Republican parties are trying to please ethnic minorities in the elections, so some of them as Gendron believe that they should solve the problem on their own through violence," Shen said.

Some white people believe their social status is being shattered and threatened by prominent problems involving minority migrants and refugees, triggering them to vent their grievances and express their political demands and will in an extreme and violent way, analysts said.

DANGEROUS TOLERANCE

Li Wei, a research fellow of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations on anti-terrorism studies, told the *Global Times* on Monday that the Five Eyes Alliance headed by the US has the capability to monitor, detect and cut off the spread of extremism online, but it seems like they are showing tolerance to white supremacists and neo-Nazism, which is why attackers like Gendron can use their social media accounts to share their dangerous thoughts.

Supporters of white supremacist terrorism are growing in the US and some European countries, but they are not newly emerging problems. Traces of extreme white supremacist terrorism or neo-Nazism can be seen in groups such as the notorious Ku Klux Klan and Proud Boys, as well as terrorist acts including the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City by Timothy McVeigh, Li said.

White supremacist terrorism has been fueled over the years by the fact that frequent police violence against black people actually ends up being dealt with unfairly, and discrimination and violence against Asian people is not being addressed properly.

In 2021, the Rittenhouse case resulted in a new wave of protests across the US, some of which escalated into riots, after the trial became deeply politicised amid an intense political struggle between Democrats and Republicans. Shen said this has also encouraged far-right groups to use violence against ethnic groups like African Americans.

Racism is viewed by the US government as a structural problem in the country brought about by the higher proportion of minorities, while behind the scenes, intensified social contradictions and a divided society are problems that have contributed to forming very fertile soil for white supremacist terrorism, Li said, adding that these problems cannot be solved under the current US system.

Neo-Nazism will be further driven by a bitterly divided American society and ethnic antagonism resulting in white supremacist and racist groups and organisations, such as the Proud Boys and other groups that already exist in the US, to grow faster. The proliferation and legalisation of guns in the US will certainly be the catalyst, Li noted. "Organised white supremacist terrorism will definitely do more harm than terrorist attacks launched by lone wolves."

Despite having the world's strongest terrorist monitoring system that allows the US government to intercept and evaluate any potential terrorist speech or actions by Neo-Nazi supporters before they launch violent acts, it chooses to turn a blind eye, like all members of the Five Eyes alliance have done, Li said. "Turning a blind eye is condoning the extremism of white supremacy."

Analysts said that a greater cause of concern is that when other ethnic groups in the West believe that Western governments are tolerating white supremacy and neo-Nazism, this will form a breeding ground for extremism against white people, and revenge killings could become a frequent occurrence in Western society if Western governments are unable to stop the dangerous trend.

Global Times

Western governments are tolerating white supremacism and neo-Nazism.

CANADA: 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COLONIAL BUILDING RIOT PROVIDES A LESSON ON CLASS CONFLICT AND ORGANISING

Ky Rees and Sean Burton

In the early 1930s, the Dominion of Newfoundland was in a deep economic crisis along with many other parts of the capitalist world in the Great Depression. The price of cod, the country's chief product, had bottomed out and the government was mired in enormous debt due to its enthusiastic contribution of blood and materiel for the slaughter that was World War I. Given the utter desperation, the workers had little patience left for a government typically headed by and for the representatives of the big merchant firms that controlled the fishery and other interests.

On the 5th April, 1932 a mass of several thousand workers took to the streets and descended upon the Colonial Building, the rather aptly-named seat of the Dominion's government. Enraged by allegations of corruption, bribery and fraud rampant within the colonial government, these workers demanded the resignation of Newfoundland's Prime Minister Richard Squires. When a prompt response from Squires was not forthcoming, some members of the crowd began forcing their way into the building; the assembled members of the constabulary responded with violence, rushing into the crowd and beating whomever they could see. In the aftermath of what has since become known as the Colonial Building Riot, there were numerous injuries and thousands of dollars in damage as rioters broke every window and set ablaze several lavish furnishings inside. The Prime Minister was forced to flee the building under guard and ultimately agreed to have his government dissolved. He lost the subsequent election.

This 90th anniversary of the Riots is an opportunity for reflection on how best to honour the fighting spirit of workers then, as well as the continued class struggle workers continue to fight today. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – as well as the Innu, Inuit and Mi'kmaw under the thumb of this same ruling class – are facing unsurprisingly very similar circumstances that led to the 1932 Riots: a (neo)liberal government lacking transparency and accountability, a daunting host of austerity measures to be financed by the working class and a bloated capitalist class looking out for only themselves, even as the world around us descends into multiple crises.

Workers have always had the odds stacked against us in this struggle. Against all the resources at the disposal of capitalists, workers have only one weapon with which to finally slay this Goliath: organising, by using the power of working-class solidarity and the force of our great numbers when acting in unison, the most essential task of any oppressed population in order to escape their shackles. Organising begins with listening to each other, recognising on a fundamental level that our united interests exceed any smaller differences between us, while also recognising that the interests of the bosses and ruling class are impossible to ever fully align with ours. After all, their system relies on our continual exploitation, squeezing as much profit from workers, the public purse and the environment as we allow them. Once these realisations ignite a worker's consciousness, the task begins – to form with other workers an organisation that can rival the powers stacked against them: whether that be through a small local union, a larger federation, a political party or a worker's state itself. A worker's most formidable obstacle is that of their own mind and that of their coworkers. In our workplaces the bosses pit worker against worker, using every means at their disposal to sow distrust between us. Their tactics betray their biggest fear: that we organise together, because we not only outnumber them, but it is we who could make the world truly stand still. Without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel could turn! The wealthy rule only with our cooperation.

What then was the state of organised labour in Newfoundland in 1932? There was some degree of organisation for sure, most notably expressed by the Fishermen's Protective Union (FPU) which had managed to organise over twenty-thousand people (about half of all fishers in the country), built its own community with a newspaper and fish plant and even formed a political party that had several members elected to the House of Assembly. Yet this was no vanguard party, not guided by any particularly clear goal other than guaranteeing the livelihood of the fishers. At best, the FPU's policies were social-democratic, and like many of those parties it lost considerable credibility during World War I for supporting unpopular measures like the conscription of the very fishermen they were supposed to be protecting. Following the war, the FPU was drawn ever more into "respectable" politics in alliance with the Liberals and gradually faded as a political force. The Colonial Building Riots ultimately failed to bring about the change workers needed, not because the workers were not determined, but because they lacked the organisation and foresight to demand more than a simple resignation. They were a group gathered in anger by opportunistic opposition leaders, but without a clear direction. What more could have been made of this had there been a communist party in Newfoundland in those days?

And now here we are, almost a century later, facing a similar set of circumstances with the Moya Greene "Big Reset" austerity threatening what few public assets we have left with privatisation, which will come directly from the pockets of the working class. Would it be sufficient to occupy ourselves with demanding that Premier Furey resign? To replace the Liberals with a similarly lacklustre party not explicitly devoted to our class interests? What good is smashing the windows and doors of a government building if the end result is just the Liberals and Conservatives switching which side of the House they sit?

Workers and organised labour face the fight of our lives in the coming years. The Riot of '32 may not have been a revolutionary moment, but it nonetheless demonstrated the potential power of mass action. The organised working class in Canada have managed to win important gains, wresting them from the grip of the capitalist class and its politicians. We must not be afraid to be uncompromising; no matter how taxing the struggle, we must continue to fight for the better socialist world we know is possible and necessary. We have a world to win, and nothing to lose but our chains.

People's Voice

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CP IRELAND: ELECTIONS IN SIX-COUNTIES INDICATE CONTINUED UNIONISM DIVISIONS AND THE GROWTH OF SINN FÉIN

Eugene McCartan
General Secretary of
Communist Party of Ireland

The outcome of the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly should not come as a surprise to anyone who pays the least bit of attention to one of the last remnants of the British Empire.

With Sinn Féin securing twenty-nine per cent of the popular vote, 250,398 first preference votes and winning the largest number of seats (27) to become the largest party in the Assembly Sinn Féin leader Michelle O'Neill will be entitled to be nominated to become First Minister. The DUP secured 21.3 per cent and 25 seats.

That Sinn Féin is now the largest elected party in the enclave has sent a huge shock-wave through the unionist political leadership as well as through the southern political establishment.

For the first time since the founding of the gerrymandered northern statelet established under the control and direction of British imperialism over a century ago unionism is no longer the largest party nor the deciding force in Six County politics.

Following on the election result unionism has reacted in its default mode of threatening violence to prevent change, and its imperial masters in London will be only too ready to manipulate those threats to maintain a unionist veto on anything they consider challenging to their interests.

Political unionism has always used the dog whistle of "protect the Union" or "not an inch" dressed up in sectarian rhetoric and backed up with extreme violence against the nationalist minority to hold the unionist-orientated people in check.

A number of factors have brought about this election result. Unionism remains in a political, economic and cultural cul-de-sac, still hankering after a lost relationship to its former imperial benefactor.

Unionism has down the decades fed generation after generation of its political support base the belief that they would always be top dog, that there would not be, nor could there be, any change in who governs the Six Counties.

They bred a mentality of "no surrender" which was to ensure conformity and obedience and a show of force against any nationalist resistance. Britain was only too willing to let the situation persist so long as its interests in Ireland were secure.

Today the demographics have changed, with a growing nationalist population and a declining unionist one. In addition, the nationalist people are no longer the cowed and battered-down populace they once were. They are politically and culturally much more confident and surer of themselves.

Unionism's constant display of the settler colonial mentality of "no surrender" has left many of their supporters confused politically and culturally locked deeply into the past of a settler colonial mindset, not too dissimilar to that of the Zionist settlers in Palestine, the white minority in South Africa, or the white supremacists in the USA.

Today British imperialism has other allies and interests to cultivate and develop in Ireland.

British imperialism has succeeded in locking radical republicanism into institutions that are still controlled by the British and by whose outcomes they exert significant control, locking them into a political process around some vague idea of "consent", an exercise some would call a "pacification process."

British imperialism is pursuing more strategic interests with the ruling class of the South, a relationship far more important to their overall imperialist strategy in Ireland.

The southern ruling class are central to securing the triple lock of US, EU, and British imperialism.

Unionism stood in the elections on two main planks, firstly to abolish the "Northern Ireland Protocol" (part of the Brexit process) and secondly to end the legal statutory obligation that the largest party in the Assembly automatically gets the office of First Minister. They have clearly failed on both strategic issues.

Sinn Féin's leader Michelle O'Neill Photo: Sinn Féin (CC BY 2.0)

Once again they have demonstrated their backward anti-democratic world view.

The other big winner in the elections was the Alliance Party which secured 13.5 per cent (17 seats) of the first preference votes. The Alliance secured a greater number of votes from the old Ulster Unionist Party (11.2 per cent - 9 seats) fighting on a pro-Protocol pro- EU platform with the unionist business community and the professional classes switching to vote in their own material self-interest, a clear indication that unionism continues to fracture and fragment.

The DUP lost votes to the Traditional Unionist Values Party, a party even more entrenched in bigotry and pro-imperialist ideology.

The election result has also not been welcomed by the Dublin establishment. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour Party canvassed for the SDLP (8 seats) while the Dublin-based media promoted the SDLP against Sinn Féin.

While the nationalist people in the Six Counties may take some small satisfaction at the discomfort of unionist politicians, elements on the "left" within the Six Counties lamented that real politics did not feature in the election debates. We have to ask the question – what is real politics?

What they suggest is that social and economic demands and struggles take place in some sort of void. Struggles devoid of political context which ignore concrete material conditions are doomed to failure. They also imply that a democratic soliton to the question of imperial interference is of secondary importance.

What is clear is that there is no lasting stable solution to be found within the political structures created by and bolstered by imperialism.

Partition has been the major road block to the national democratic struggle of the Irish people.

It is only by ending the partition of Ireland and the allowing the people of Ireland to decide their future that true democracy and peace can be built.

The ending of partition of Ireland would also be a major democratic advance for progressive forces in Britain itself.

The strategy of the Communist Party of Ireland is to develop maximum economic, political, social relation between North and South and to shrink the East-West controls from London, thereby providing greater potential for national working-class unity on a national democratic basis.

To link and develop all-Ireland struggles in areas like health, housing, industrial development, social and workers rights. To strengthen the national content in the class struggle, and the class content in the national struggle. ✪

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DETROIT TENANTS ORGANISE TO TAKE ON BIG LANDLORDS AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

Joseph Bierlein

Detroit today is a city mostly made up of renters. According to 2020 census data, fifty-three per cent of residents are now rent-paying tenants. Sometime before 2015, Detroit transitioned from a majority homeowner city to a majority renter city. This transition can, in large part, be attributed to a large-scale corporate takeover of homes, apartment buildings, and public housing.

This change has not been a peaceful one. Just outside downtown, longtime residents in the New Center area (largely working-class residents of colour) have been subject to an extended process of displacement in favour of young, white, higher-paid professionals. This process has taken many forms, including legal and illegal attacks on residents. Detroiters, however, are fighting back.

The recently formed Tenants Association of New Center Plaza and Marlenor (TANCPM) has taken up the struggle against large-scale landlords and property managers. Members of their association spoke with *People's World* about their struggle.

TANCPM is in a battle with Raymond DeBates, the owner of the New Center Plaza and Marlenor buildings and an attorney whose firm specialises in real estate law. Management has changed twice over the last two years. In 2021, both buildings were administered by Golden Management, but recently a company named Continental Management took over operations.

Prior to forming the tenants' association, residents addressed maintenance issues by filing complaints with the Buildings, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED), which later issued a correctional order for multiple violations. Nonetheless, maintenance issues continued to go unresolved. In response, residents joined together to form TANCPM.

Lewis Bass, a New Center Plaza resident and founding member of the TANCPM, explained why tenants formed the association, saying, "I've had people coming to me for years, complaining about management, [saying], 'We need to do something.' *We* need to do something. If I go in there alone, you'll be looking at my apartment being gutted and renovated. If I go in there to present your concerns, we have to go as a group."

TANCPM held its first meeting in 2021 to discuss the installation of Project Green Light cameras (Detroit facial recognition surveillance), inaccessible housing due to a broken elevator, and racist rent hikes that targeted Black residents and TANCPM organisers. After coming together, the members of the association delivered a Notice of Requests, once again informing management of the unacceptable living conditions at both buildings.

Eventually, DeBates and management began working on some maintenance issues, albeit slowly. However, at the same time, residents reported harassment from both parties, citing verbal abuse, banging at their doors, and the vandalisation of TANCPM flyers. DeBates also demanded to know who informed local news of the tenants' issues and that tenants cease their attempts to secure reasonable rent and quality living conditions.

Continuing their harassment, DeBates and management threatened Lewis Bass with eviction. Management informed Bass that his rent check had not been sent. However, he disputed the claim, citing the copy of the check he produced when he sent the payment. The case proved frivolous and was swiftly thrown out of court.

Bass was not the only victim of a targeted attempt at displacement. Management previously assured Steve Rimmer, another resident and founding member of TANCPM, that he would not face a steep rent increase. However, he later received a short-notice lease agreement in January 2022 that informed him of a $269 rent increase, a thirty-nine per cent hike from his previous lease agreement.

TANCPM also reported rent increases were greater for Black residents than white residents. Members say it's a racist strategy that aims to remove Black community members in favour of white residents.

In addition to their tenant organising efforts, the association also reformed an old project on the street dubbed "The Seward Sharing Table," a community pantry that operates on the principle of "give as you can, take as you need." The Table serves as an important resource for many community members who are disabled, low-income, or otherwise unable to acquire quality groceries.

Joseph Bierlein / *People's World*

DeBates, upset with the potential impact that the pantry might have on the appearance of the grass, demanded that it be moved to a gated parking lot. He gave The Sharing Table just a few days to move. Community members rallied and announced a protest for the pantry to remain where it stands. After announcing the protest, the Sharing Table was vandalised and its tables stolen; the culprit remains unknown.

Following the protest, Steve Rimmer says an employee of Continental Management informed him that the company would not interfere with The Sharing Table, and that any attack on its placement had to have come from DeBates himself. However, a strongly-worded email from Vice President Robert Carson contradicted this claim. On the issue of relocating The Table, he had this to say:

"Disappointingly, the result of this simple, lateral, relocation request was met with, not compromise, not discussion, but with inflexibility, protest, and spectacle. You further then went on to publicly make false and misleading representation. Relocating is not unsafe, nor any less safe than the current location. If anything, it is safer. Relocating does not make the Sharing Table any less accessible. It is equally accessible as the gate is open. Your position, related behaviour and misleading rhetoric is divisive and not helpful."

Carson also attempted what TANCPM says amounts to legal intimidation when he requested the information of all members of the tenants' association. Their presumption is that there are plans to target individuals for their activism. Carson cited the Open Meetings Act, which, according to its handbook, applies to:

"[A]ny state or local legislative or governing body, including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, authority, or council, that is empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution, or rule to exercise governmental or proprietary authority or perform a governmental or proprietary function; a lessee of such a body performing an essential public purpose and function pursuant to the lease agreement."

A tenants' union, in this case, is a loose, informal association of residents who have joined together to advocate for better living conditions. They do not carry out proprietary or governing functions. So, the act simply does not apply. Words such as these are merely meant to intimidate residents.

Despite these obstacles, the members of TANCPM have been pushing their efforts outside the block. Rimmer also advocates for Right to Counsel, a local ordinance that passed on the 10th May ensuring the right to an attorney for low-income residents facing eviction. A number of organisations and individuals appeared at the final hearing for the ordinance, including The Right to Counsel Coalition, Detroit Eviction Defense, Detroit Justice Center, TANCPM, the Detroit Club of the CPUSA, and others.

The TANCPM and The Seward Sharing Table represent two organisations that are part of the broad struggle for housing rights and food security. Their organising efforts have brought them face-to-face with big landlords and property management companies who have attacked them every step of the way. Their struggle is taking place at an unprecedented time for housing in Detroit, with tenants facing explosive rent hikes, racist landlords, stagnating wages, and rising food prices. Their collective action serves as a shining example for tenant organising all over the country and demonstrates the type of movement needed by many.

People's World

... Detroiters are fighting back: "We need to do something. *We* need to do something."

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