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CLIMATE CHANGE WREAKS HAVOC

Anna Pha

Lives have been lost and thousands of homes have been flooded and destroyed as the floods continue to hit eastern Australia. People have lost their homes, valued possessions, and livelihoods while farmers have witnessed the destruction of their crops and loss of livestock. Climate change is here, and worse is to come.

At the time of writing, flood warnings continued to be issued, now extending from Victoria to Queensland. The destruction of infrastructure is extensive.

Ironically the COP27 climate conference has just taken place amidst all the flooding.

Vast areas of NSW are under water. Flooding is occurring where it has never been experienced before. Records are constantly being broken. The crisis is such that international experts have been called in to assist.

People have been traumatised after spending hours on their roofs waiting to be rescued. Helicopters have been used to drop off essential supplies to isolated communities.

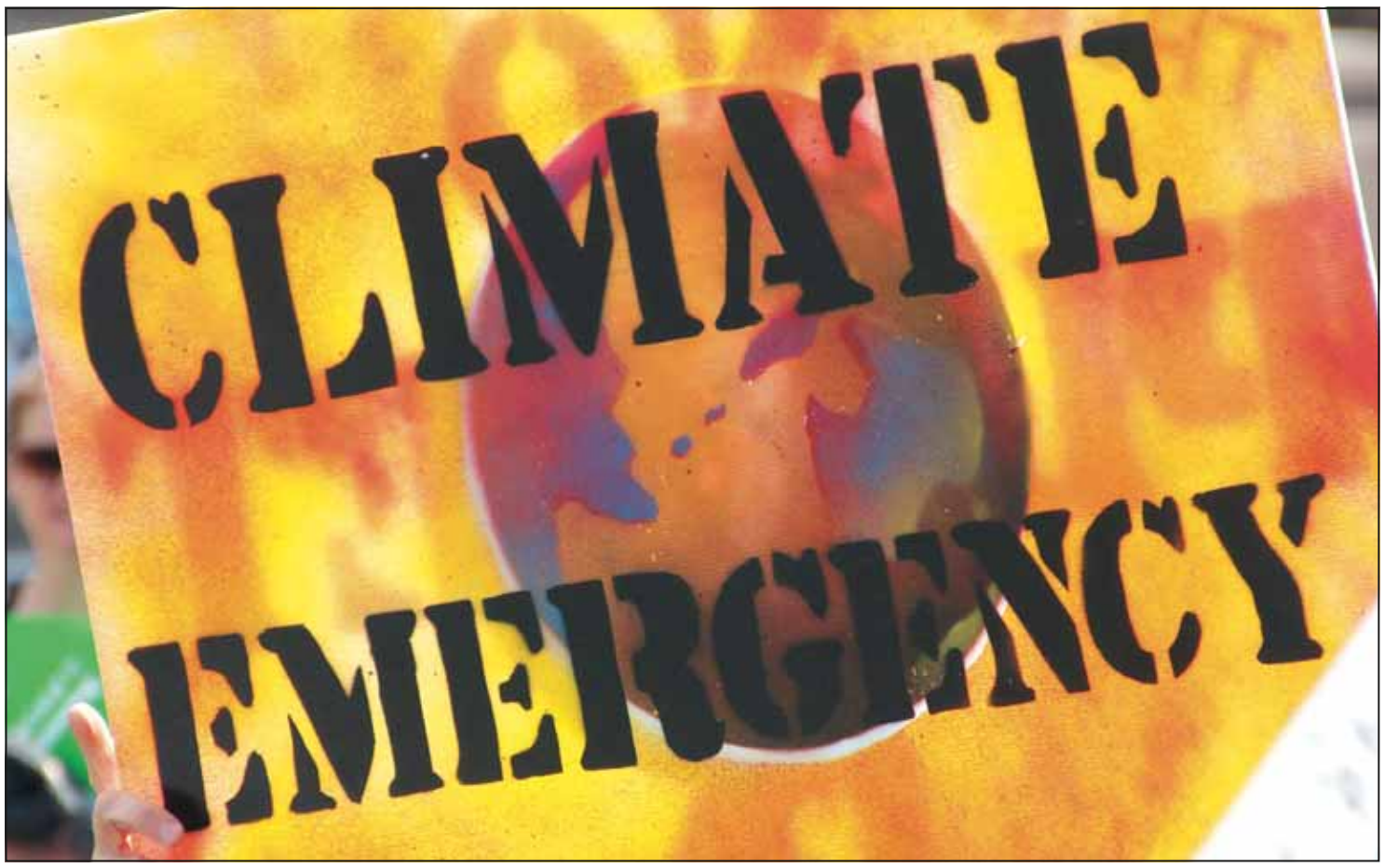
With rivers overflowing, catchments bursting their banks, streets flowing like rivers, and the ground water-logged, it does not take much extra rain to flood towns and farmlands.

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet visited the town of Eugowra which was hit by what locals described as an inland tsunami – a wall of water that inundated the town. He promised to rebuild the town. Rebuild, but where? The same question can be asked of many of the flooded areas.

Corrupt developers in cahoots with corrupt politicians have over decades been allowed to build on flood plains and other areas prone to flooding. Rebuilding on many of these areas is not the answer. Planning is required based on a scientific approach to the suitability of locations and the ability of new locations to absorb water.

The floods are the latest in a series of ongoing climate-change induced crises. Severe drought was followed by the 2019-20 bushfires, then by mice plagues, and today the floods. Many bushfire survivors are still living in tents, forgotten by governments.

There has been an explosion in the number of mosquitos breeding on the large areas of stagnant water. They bring serious health risks, carrying such diseases as Japanese encephalitis, Ross River virus, Kunjin virus, Dengue fever, and Murray Valley encephalitis.



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QUESTION OF PRIORITIES

It is outrageous that the government subsidises fossil fuels to the tune of $44.6 billion per annum and continues to consider the opening of new fossil fuel projects. If the government put a bill to Parliament banning new fossil fuel projects and the expansion of existing ones, it would have the support of the Greens and the teal independents – a majority in both houses.

The cost of rebuilding the lives of victims of extreme weather events will be large, as will adaptation and mitigation, but it has to be done and the sooner the better.

It comes down to priorities: hundreds of billions of dollars in the next decade in war preparations, or hundreds of billions of dollars directed to saving humanity and life on our planet as we know it.

REBUILDING LIVES

Funding for Lismore flood victims was promised by the former Morrison government, but little seems to have been released, and victims attempting to access it come up against lack of information and bureaucratic hurdles.

So many flood victims feel on their own, let down by governments. They have lost their homes. Insurance companies resist making payments. Many were uninsured, either refused insurance because of their risk-prone location ,or unable to afford it. Who can afford to pay $40,000 or more per annum, as some flood victims had been asked?

Private insurance is not the answer. Australia once had state insurance companies. It is time to bring them back or create a national insurance scheme.

Governments offer assistance to all flood victims, providing housing and services as quickly as possible. Adaptation and mitigation along with measures to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions cannot wait.

CLIMATE ACTION

The government adheres to its dangerously inadequate target of forty-three per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 at same time speaking forcefully at COPS27 of the need to curb warming to 1.5°C. The globe has already warmed 1.25°C and Australia by 1.4°C. The forty-three per cent target would see warming of 2°C or more.

A report released by the Climate Council (CC) on 4th November 2022 shows that the world is in the grip of a deepening climate crisis, and that without more ambitious emission cuts **this decade** we are headed for a full-blown catastrophe.

"Even if all countries meet their targets for emission reductions by 2030, the world is headed for 2.4-2.6°C of warming this century ... Global emissions **must fall by 45 per cent by 2030** to have any chance of achieving the Paris agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C," the CC said.

Existing energy infrastructure must be replaced as quickly as possible with solar, wind, thermal and other renewable energy sources and storage in a just transition that ensures no workers are worse off.

The human and the economic costs of inaction are existential. ✪

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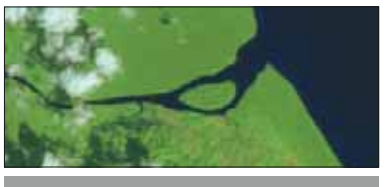
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FIGHT BACK AGAINST ANTI-EDUCATION RHETORIC

Pauline Hanson is doing what she does best: pushing bills that further marginalise minority communities that don't fit into her conservative outlook.

This time, Hanson is flogging a dead horse with the *Australian Education Legislation Amendment (Prohibiting the Indoctrination of Children) Bill 2020*. First introduced in 2020, the bill went nowhere fast and will go even less this time around. The bill's summary seeks to amend the "*Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008* to require the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to ensure that school education provides a balanced presentation of opposing views on political, historical, and scientific issues."

It also seeks to amend the "*Australian Education Act 2013* to make financial assistance to a state or territory conditional on the state or territory having certain laws in force."

Hanson has big plans for this bill. According to her, this bill is "aimed at ensuring schools and teachers do what they're supposed to do, rather than what many of them are doing today." What are teachers doing that they're NOT supposed to be doing? According to Hanson, teachers "are not supposed to indoctrinate [children] with Marxism," or "groom them into believing they can be a boy one day and a girl the next," or "supposed to recruit them as warriors for climate change or social justice" – something which she believes is actively happening in our classrooms: "[The] education system thoroughly infiltrated by activists and disturbing concepts about race, climate and gender grounded in disproven neo-Marxist theories."

How is this bill meant to prevent the boogeyman Marxist teachers from "brainwashing" Australian youth? Hanson states that the first aim of the bill is "placing an obligation on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to develop a balanced curriculum for states and territories to adopt." Here, Hanson points out Climate Change as one of the subject areas that require a "balanced" assessment.

Additionally, the bill seeks to "tie federal education funding to the existence of state and territory legislation and prohibits indoctrination in schools." Hanson mentions "Gender Fluidity Theory" (a theory she made up) as an area where – if a school deviated from her perception of the science – it would lose funding if it breached the curriculum.

While climate action received a bashing, it was largely sexual orientation and gender diversity that received the brunt of Hanson's ire. While making fun of or dismiss Hanson's rhetoric is easy, we shouldn't.

Earlier this month, five people were killed and seventeen were injured in a senseless act of gun violence at a gay nightclub in Colorado, US – and things aren't much better at home. Hanson doesn't believe we need to educate children on LGBT+ issues yet, last year, "a Western Sydney University study, which surveyed 2,376 LGBTQ students aged between 13 and 18 at government, independent and Catholic high schools across Australia" found that "More than 90 per cent of LGBTQ+ students hear homophobic language at school, with more than one in three confronted with slurs on a daily basis" (*Guardian* UK).

Hanson tying pro-LGBT and pro-Climate action sentiments to Marxism is her attempt to dog whistle that "outside" or "unAustralian" forces are influencing our society. Marxism – at least directly, in its orthodox framework – has nothing to say on these topics and Hanson's comments are indicative of how little she understands the ideology she hates. Hanson is the perfect example of WHY we need to educate our youth. A world with fewer Hansons and a more educated working class can change the world.

PAMPAS WORKERS REJECT CRUMBY DEAL

More than fifty pastry and pie makers at Pampas in Melbourne commenced an indefinite stop work on Monday last week in a fight for job security and a decent wage rise. Some of the workers have been employed in insecure labour hire jobs for fifteen or twenty years.

They are demanding a wage increase of about $1.60 per hour each year for three years and conversion of labour hire workers to direct employment.

The workers are united in their demands and say they are ready to stay on strike for as long as it takes to win their claims. They have been denied entitlements such as sick leave and paid annual or other leave when working hard for so long in ongoing jobs through the highly exploitative labour hire system.

Their union, the United Workers' Union (UWU), is attempting to negotiate an agreement with the company. Earlier this month workers overwhelmingly rejected an offer from management. The company retaliated by making an inferior offer to exert pressure on workers.

"Pampas workers aren't interested in this crummy deal. They want an agreement that gives workers job security and a fair pay rise that recognises rising cost of living," UWU organiser Andy Giles said. Inflation continues to rise, forecast to hit eight per cent or more by the end of the year.

"We are hearing a lot in the news right now about how workers in Australia need a pay rise. These are those workers."

Christmas is fast approaching. Giles noted: "Pampas is willing to risk a national pastry and mince pie shortage just because they want to keep long-term, skilled, committed workers on low wages and stressful, insecure contracts."

Pampas Delegate Lam Thanh added, "Rather than employing the casuals who have worked hard for the company fifteen years or longer, full time jobs have been given to people who have never worked here before."

Pampas is owned by Goodman Fielder, a billion-dollar transnational corporation which supplies companies including supermarket monopolies Coles, Woolworths, and Baker's Delight with frozen pastry lines, bread, margarine, oil, and other food lines.

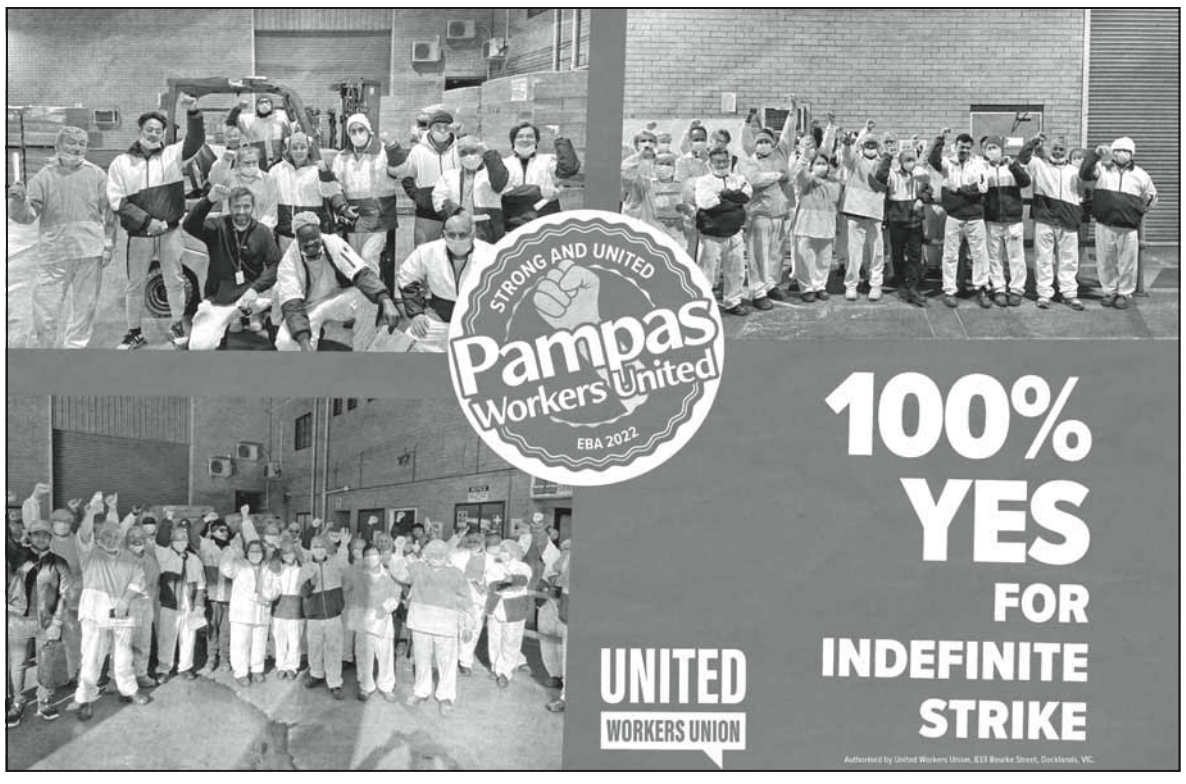
Goodman Fielder employs approximately 1,200 people, operates in Australia, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, and is administered by its head office in Macquarie Park, New South Wales. It generated over a $1 billion in revenue in 2021.

As befits a monopoly, its major brands are numerous. They include Helga's, Wonder, Praise, White Wings, CSR Sugar, Pampas, MeadowLea, Equal, Crisco, Fortune, La Familia Kitchen, Cornwell's, Bush Oven, Buttercup, Country Life, Defiance, ETA, Gold'n Canola, Holbrooks, La Famiglia, Lawson's, Mighty Soft, Olive Grove, Lawson's, and Whole Earth.

Goodman Fielder is a privately-owned subsidiary of Wilmar GF Singapore Holdings which is controlled by its major investor, First Pacific Company Limited, an investment firm based in Hong Kong.

If you wish to show your solidarity with striking Pampas workers, you can sign the petition on the UWU's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/UnitedWorkersOz/ ✪

"We are hearing a lot in the news right now about how workers in Australia need a pay rise. These are those workers."



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15,000 WORKERS LEFT IN THE LURCH AS DELIVEROO GOES UNDER

B Curphey

Photo: Matt Taylor – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

British food delivery platform Deliveroo announced on the 16th November that it was going into voluntary administration, claiming that "achieving a sustainable position of leadership in the market is not possible without a disproportionate level of investment which would have highly uncertain returns."

Advisory and investment firm KordaMentha has been appointed as the administrator for Deliveroo Australia, and will now decide what Deliveroo's creditors are owed. These creditors include the 15,000 workers who deliver for Deliveroo as couriers. Deliveroo's couriers, like almost all gig workers, are classified as independent contractors, not as employees. This means that they are not entitled to basic protections, including the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG), a government program designed to help employees recover unpaid wages when the company they work for becomes insolvent.

It is not farfetched to suggest that one of the "challenging economic conditions" informing Deliveroo's decision to shut down its Australian operations may be the promise of greater regulation. The writing has been on the wall for quite some time now – better regulation of the gig economy is crucial. It is something that has been promised both by Federal Labor at the last federal election, and Victorian Labor ahead of the upcoming Victorian election on 26 November (see Guardian #2033: "Workers' rights up for grabs"). In 2021, the Fair Work Commission even decided that one Deliveroo contractor ought to be classified as an employee (see *Guardian* # 1964: "Gig Workers Fight Back: Fair Work Commission Rules Delivery Riders Are Employees").

The Transport Workers Union (TWU) announced on the day of the shut down that it is "seeking an urgent meeting Deliveroo's administrators on workers entitlements and data protection." It has represented gig workers working for Deliveroo throughout the pandemic. They cite the appalling exploitation of Deliveroo couriers as a key reason why Deliveroo cannot be allowed to simply leave without paying up:

"Deliveroo has always been the outlier of the gig industry in Australia, railing against reform supported by Uber and DoorDash to level the playing field for companies while lifting standards for workers under deadly pressures."

And now it wants to ensure that the company does not get away with their "sudden and cowardly" departure, leaving workers with no job and thousands in unpaid wages. Deliveroo's 15,000 workers were not even given notice of the shutdown, which happened in the middle of a work day.

Other delivery services such as DoorDash have been quick to get former Deliveroo workers to sign up. But more gig work is a band-aid solution to a much bigger problem. Some commentators fear that this may be the beginning of the end for the big food delivery companies, and that more closures are on the horizon.

But even if these companies continue to exist, which they almost certainly will in some form, they cannot be allowed to continue misclassifying, underpaying and exploiting their workers. The Albanese government has proposed reforms to enable the Fair Work Commission to consider cases that relate to "employee-like" situations, where it is currently limited to considering matters which relate to employees and those who seek clarification about whether they are an employee or a contractor. This could usher in a new era of regulation for gig work.

However, the gig economy is not an issue that can be tackled meaningfully on a case-by-case basis. Ultimately, as the TWU has already recognised, gig workers are workers and the gig economy is a union issue. Work must be done to empower gig workers to organise and bargain with the big platforms to ensure that fair pay and conditions are implemented and enforced. This includes safe conditions of work and data protection for users of delivery apps.

The solution is not, as one columnist in the *Sydney Morning Herald* asserted, for individual consumers to stop using delivery apps. This kind of argument diverts responsibility away from the companies who engage gig workers. It is Deliveroo, and not the users of its services, that bears responsibility for the conditions of its workers. It is Deliveroo, and ultimately other companies like it, who must be held accountable. ✪

SVITZER'S BOSSES ARE ON STRIKE, NOT THEIR WORKERS

Maritime Union of Australia Statement

At a meeting facilitated by Fair Work Commission Vice President Hatcher, Svitzer Towage bosses refused to voluntarily withdraw the lockout threat which looms over 17 Australian ports nationwide, prompting the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) to call for an inquiry into how Australia's supply chains have been allowed to become vulnerable to employer-led militancy.

"We have seen Svitzer's international bosses stuff a ransom note in the mail flap of the Australian community on the cusp of Christmas, to shake down the entire nation under threat of economic and social chaos for no greater purpose than their own profiteering," said MUA National Secretary Paddy Crumlin.

"This company's social licence to operate should now be in doubt, and an inquiry into how a multinational Danish owned company can be allowed to hold an entire country to ransom through this campaign of employer-led industrial militancy must be held so we never again find ourselves vulnerable to this corporate piracy," Mr Crumlin said.

The Fair Work Commission has signalled that it may intervene formally to prevent the economic and social chaos of a nationwide port shutdown but gave company bosses an opportunity to withdraw their threat voluntarily and return to good-faith bargaining.

Svitzer management representatives refused at a meeting today with Fair Work Vice President Hatcher to withdraw the lockout notice. In fact, Svitzer Managing Director Nicolaj Noes failed to present at the hearing today, and also refused to participate in Fair Work convened meetings yesterday with the Unions.

Vice President Hatcher had asked that Svitzer engage in a conciliation process this week to avert a supply chain disaster on Friday, but Svitzer's management team refused.

Accordingly, with the bosses' lockout of tugboat workers still looming large over the national economy, tomorrow a full bench hearing of the Fair Work Commission will consider whether to suspend or terminate the lockout threat made by Svitzer Australia management.

All three unions representing workers employed at Svitzer Towage – the MUA, the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE) and the Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) – offered to withdraw any further industrial action until beyond Christmas so that good faith bargaining could resume, however, the company refused to agree to this proposal and is persisting with its planned lockout on Friday.

"This amounts to a war on workers, a war on consumers, on households, and businesses throughout the supply chain. Svitzer bosses' dogged refusal to withdraw this lockout will destroy Christmas 2022 and bring our economy's post-COVID recovery to a grinding halt," Mr Crumlin said. ✪

JOHN SHIPTON CALLS FOR THE RELEASE OF HIS SON JULIAN ASSANGE FROM PRISON AND RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

Richard Titelius

On Saturday 19th November 2022, John Shipton spoke at a rally in Perth calling for the release of his son Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks is incarcerated in Belmarsh Prison in the United Kingdom awaiting the appeal of proceedings to avoid extradition to the United States on charges of receiving classified national security documents.

Shipton was critical of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for failing to raise his son's plight at the November 2022, G-20 summit in Bali while being critical of journalists being incarcerated in Myanmar and China. This was despite Anthony Albanese and many of the members of Federal parliament being elected on a platform to release Julian Assange.

In the evening I was invited with a group of eight activists to a dinner at a Perth restaurant to meet and discuss with John Shipton about ways which can be progressed among the people of Perth to bring Julian Assange home.

As has been shown with the recent release of Australian academic Sean Turnell from prison in Myanmar, if the efforts by diplomatic staff from the Australian government were authentic and persistent, then results can be achieved. In the case of Julian Assange, it seems the Australian government fears putting pressure on the US government who are seeking to persecute him for his journalistic crimes.

Much of the trove of information Wikileaks put into the public domain has shown impropriety by various levels of the US military in theatres of war where the US has been present. Instead of persecuting Julian Assange and also that of another Australian whistle blower, Major David McBride, US and Australian governments should thank them for showing them where they went wrong and putting pressure on governments not to use these types of tactics ever again.

The Communist Party of Australia calls on the Australian government to negotiate the immediate release of Julian Assange from the charges he is facing in the US so that he can return to Australia from the maximum security prison in Belmarsh Prison in the UK where his physical and mental health continue to deteriorate. ✪

John Shifton and Richard Titelius at a restaurant following the rally on 19 November 2022, in Perth.

Dingo bytes

Scott Morrison's secret multiple portfolios has nothing on the dual role of PM Albanese and Defence Minister Richard Marles as salesmen/lobbyists for the arms manufacturers. The couple have announced a new bundle of death to fuel the conflict in Ukraine, proudly from "Australian suppliers." They include another thirty Bushmaster armoured vehicles to add to the sixty troop carriers, twenty-eight M113 armoured personnel carriers, anti-tank missiles, $32 million to buy drones and more, totalling $655 million thus far. Australian personnel are in Britain training 5000 Ukrainian soldiers "in basic warfighting." As Marles put it, helping "our Ukrainian mates."

"You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so: that is just what we intend" – *Communist Manifesto*.

In the case of national airline Qantas, under the Hawke-Keating Labor government public property was given over to the private profit vultures. Here's one of them – Qantas chairman Richard Goyder – striking out against wage rises: "It's often portrayed Qantas plays hardball in wage deals. It's true we have threshold requirements and look for improvements in productivity." Last week the major shareholders, the ones who get to vote, gave Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce a package of shares worth $4 million on top of his $2.17 million salary. And productivity? In 2020 Qantas outsourced its baggage handling, 1700 jobs wiped. The Federal Court found the outsourcing to be illegal: Qantas is challenging the decision in the High Court.

Following along the privatisation line, the Albanese government has begun an inquiry into Medicare "fraud." It comes on the crest of a media wave of hyperbole with headlines such as "Revealed: $8b Medicare scandal." Governments don't initiate inquires unless they know the outcome and the outcome of this one will be funding sliced away and parts of the system outsourced. The trigger for this attack on the universal health provider is Dr Margaret Faux, whose PhD in Medicare revealed the aforementioned shock-horror $8 billion. That's a hell of a PhD. I will simply note here the dictionary meaning of faux: made in imitation, artificial, not genuine, fake, false.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: The brutal clampdown by Israeli forces continues with more Palestinians killed in the occupied territories. Four were shot and killed by Israeli forces in East Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank last week. Two others were shot dead by Israeli forces in Jenin, while four others suffered gunshot wounds, the Palestinian health ministry said. The deaths were announced as the Israeli army said it was carrying out a raid in the northern West Bank city. Another Palestinian was killed earlier after Israeli forces raided the town of Beit Duqu, north-west of Jerusalem. Deadly raids on Palestinian towns and refugee camps have been carried out by Israeli forces on a near-daily basis.

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HOW FAR HAVE WE COME WITH EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN?

Australian Unions

Photo: Anna Pha

It's hard to believe we face a gender pay gap in Australia that still sees men take home an average of $263.90 more than women per week. But thanks to generations of women working together, that gap has shrunk.

The union-led campaign to obliterate the gap continues strong today and when we look back over the past couple of centuries, we can see what can be achieved when working women unite.

The efforts of working women for equal pay dates back to the 1890s, when the prolific Louisa Dunkley, campaigned on behalf of women telegraphists and postmistresses to be paid equal to men in the Post and Telegraph Department of Victoria.

A bold act of advocacy that won widespread praise, yet, despite her efforts, only granted salary increases, not pay equality.

Fast forward to the 1930s, when prominent leader and advocate for union women, Muriel Heagney, helped found the Council of Action for Equal Pay – a group of women unionists – and led their campaign for gender equity. In doing so, they were a huge influence on the Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU)'s policy for supporting equal pay that was adopted at the 1941 congress.

THE 1969 "EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK" DECISION

While salary increases and policy changes progressed the equity agenda, it wasn't until 1969 when things really started to change. Finally, the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission – now the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) – recognised "equal pay for equal work" in a landmark decision brought forward by the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union.

While this was a breakthrough decision, it highlighted systemic sexism by failing to apply to women in traditionally women-dominated roles, affecting less than 18 per cent of working women; arguably the workers most affected by equal pay in the first place.

Enter Zelda D'Aprano, union activist and prolific public speaker and writer. To secure true pay equality, Zelda famously chained herself to Melbourne's Commonwealth Building and refused to pay the full price fare on the tram, instead paying seventy-five per cent, representative of the gender pay gap at the time.

The work of Zelda, Muriel, and Louisa, among other formidable females, laid the foundations for the 1972 case initiated by the ACTU that resulted in the commission recognising the legal right to "equal pay for work of equal value."

FIFTY YEARS ON, PAY EQUALITY STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

Yet, five decades on, the fight is still alive today.

As the job market continues to evolve, and the nature of work differs vastly from industry to industry measuring "work of equal value" has only become more complicated. That's because the jobs themselves are so different, resulting in a further widening of the gender pay gap which currently sits at 14.1 per cent for full-time workers.

THE GENDER PAY GAP

According to data released by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), men out-earn women across every generation, peaking at ages 55-64 where men out-earn women by more than $40,000 on average per year. However, it's expected this number is even greater as it's not mandatory for all companies to report to the WGEA and the organisation lacks the resources to perform its duties effectively. In order to make real change, we need to first understand the full picture of the gender pay gap across all industries and demographics in Australia.

A report by the ACTU found that men take home an average of $263.90 more than women per week. This is partially due to the failure of our system to properly recognise and value caring responsibilities – the majority of which are undertaken by women – and therefore remains financially unremunerated. Women are also more likely to be working in undervalued roles in female-dominated industries such as education and nursing, where systemic sexism is rampant, making achieving a higher income in the first place completely unattainable.

For women in higher income roles, the gender pay gap is only exacerbated as the salary increases, with senior executives taking home less than $100,000 per year on average than men.

When you consider this alongside ballooning cost-of-living, the disparity impacts Australian women's financial freedom as they're working harder to make ends meet with little room for discretionary spending or savings.

It's also important to note that it's not mandatory for all companies to report to the WGEA and that the organisation lacks the proper resources to perform effectively, which makes having a clear picture of what the gender pay gap looks like across all workplaces difficult and making change even harder.

Another factor contributing to the widening gender pay gap is pay secrecy.

Pay secrecy clauses prohibit employees from discussing their salary and remuneration, making measuring "work of equal value" near impossible – effectively silencing issues of the gender pay gap in Australian workplaces.

The union's campaign to end pay secrecy has already seen three of the big four banks rule the clause unenforceable. However, to create systemic change, the Federal Government needs to take action to outlaw them entirely.

They also need to include Gender Equity in the Fair Work Act, implement all of the Respect@Work report recommendations and roll out public reporting of pay gaps by employers.

Being a union member is the best way to protect yourself from gender pay inequality. On average, members earn thirty-two per cent more than non-members. Workers in unions are also better protected from wage theft and collectively benefit from the work unions do to ensure better pay and conditions for Australian workers. ✪

Being a union member is the best way to protect yourself from gender pay inequality.

THE BELIZE-GUATEMALA CONI

Graham Holton

In September 2022 the Belize Defence Force and Coast Guard encountered five maritime vessels belonging to the Guatemalan Armed Forces, near Sarstoon Island in the south of Belize. Five civilian vessels, operated by the Belize Territorial Volunteers, had placed two Belizean national flags on the Island, which the Guatemalan Armed Forces removed. Guatemala informed the patrol that the area belonged to Guatemala. The Ministry of National Defence and Border Security of Belize said that it would ensure that the "territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Belize" would be maintained.

This territorial conflict has been ongoing since the 1859 Treaty and continues forty years after Belize's independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in 1981. When Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands there was a fear that the war in the South Atlantic would deplete the British military presence in Belize.

However, a Guatemalan invasion never materialised. The British Forces in Belize, including the No. 1417 RAF Harriers, protected Belize until the main British force left in 1994, three years after Guatemala recognised Belize's independence. Today the UK maintains the British Army Training and Support Unit Belize (BATSUB) of tropical training for British troops and its international military partners.

The US Southern Command has a base in Belize and the French Foreign Legion does jungle training in the country. In 2011 I interviewed a former member of the British Special Air Service (SAS), who confirmed that the SAS had been used to defend Belize. Military patrols continue to encounter Guatemalan troops well inside Belize's territory.

In June 2022 the Prime Minister of Belize, Dr John Briceño, announced the delivery of Belize's counter-memorial to the Guatemalan claim to the Registrar of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Guatemala must submit its reply by December 2022. Belize must submit its final response to the ICJ by June 2023 before the oral hearings can begin. The ICJ arbitration had begun in 2018 after a Guatemala referendum voted "yes" to arbitration. In 2019 Belize submitted its territorial dispute with Guatemala to the ICJ. Guatemala initially had claimed all of Belize, but after its independence in 1981, Guatemala recognised the new government and reduced its claim in 2008 to an area of 12,000 sq km, roughly half the country.

This territorial dispute between Guatemala and Belize, formerly British Honduras, goes back 200 years, to when they were Spanish and British colonies, respectively. Britain and Guatemala had signed a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation in 1849 and then the British-Guatemalan Treaty of 1859. The treaty required that under Article 7, a cart road costing £50,000 be constructed by the British to connect Guatemala City to the Caribbean coast through British Honduras, but it was never built. Under Article 2, Britain was required to survey and mark out the boundary, which was never completed.

In 1946, the Guatemalan government declared the treaty null and void and demanded the return of British Honduras territory. In 1946 Britain took the dispute to the ICJ. When Guatemala threated to invade the colony, Britain sent in two cruisers and a battalion of infantry in 1948. The American Committee on Dependent Territories declared Belize to be an "occupied territory." In 1955 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central America issued unanimously that Belize was Guatemalan territory. With this political support, the 1965 Constitution defined Belize as "part of the territory of Guatemala" and that Belizeans were "natural Guatemalans."

To complicate the political dispute further is that Belize's demographics has changed greatly since independence. The emigration of large numbers of English-speaking Afro-Belizeans (Creoles and Garifuna) to the United States and their replacement by Spanish-speaking mestizos and Maya from Guatemala has altered the ethnic composition and spatial distribution. These cultural changes have meant that the Creole population (Black, English speaking and Protestant) has been reduced to thirty per cent, making Belize a multi-ethnic country.

Although not born in Belize, Maya immigrants claim "native" status due to their common cultural heritage of Maya civilisation, which is identified by the presence of numerous great Mayan cities in Belize, such as Caracol. Afro-Caribbean Belizeans are proud of their African heritage and argue that they are the true "indigenous." Both ethnic groups are divided by history, language (English versus Spanish), music (Reggae vs Salsa), architecture (wood vs adobé) and religion (Protestant vs Catholic), which accentuates the cultural and racial differences.

While travelling through Belize, I often witnessed the Afro-Belizeans accusing the Maya of being "in my black country" and they "should speak English." The Guatemalans replied that "I am Indian and this is my continent," a claim of indigenousness by rights of culture and ethnicity. In the past ten years the Courts of Belize have granted land rights to the Maya owing to their collective indigenous past.

The British colony's descendants were former slaves, who gained emancipation in 1838. British Honduras had its first constitution in 1854. The colony was extremely important to Britain, both economically and geopolitically. Nearly 100 percent of all British imports into Central America went through the colony. After the independence of the five republics, European and US goods were exported through new ports into Central America. Britain still held territories in Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, which led to clashes with the US, which maintained the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, in which no foreign powers were allowed in its backyard. It led to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, though conflicts between the two great powers flared in 1854 and 1856, which led to the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty of 1856. British Honduras became a Crown Colony in 1871.

Because of hunger, poverty and the harsh working conditions, workers rioted in 1894, 1919 and 1934. In 1939 calls for independence led to the formation of the People's United Party (PUP) in 1950. With demands for political and economic independence, its leaders were imprisoned. Party leader John Smith told the workers that, "The present evil is British colonialism. That evil the people must fight until it is dissolved." In 1954 the British Honduras governor warned that PUP was under the influence of international Communism. In 1961 PUP won all eighteen seats, spelling the end of colonialism. British Honduras, a self-governing colony, was renamed Belize in June 1973.

The political situation in Guatemala changed when Jacobo Arbenz became president in 1951, under revolutionary nationalism that gave voice to the dispossessed. Under the reform law of 1952 idle land was expropriated from the rich landlords and foreign corporations, one of which was the US-owned United Fruit Company. Arbenz promised to uplift the standards of living of the poor by expropriating 300,000 hectares of land for redistribution to the peasants.

In 1954, during a game of golf, President Eisenhower promised to assist the CEO of the company. Under US pressure the OAS (Organization of American States) declared that any signs of international Communism

Source: Mapswire (CC BY 4.0)

FLICT AND THE ROLE OF CUBA

would result in "appropriate actions." The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) organised a "liberation army" trained in Honduras, commanded by Guatemalan Colonel, Carlos Castillo Armas. The coup ousted president Arbenz and installed the brutal dictator, Armas. Che Guevara was in Guatemala City at the time and fled to Mexico where he met Fidel Castro, joining his rebels for the invasion of Cuba. The Guatemala Civil War, 1960 to 1996, led to the death of over 600,000 people, so that the rich retained their wealth and power.

Five years after the coup against President Arbenz, in January 1959, the rebel forces under the Castro brothers and Guevara took control of Cuba, ousting the US-backed Batista government. The US promised the Guatemalan government that if it supported a US invasion of Cuba Guatemala would receive diplomatic support in its claim of British Honduras. President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes allowed the CIA to train the Cuban exile force in Guatemala. On 17th April 1961, the *Brigadistas* of Brigade 2506 opposed to the Castro regime, sailed from British Honduras for Bahía de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs) in Cuba, during Operation Zapata, in an attempt to overthrow the Communist government. It ended in a complete disaster for the US. This was followed by the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. In 1963 President Kennedy approved the coup against Ydígoras, installing Defense Minister Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia as the new president.

The Cuban Communist government set out to ensure independence from the imperial powers around the world, at great sacrifice politically, militarily and economically. One such colony was British Honduras. The first Belizean Prime Minister, George Price, visited Cuba to receive the "Orden José Marti" from Fidel Castro.

Cuba became the third player in Belize's independence and its conflict with Guatemala. In the 1960s, Cuba established close ties with Luis Augusto Turcios Lima, an advocate of communist revolution through guerrilla warfare and organised the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) in 1962. He supported the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*), URNG-MAIZURNG, an umbrella organisation representing the Guatemalan poor, which became a political party after the Civil War. In retaliation Guatemala severed ties with Cuba until 1996. In 2009, Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom gave Fidel Castro the Order of Quetzal, one of the highest honours in Guatemala. Cuban president Raul Castro accepted the award on behalf of his brother.

On the 27th April 2022, Prime Minister of Belize, John Briceño, and the First Secretary of the Communist Party and president of Cuba, Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, signed a Joint Communiqué strengthening the bilateral ties between the two Caribbean countries, marking the 27th Anniversary of establishing Cuba and Belize diplomatic relations, deepening their historic bonds of friendship and cooperation. Briceño reiterated Belize's unwavering support to end the illegal and unjust economic and financial blockade imposed by the US on Cuba.

In 2021 Belize had sent food, sanitation and hygiene products to Cuba, valued at BZ$200,000, a large sum for the poor country. Cuba had earlier sent a medical brigade to help Belize fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. Both countries have Afro-descendants making African cultures a part of their multi-culturalism. Hundreds of Belizeans have graduated in medicine from Cuban universities and thousands of Cuban Doctors have worked in Belize's hospitals and clinics.

The relations between Belize and Cuba go beyond diplomacy and trade links, as Cuba has always supported unconditionally the independence and sovereignty of Belize.

On the death of Fidel Castro in 2016, the Prime Minister of Belize, Dean Barrow, expressed his condolences through a diplomatic note to Raul Castro:

> "This note is penned with a heavy heart. You have lost your brother, the Cuban people have lost their avatar, and humanity has lost a giant for the ages. As a leader, bestriding history, Fidel proved, in unending ways, his love for the Cuban people, and all people, especially those suffering from injustice or neglect [...]. On behalf of the government and people of Belize, I, therefore, extend our most profound condolences. But we know that in death Fidel will continue to inspire. Thus, we will take comfort from his enduring legacy, from the triumph represented by his life and the unmatchable work that, together with you, and all the other heroes of the Revolution, he did for Cuba, the region, and the world."

Between 1966 and 1981, Cuba became a major player in Belize's struggle for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In 1966 British-Guatemalan talks were held in Washington DC. Later President Reagan pressured British Honduras to cede land to Guatemala, but it remained resilient with the vital support of Cuba. By 1983, Fidel's allies in the George Price Cabinet, Assad Shoman and Said Musa, were defeated by the PUP's right wing. On 16th January 2019, Prime Minister Barrow visited Cuba on the invitation of President Díaz-Canel, to pay tribute to José Martí, a national hero of pre-revolution Cuba. The official meeting commemorated the little-known history of Cuba's support for Belize during the height of the Cold War, against UK and US imperialism.

Further Reading: Assad Shoman. *Guatemala's Claim to Belize: The Definitive History.* Belize, 2018.

Placencia, Belize Photo: Sasha India – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Satellite image of Sarstoon Island in the south of Belize. Photo: United States Geological Survey – Public Domain.

The relations between Belize and Cuba go beyond diplomacy and trade links, as Cuba has always supported unconditionally the independence and sovereignty of Belize.

CHINA EMBARKS ON THE NEW JOURNEY OF THE SECOND CENTENARY GOAL

Dingbin LONG
Consul General of China in Perth

A political slogan on the wall in Longhua District, it reads: "Holding high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics for the Xi Jinping Era. We should fully implement the of spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress." Photo: Huangdan2060 – creativecommons.org (CC0 1.0) Public Domain.

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) came to a successful conclusion October 22, 2022 in Beijing. The congress elected a new CPC Central Committee and a new Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), and passed the Resolution on the Report of the 19th CPC Central Committee, the Resolution on the Work Report of the 19th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and the Resolution on the Revised Constitution of the Communist Party of China. The congress called on the whole Party, the entire military, and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to stay closely rallied around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, to keep in mind that empty talk will do nothing for our country and only solid work will make it flourish, to maintain firm confidence, unite as one, forge ahead with resolve, and to strive in unity to build a modern socialist country in all respects, and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts.

The five years (2017-2022) since the 19th National Congress have been truly momentous and extraordinary. The Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core fully assessed the situation, upheld fundamental principles, broke new ground, and exhibited its courage and ability to fight. It has united and led the whole Party, the entire military, and all people across the country in effectively responding to grave, complex international developments and a series of immense risks and challenges, in solving a great number of problems that had long gone unsolved, in securing many accomplishments that hold major future significance, and in achieving impressive advances in the cause of the Party and the country. With great effort and determination, China has thus steadily advanced Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the new era.

The past decade (2012-2022) since the Party's 18th National Congress marked three major events of great immediate importance and profound historical significance for the cause of the Party and the people: embraced the centenary of the Communist Party of China; ushered in a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics; eradicated absolute poverty and finished building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, thus completing the First Centenary Goal. The great transformation over the past ten years of the new era marks a milestone in the history of the Party, of the People's Republic of China, of reform and opening up, of the development of socialism, and of the development of the Chinese nation. The Communist Party of China has tempered itself through revolution and grown stronger. The Chinese people are filled with a stronger sense of history and initiative. The rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is now on an irreversible historical course. Scientific socialism is brimming with renewed vitality in 21st-century China.

This great transformation is owed to the entire Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups who have striven in unity under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, and under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. The Party has established Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and established the guiding role. This reflects the common will of the Party, the military, and the Chinese people, and it is of decisive significance for the cause of the Party and the country in the new era and for advancing the historic process of national rejuvenation. To advance socialism with Chinese characteristics on the new journey in the new era, it is most critical to develop a deep understanding of the decisive significance of the establishment of Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; to strengthen our consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership; to stay confident in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics; to uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and uphold the Party Central Committee's authority and its centralised, unified leadership; and to be more purposeful in closely following the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core in thinking, political stance, and action.

Since the 18th National Congress, the CPC has made theoretical explorations and innovations with great courage. It has, from an entirely new perspective, deepened its understanding of the laws that underlie governance by a communist party, the development of socialism, and the evolution of human society. It has achieved major theoretical innovations, which are encapsulated in Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. The main elements of this theory are summarised in the 10 affirmations, the 14 commitments, and the 13 areas of achievement that were articulated at the 19th National Congress and the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Party Central Committee.

The central task of the Communist Party of China will be to lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in a concerted effort to realise the Second Centenary Goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernisation. The two-step strategic plan has been adopted to meet the Second Centenary Goal through firstly, realising the socialist modernisation from 2020 through 2035; secondly, building China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious, from 2035 through the middle of this century. The next five years will form a crucial basis for the efforts to build a modern socialist country in all respects.

Chinese modernisation is socialist modernisation pursued under the leadership of the Communist Party of China; it contains elements that are common to the modernisation processes of all countries, but it is more characterised by features that are unique to the Chinese context; it is the modernisation of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity and nature, and of peaceful development. The essential requirements of Chinese modernisation are as follows: upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China and socialism with Chinese characteristics, pursuing high-quality development, developing whole-process people's democracy, enriching the people's cultural lives, achieving common prosperity for all, promoting building a human community with a shared future, and creating a new form of human advancement.

Over the past century, the Party has rallied all Chinese people and led them in securing great successes in the new-democratic revolution, in socialist revolution and construction, in reform, opening up, and socialist modernisation, and it has led them to usher in a brand new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The achievements over the past century have been truly remarkable, and after more than a hundred years on from its founding, the Party is still in its prime.

The Party is fully confident and capable of creating newer and even greater miracles on the journey of the new era, miracles that will amaze and create more opportunities for the world. All Party members will stay closely rallied around the Central Committee and hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics; remaining confident in China's history, exhibiting greater historical initiative, showing the courage needed to fight and having the mettle needed to win; staying focused, determinedly forging ahead, uniting, and leading all Chinese people to strive to fulfill the goals and tasks set out at this national congress. ✪

The Party is fully confident and capable of creating newer and even greater miracles on the journey of the new era.

COP27 YIELDS "HISTORIC" DEAL ON CLIMATE LOSS AND DAMAGE

In what has been hailed as a "breakthrough" achievement, negotiators from nearly 200 countries agreed to set up a "loss and damage" fund meant to help vulnerable countries cope with climate disasters after two weeks of negotiations at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Experts said that although the landmark agreement will serve as a powerful response to developing countries' requests, it will only come into effect as long as rich countries honour their promises, rather than making another sham promise just to quell poorer countries' criticism.

Photo: UN climate change COP27 Peoples Plenary KiaraWorth – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

China, a strong supporter of establishing a loss and damage mechanism, has been actively helping developing countries tackle climate issues via the South-South cooperation. But faced with pressure from the US and other countries for China to contribute to the loss and damage mechanism, experts said that the onus is first and foremost on rich countries, the main contributors to historical global warming, to pay for the mechanism, and that China will not be coerced or pressured on climate issues.

After days of intense negotiations that stretched into early morning in Sharm El-Sheikh, countries at the COP27 reached agreement on an outcome that established a funding mechanism to compensate vulnerable nations for loss and damage from climate-induced disasters.

The deal calls for a committee with representatives from twenty-four countries to work over the next year to figure out exactly what form the fund should take, which countries should contribute and where the money should go. Many details, however, remain vague, media reported.

"This COP has taken an important step towards justice. I welcome the decision to establish a loss and damage fund and to operationalise it in the coming period," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a video message issued from the conference venue in Egypt, underscoring that the voices of those on frontlines of the climate crisis must be heard.

"The announcement offers hope to vulnerable communities all over the world who are fighting for their survival from climate stress," said Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's minister for climate change. The agenda item was proposed by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of seventy-seven coalitions of developing nations and China during talks in Bonn, Germany, earlier this year.

Chinese scientists praised the deal as "historic." Under the backdrop of the ever more intense climate crisis, this agreement serves as a powerful response, and a political signal to developing nations' requests on the climate crisis, which can help alleviate the global damage from the crisis," Li Shuo, a senior global policy adviser at Greenpeace China who is attending the summit, told the *Global Times*.

The creation of a loss and damage fund was almost derailed by disputes that ran into the dawn hours of Sunday (20/11/2022) over other elements of a broader agreement, including how deeply countries should cut their emissions and whether to include language that explicitly called for a phase out of fossil fuels, including coal, natural gas and oil. By 5 AM in Egypt, negotiators were still debating those other measures, media reported.

The US and other wealthy countries had long blocked the idea, for fear that they could be held legally liable for historical greenhouse gas emissions and the colossal payment they could face.

Although agreement on the mechanism was reached, Yang Fuqiang, a research fellow at Peking University's Research Institute for Energy is pessimistic that the promise will translate into meaningful action by the rich countries.

"Developed countries are constantly grilled on why they have defaulted on their previous promises of transferring $100 billion per year to vulnerable states hit by increasingly severe climate-linked impacts and asked to be responsible for their historical emissions. So maybe signing this agreement is just to quell developing countries from firing criticisms at them," Yang told the *Global Times*.

"It is almost predictable that US and other rich countries are just making empty promises," Yang said.

A decade ago, the US, European Union and other wealthy emitters pledged to mobilize $100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020 to help poorer countries shift to clean energy and adapt to future climate risks through measures like building sea walls. They are still falling short by tens of billions of dollars annually.

Yang pointed out that details of how to carry out the mechanism are not hammered down, nor is how to quantify the damage caused by climate crisis, which will make it difficult for the mechanism to work and leaves room for rich countries to maneuver.

"Moving forward into discussions [on] the details of the [loss and damage] fund, we need to ensure that the countries and corporations most responsible for the climate crisis make the biggest contribution. That means new and additional finance for developing countries and climate vulnerable communities not just for loss and damage, but for adaptation and mitigation too," Yeb Sao, Executive Director, Greenpeace Southeast Asia and Head of the Greenpeace delegation attending the COP said in a statement sent to the *Global Times*.

But the US and the European Union are pushing for assurances that China will eventually contribute to the fund – and that China would not be eligible to receive money from it, *The New York Times* reported.

When asked whether the US has informed him that China should contribute to the loss and damage fund, Xie Zhenhua, China's special envoy on climate change said that China supports the loss and damage mechanism. He said the solution is simple, that is common but differentiated responsibility.

"China has no responsibility [on loss and damage], but China is willing to help developing countries raise their adaptability by South-South cooperation and China is already doing that," Xie said.

China is still a developing country and it has been offering help to developing countries via multiple international channels, said Yang. "We stick to common but differentiated responsibility, and we will never be coerced or pressured by Western countries on climate issues."

A CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATION

Xie told reporters that Chinese and US negotiators had "very candid, friendly, positive and constructive" negotiation at COP27, and the result is very constructive, but will only be made public after formal negotiations.

Xie said that formal talks, or even face-to-face discussion between Beijing and Washington, will be conducted after COP27 is concluded.

The fact that Xie's US counterpart John Kerry tested positive for COVID-19 has hampered the two countries' discussions at the summit.

Climate negotiations between the two countries resumed after the meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit last week in Bali, Indonesia. The two presidents agreed that the two countries will jointly work for the success of COP27.

Scientists are overwhelmingly praising the resumption of talks between the world's two biggest economies as a positive sign, and the final negotiations could yield positive results to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"The US is denounced by other Western countries as it lacks efficient efforts in tackling global warming, and flip flops on its climate promises. Thus it strives to cooperate with China, because Beijing wins wide support among developing countries on addressing climate change," Yang said.

However, to show sincerity over the cooperation, Washington must abandon its previous crackdown on China's clean energy industry, such as on photovoltaic products, Yang warned.

Global Times ✪

"It is almost predictable that US and other rich countries are just making empty promises."

NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Miranda Lynch

On 29th October 1983, 550,000 people gathered in the middle of the Hague to protest against nuclear weapons being placed in the Netherlands. This is still the biggest protest the country has ever seen, and was a clear mandate against nuclear weapons. As a result of this and other mass protests, no nuclear-armed cruise missiles would be stationed in the Netherlands.

This sounds like a success story: a country successfully resisting their NATO overlords when it comes to nuclear weapons. However, the government had already secretly agreed in the 1960s to the placement of a different kind of nuclear weapons. While this was an open secret, it would not be confirmed until Wikileaks released a confidential cable in 2009, which also confirmed the placement of nuclear weapons in Belgium and Germany.

It is now believed that twenty-two nuclear weapons of type B61-12 are stationed in the Volkel air base in the southern part of the country. These are smaller nuclear weapons with "only" a 50-kiloton TNT yield, or three times the power of the American bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. A nuclear weapons expert, Hans Kristensen, expects that 9,000 people would die if something goes wrong with the weapons. And, because they are owned by the United States, it is the Americans who decide whether or not they will be used.

Declassified maps from the USSR showed Volkel as a target, confirming that nuclear weapons don't protect but rather make anyone storing them a potential victim of their destructive power.

This situation is relevant to the present time, with Finland and Sweden on the verge of joining NATO. Both countries have seen popular opposition to nuclear weapons. While the leaders of both countries have put out statements declaring that they oppose the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory, the history of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany shows that public opposition counts for nothing when it comes to the Americans placing nuclear weapons on their land. This is especially concerning for Finland, which shares a 1300-kilometre border with nuclear-armed Russia.

The media have also reported recently that Poland is in talks with the United States about joining the nuclear-sharing programme, officially putting American nuclear weapons on Polish soil. At the beginning of October, President Zelenskyi of Ukraine even seemed to call for a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Russia. While his office has clarified his remarks since, it shows how tense the present situation is, and how easily the situation can escalate.

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous technology that humanity has ever created. Their only use in the theatre of war – the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – resulted in approximately 250,000 deaths, the vast majority of whom were civilians. In 1962 the United States threatened a full-scale escalation because nuclear weapons were positioned in Cuba, close to their borders. Yet in 2022 they don't seem to mind doing the exact same to Russia. Sweden, Finland, and Poland might feel protected, yet NATO nukes make them not just potentially complicit in widespread nuclear destruction but also the first target should things go wrong.

In 1983 the message of the Dutch protesters was: "We have made weapons that caused us to stand on the edge of a cliff. We can't afford another mistake, or the whole world will be destroyed." Now that nuclear war is looming again, every communist, socialist and anyone with an ounce of peace and self-preservation in their body should resolutely oppose every development that brings us closer to nuclear armageddon.

Socialist Voice ✪

Graphic: George Hodan – Public Domain Dedication (CC0 1.0)

JAPAN: JCP DEMANDS THAT GOV'T PREVENT MASS LAYOFFS OF PART-TIME RESEARCHERS

The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) on 14th November made an urgent demand to the government to take countermeasures against a possible situation in which many part-time researchers at national universities and research institutions will be forced out of their jobs at the end of March 2023.

Mass layoffs of researchers will undoubtedly spur the decline in Japan's research quality and capacity.

The Labour Contract Act obliges employers to offer indefinite contracts to fixed-term employees after five years of service, and after ten years of service for fixed-term researchers.

According to the Education Ministry, 4,489 limited-term researchers at national research institutes will complete ten years of service in April 2023. A possible mass termination of their contracts at the end of March 2023 in order to shirk away from the legal stipulation is becoming the issue.

JCP Diet members Kira Yoshiko (House of Councilors) and Miyamoto Takeshi (House of Representatives) visited Education Minister Nagaoka Keiko and handed her a written request demanding that the government: instruct national universities and research institutions to refrain from terminating the contracts of nearly 4,500 researchers; earmark a budget to protect researchers' employment; and increase the number of open-ended full-time posts at national institutions.

Nagaoka told them that the ministry sent a notice which states that a termination of contracts before the 10-year employment period is "not desirable in the light of the purpose of the law" to each national research institute on 7th November.

Japan Press Weekly ✪

CALIFORNIA LABOR UNITED IN SOLIDARITY WITH 48,000 STRIKING UC ACADEMIC WORKERS

Marilyn Bechtel

As some 48,000 student academic workers represented by three United Auto Workers locals launched an open-ended strike across the University of California's (UC) ten campuses on the 14th November, unions throughout the state were declaring their solidarity.

After more than a year of bargaining over issues including low wages and other compensation, lack of job security, and the university's repeated violations of labour law, the instructors, teaching assistants, researchers, tutors, and readers voted to strike by ninety-eight per cent earlier this month.

In a statement issued as the system-wide action began, the California Labor Federation announced it had granted the academic workers statewide strike sanction, with the support of all its 1,200 affiliate unions and two million members.

"California Labor is united," the federation's Executive Secretary-Treasurer Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher declared. "We stand alongside the dedicated academic workers who are so critical to the teaching and learning environment at UC. It is outrageous that these workers make poverty wages at some of the wealthiest institutions in our state. We call on the University of California to do the right thing and agree to a fair contract and we will be out on the picket lines until that happens."

The Labor Federation said all the unions at the University of California, including the State Building and Construction Trades Council, supported the strike, and Teamsters Joint Councils 7 and 42 have issued strike sanction so their members can honour the academic workers' picket lines.

That labour solidarity was on full display as upwards of 2,000 student workers and their supporters, holding their signs high, packed into the UC Berkeley campus' Sproul Plaza for a rally on the first morning of the strike.

Bargaining committee member Jess Banks, a graduate student researcher at UC Berkeley's mathematics department, set the stage.

"A fair contract means living wages, real fair wages that address the cost of housing here in the Bay and across California," he told the crowd. "A fair contract means employment security – no one has to wonder whether they're going to have a job next term, next year, next summer. A fair contract means childcare benefits for our working parents."

Alameda Labor Council President Keith Brown, who is also president of the Oakland Education Association, told the strikers the labour council and the OEA "have your back. We know what it means to go on strike, to fight for workers' rights. UC must come to the table and meet all the demands of this strike."

Brown was joined by Liz Ortega, executive secretary-treasurer of the Alameda Labor Council and newly-elected California Assembly member, who declared that in her new role as a legislator, she will "have the power to represent you and to hold UC accountable."

Jason Rabinowitz, president of Teamsters Joint Council 7, which represents 100,000 Teamsters in northern California and northern Nevada, told the strikers, "Seeing you stand together and demonstrate this strength is inspiring to all of us." Rabinowitz, who is also secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 2010, added, "This university is built on a model of exploiting the work, underpaying for your work, and it warms my heart to see you coming together across the state, saying, 'We're not going to take it anymore. We're going to demand to be paid what we're worth.'"

Rosie Rodriguez of AFSCME Local 3299, which represents some 27,000 service, patient care technical and skilled craft workers at UC, declared, "I'm so proud of you guys, because I know how it feels to be a worker and not to be considered. Thank you very much for this fight." Rodriguez, a senior custodian at UC Berkeley, led rally participants in the chant, "When we strike, We win!"

Dan Russell, an information technology worker at UC Berkeley and president of University Professional and Technical Employees-CWA, which represents some 18,000 UC research and technical workers and part-time faculty, thanked the academic workers for "building the kind of democratic union that can shut down UC, organize new workers, and build the kind of life we all deserve as UC workers."

Photo: www.fairucnow.org/press/

The day's final speaker, bargaining committee member Tanzil Chowdhury, a third-year graduate research assistant at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, told the academic workers their action is "historic, because for the first time, all of us literally are the ones making history. We are taking the reins of our own destiny and taking control of our lives and our workplace."

With that, the strikers hoisted their signs high again, as they joined in singing the labor movement anthem, "Solidarity Forever."

The 48,000 strikers are represented by UAW Locals 2865, 5810 and UC Student Researchers United-UAW. Among their specific demands:

- Minimum salaries of $54,000/year for all graduate student workers, $70,000 for post-doctoral workers, a fourteen per cent pay hike for academic researchers.
- Affordable housing, transportation benefits to aid affordable commuting, and no out-of-state tuition fees for academic researchers from outside California.
- Greater support for workers who are parents, including childcare subsidies, free participation in UC childcare programs, and family health coverage.

As the week progresses, picket lines are continuing at UC campuses throughout the state.

People's World

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Responsibility for electoral comment is taken by **T Pearson,**
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

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

Also stop other blockades like Venezuela and Gaza.

4:15 pm Thursday December 17
50 Miller Street North Sydney

UK: ABOLISHING THE HOUSE OF LORDS – THE DEVIL WOULD BE IN THE DETAIL

It is seldom that Keir Starmer can be commended for taking a democratic initiative.

His leadership of the Labour Party has been characterised by an unyielding authoritarianism evocative of the worst days of the cold war seventy years ago.

Just last week the president of Unison became the latest left-winger to fall foul of his expanding purge of the party, for the sin of liking on social media articles produced by a proscribed organisation.

Nor has Starmer been any more liberal in his approach to the state generally. He has sought to shield undercover police officers from having to answer for their crimes, to indemnify British troops for abuses committed overseas and to back draconian sentences for peaceful protesters.

All of this marks Starmer out as a loyal servant of the state, and his main service lies in making the Labour Party its obedient instrument once more.

However, the Labour leader has indicated – unofficially of course – that he would move to abolish the House of Lords in the event of a majority Labour government and replace it with an elected second chamber.

Of course, any welcome for this pledge must come with considerable caveats – above all, Starmer's record of sticking to any vaguely radical commitment has been abysmal to the point where his word is virtually worthless.

Pausing such merited scepticism for a moment, the abolition of the House of Lords would be a significant democratic advance. To describe such an initiative as overdue would be a considerable understatement. The famous dustbin of history has been awaiting the House of Lords for a century at least.

Sending the peers packing would eliminate one of the most obvious feudal accretions in the country's constitutional arrangements. It would not change the class nature of the state in the least but it would expand the democratic space.

One happy by-product would be ending the temptation to seek a peerage at the end of a career in the labour movement which afflicts too many trade union leaders and Labour MPs, including some who should know better.

House of Lords Chamber. Photo: www.flickr.com/photos/uk_parliament/ (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Embracing privilege and patronage, not to mention unaccountable legislative authority, is never a good look and risks stimulating cynicism in a movement now enjoying a resurgence in spirit.

Starmer's leaked plans speak of an elected second chamber based on the nations and regions to succeed the Lords.

That would be on the right lines, the more so if it formed past of an overall package of progressive federalism, guaranteeing new powers to Scotland and Wales as well as a systematic transfer of authority to English regions, something now evolving with the "metro mayor" system.

The devil of course will always be in the details. Too many elected chambers in other capitalist democracies are rigged in their composition to constitute a barrier to radical change. The US Senate is the prime example.

A second chamber must be genuinely representative of the popular will, and its system of election should reflect that, even if it should not acquire powers to block the will of the House of Commons.

Starmer's model will doubtless tend towards the constitutional conservatism championed by Gordon Brown most recently. That would squander the opportunity.

The labour movement needs to fight for a programme of democratic renewal that would empower devolved bodies to intervene economically and industrially in the interests of working people, with a second chamber that guarantees the free development of each part of the country through the development of all.

Through such gains the power of capital may be better confronted and the working class can develop the sense of its own potential to rule.

Morning Star

LULA CALLS FOR THE DEFEAT OF THE EXTREME RIGHT IN BRAZIL

The president-elect of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, warned that despite his victory in the last elections in the South American country, the extreme right that supports the outgoing president Jair Bolsonaro, is still present and must be defeated through peace.

Lula da Silva held a meeting at the University Institute of Lisbon with the Brazilian community in an event organised by the core of the Workers' Party (PT).

The president-elect, who takes office on 1st January, 2023, said that "bolsonarismo is still alive and we have to defeat it [...]. We do not want persecution [...] violence. We want a country that lives in peace."

He urged to "defeat" Bolsonarismo "without using against them the methods they used" against the left.

In the meeting, the president-elect stressed his commitment to Brazilian education in the face of the disaster in the matter in Bolsonaro's administration.

In addition to referring to the situation of millions of Brazilians who go hungry, a situation that should not happen because the South American nation is the "third largest food producer in the world," Lula expressed that he will reverse the situation and blamed the outgoing president for not guaranteeing access to food.

The meeting takes place after the leader's visit to the COP27 Summit held in Egypt, being his first trip to Lisbon after his election as president.

The head of state-elect was received by the President of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, and by the Prime Minister, António Costa, as a symbol of the resumption of relations weakened during Bolsonaro's mandate.

teleSUR

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