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International Women's Day, 8 March

A HISTORY OF STRUGGLE

Anna Pha

More than half of all workers are employed in industries that are dominated by one gender. The lowest paying ones are female-dominated industries, such as aged care, community work, early childhood education, primary school teaching, office work, and nursing. Women's work is more likely to be precarious and subject to vulnerabilities such as sexual harassment.

The average annual pay difference between men and women is $26,393. Women's participation in the workforce has increased to 62.2 per cent but still lags that of men at 71.1 per cent.

Women have come a long way over the past century or so but still have far to go in achieving equality with men, let alone full emancipation. Just under 100 years ago an ACTU Congress was debating whether men should let their wives work! In the mid-1970s, in the debate at an ACTU Congress on the adoption of a Working' Women's Charter, an amendment supporting the right of married women to unemployment benefits and abortion rights was defeated.

The struggle for women's rights dates back to the early 20th century and before that in the penal colonies. South Australia was the first colony where women won the right to vote in 1894 after a 10-year struggle led by the suffragettes.

Justice Higgins of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court, in what is known as the Harvester Decision, set a 'living' or 'family' wage in 1907. It was supposed to provide an unskilled labourer with the means to support his wife and three children, to feed, house, and clothe them. This became the basis of the national minimum wage system in Australia. In the same decision the female basic wage was set at 54 per cent of the male's.

STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL PAY

Until World War II, assumptions of a male bread winner and female domestic carer subjected women to economic dependence and to male authority. The idea that a wife was a husband's property was reinforced by the church.

During World War II, women replaced the soldiers going to war, performing 'men's work.' Their wages were kept down to 60-90 per cent of the male wage for performing the same job. They were only paid equal wages if their work threatened the position of men.

In 1941, the ACTU adopted a policy affirming "the right of women to earn their living in industry, the professions, and the public services, and ... the legal right to equal occupational rates based on the nature of their work, and not on the sex of the worker."

When the men returned after the war, most of the women were forced to either return to low-paid 'women's work' or leave the workforce.

MARRIED WOMEN

In the public service married women could only be employed as temporary staff, which restricted their promotion opportunities. Women were forced to step down or become temporary when they got married. This did not change until 1966.

Married women were also discriminated against in superannuation. Permanent staff in the public sector could not join the same scheme as other permanent employees. They had to access an inferior scheme that was not much more than a savings account – minus interest if they quit before retirement age.

This discrimination continued until former Treasurer Paul Keating introduced the Superannuation Guarantee in 1992.

ILO CONVENTION

The International Labour Organisation's Equal Remuneration Convention came into force in May 1953. It stated that men and women were entitled to "equal remuneration ... for work of equal value ... with a view to providing a classification of jobs without regard to sex."

During the 1950s and '60s both men and women in Australia participated in protests calling on the government to ratify the Convention and make equal pay the law in Australia. Employer bodies, the Coalition, and right-wing groups who thought a woman's place was in the home, fought hard to prevent equal pay or ratification.

The Whitlam Labor government ratified the Convention s well as the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women in December 1974.

The Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (ACAC), which applied nationally, set the general female award minimum wage at 85 per cent of the male wage in 1969 in a case brought by the Meat Employees' Union. The 'breadwinner' component of the male wage remained.

A review in 1972 noted that only 18 per cent of working women were assessed as performing work equal to that of a man, meaning the majority of working women did not benefit from the 1969 decision.

Continued on page 2

Etching by Rini Templeton

9

Book Review
Radical Housewives

12

Palestine: no let-up in genocide

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Guardian

Issue 2089 4 March 2024

Brad's bad day

You've probably heard about Brad Banduccio's train-wreck interview on a recent episode of *Four Corners*. The Woolworths CEO put on a worker's shirt so as to look relatable, did his interview in a store, as though he'd just finished a hard day's stacking and packing, and then flounced off when he was told some of his comments had to stay on the record. After presumably being quietly screamed at by his communications team, he sulkily came back. He resigned shortly after the interview went to air. Brad's salary was 15 times that of the Prime Minister, so he doesn't have to worry about where he'll get his t-shirts from now that he can't use Woolies uniforms. The interview was a disgrace for Brad and will be studied by media types for years to come. The show was instructive for the rest of us.

Capitalism leads to monopoly, and Australia's concentrated supermarket sector is a good example. Coles and Woolworths are a duopoly, with around 65 per cent of the grocery market. To the surprise of absolutely nobody who shops, 'Colesworth' as they are sometimes nicknamed, have used this power to exploit customers, making profits far in excess of inflation.

'Colesworth' is also a near 'monopsony,' meaning that they are almost the only buyer for a lot of suppliers. Stories of farmers having to pay bribes for shelf positions, or to get price rises through are common.

As the largest employers in the country, the duopoly are powerful and exploitative employers. Union members have walked off the job several times last years, because they want a living wage. After the *Four Corners* interview revealed that some Coles staff were made to work in 35 degree heat, staff were provided with "chilled necklaces." During the pandemic, workers bore the brunt of public frustration, and had to fight to get adequate protective gear.

After these exposés, what's usually suggested is more competition. Perhaps the ACCC should have more powers. Maybe the government should help more supermarkets move into Australia. Competition can lead to cheaper products, but it can just as easily lead to more creative ways of ripping people off, as anyone who's ever tried to compare telephone plans or cereals will tell you. The point of competition for businesses in a capitalist society is to win that competition, not to make things better for suppliers or customers, and certainly not for workers. Companies are duty bound to put profits first – it's a duty to their shareholders.

What's needed is a people-centred system – one that is owned by the people, and one that works for people, not a system that exploits workers, consumers and small suppliers on behalf of investors. A people-centred system would mean that the people who supply our food would be obliged to help people, not to make the absolute maximum profit they can get away with. A system like this is possible. It's called socialism.

The *Four Corners* episode on Coles and Woolworths is well worth a look to see what big companies will get away with when they can. Brad Banduccio has resigned, but there will be more scandals like this. It's called capitalism. Let's change it.

IWD, 8 March

A HISTORY OF STRUGGLE

Continued from page 1

In 1973 the Commission eventually granted an equal minimum wage to all Australians, regardless of their sex, and in 1974 the 'breadwinner' component of a male wage was removed in recognition of the fact that more Australian women were providing for their families.

Since then, the struggle has continued with further decisions still failing many working women. Adding to discrimination is Australia's highly segregated workforce, with 'men's' work on average higher paid and more likely to offer overtime.

There are a number of barriers holding women back from entering the workforce or working longer hours. One is the lack of affordable early childhood education and childcare. Another is that caring responsibilities, such as children, parents, or partners, tend to fall on the shoulders of women.

"DEATHS OF DESPAIR"

Legal services, refuges and other women's services had their funding slashed under the Coalition and the situation has hardly improved under Labor which is pruning social spending to fund war preparations.

Women fleeing domestic violence with their children are all too often turned away from refuges because of lack of funding and accommodation. Some return to danger, others end up homeless.

Guardian Australia's recent investigation found that suicide and overdose are major drivers of deaths among those experiencing homelessness. They accounted for one-fifth and one-third of deaths respectively.

Hundreds of women experiencing homelessness have died – at an average age of 40.1 years for women (45.2 for men) – over the period of 2010-2020.

Homelessness services describe older women as the "new face of homelessness."

For single women, these issues are compounded. The maximum social security payment for a full-time carer is $1,096.70.

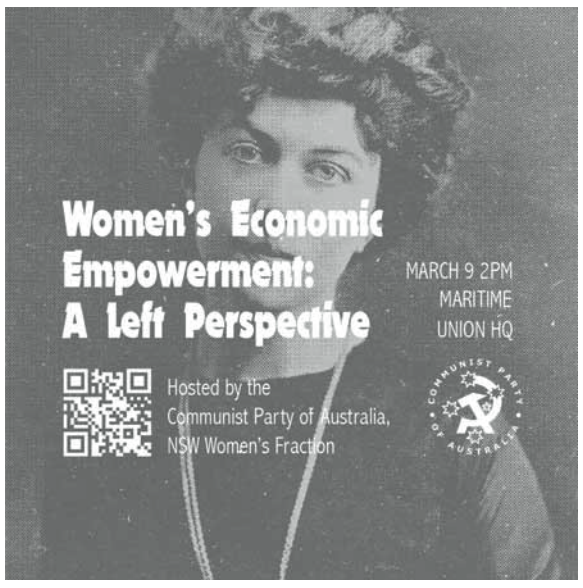
Today, shockingly, one woman a week on average is murdered by her current or former partner, thousands are subjected domestic and family violence. An average of 13 women a day are hospitalised due to family and domestic violence.

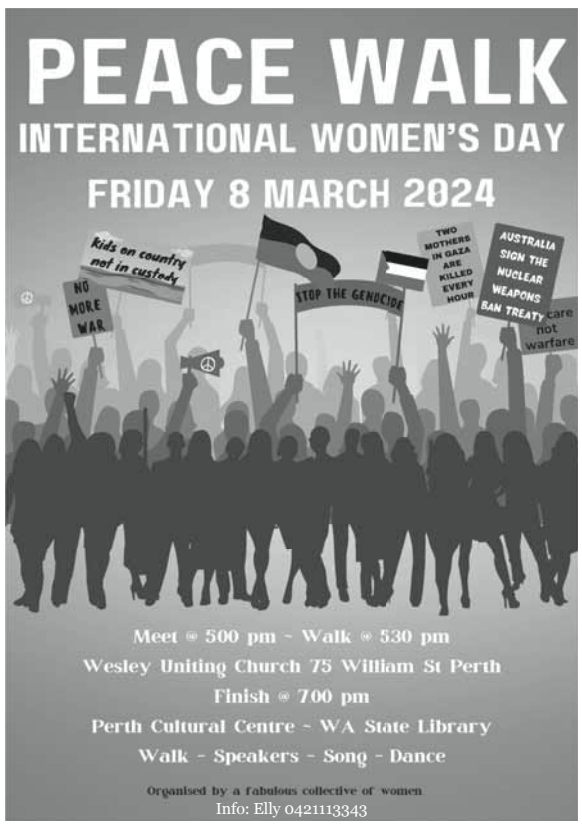
The Fair Work Commission is now required to base its wage decisions on 'equal pay for work of equal value.' In an aged care work value case last year under the new provisions, with the support of the Labor government, the Health Services Union and the Nurses and Midwifery Federation, aged care workers received a 15 per cent wage rise.

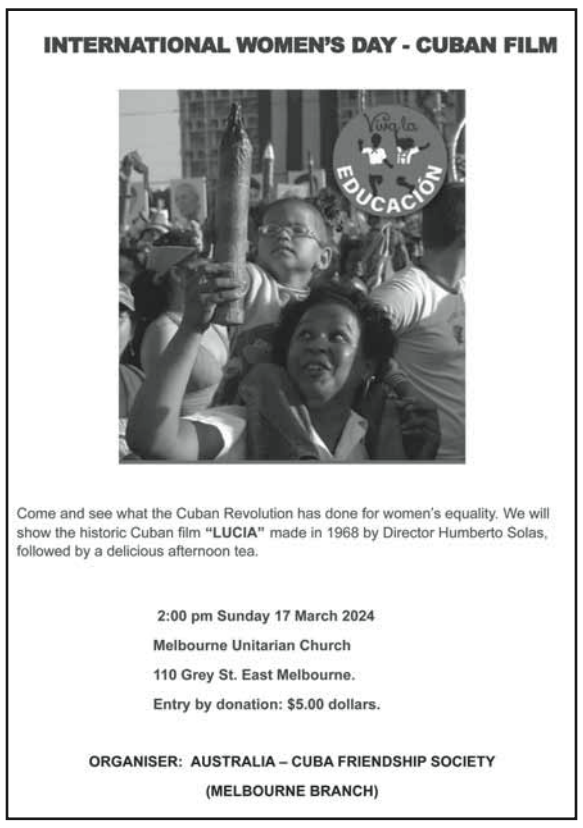
The first IWD was held in 1911 with demands for women's rights such as to work and vote, peace and socialism. Peace and socialism have dropped from the agenda in countries such as Australia.

Women have come a long way but there is still much further to go if they are to achieve economic equality with men, physical security, and empowerment.

Mere equality with men, equality in exploitation by capitalists, will not alone achieve emancipation. That requires changing the socio-economic system to socialism – a struggle that can only be won by women and men fighting alongside each other. ✪







Something to say? **Write to the Editor!**

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The House of Representatives & The Senate, Australian Parliament, Canberra, ACT.

Open Letter

29 February 2024

Dear members of the House of Representatives and Senate

Re: Pres Bongbong Marcos addressing the Australian Parliament

The Australia Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines is appalled that President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr. of the Philippines will address the Australian Parliament on 29 February 2024. His presence in the home of Australian democracy is an affront to justice, democracy, and human rights.

Under President Marcos Jr human rights abuses abound in the Philippines, corruption is worsening (from already excessive levels), and the perversion of the justice system in fact promotes injustice. State terrorism is promoted through the so-called *Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020*.

795 political prisoners face trumped up charges and a dysfunctional system incapable of delivering justice, not only in a timely manner, but not at all. Peasants, workers, human rights defenders, trade unionists, environment defenders, and community and health workers suffer the same fate as high-profile victims such as ex-Senator and Human Rights Commission Chairperson Leila de Lima – years of detention sanctioned and extended by the failed system of justice in the Philippines.

The *Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020* [ATA] (Republic Act 11479) is a failure of legislative drafting, which sadly, was aided by the last Australian government. The definition of terrorism drawn from overseas examples is vague and supposed safeguards for legitimate political dissent are ineffective. The ATA "Implementing Rules and Regulations" (IRR) permit unfettered tagging of legitimate activities, speech and organisations as 'terrorist' at the whim of government, the Armed Forces and the National Police. The Anti-Terrorism Council's power is not constrained in the ATA or the IRR. The system of justice is incapable of delivering remedies for individuals and organisations attacked under the ATA.

Crimes against International Humanitarian Law are committed in the name of "anti-terrorism". Indiscriminate bombing of rural communities abounds such as that in Buhalan, Kalinga province in March 2023, and in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental on 5 August 2023. Extrajudicial killings continue with an established pattern beginning with terrorist tagging of legitimate organisations and individuals by the Anti-Terrorism Council, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) or military personnel. Death threats then arise from "unknown" sources. An assassination in broad daylight takes place. Authorities and the justice system have not been able to bring any perpetrators to justice.

The Marcos Jr administration has undermined justice, democracy and the rights of the Filipino people. It is a mistake for the Australian government to accord Mr Marcos Jr. the high honour of addressing the Australian Parliament. He will try to cover up injustice in his country, and his family's legacy of corruption. Shame! on the Albanese government for allowing this to happen.

Yours faithfully

Sr Patricia Fox, Coordinator,
Australia Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines

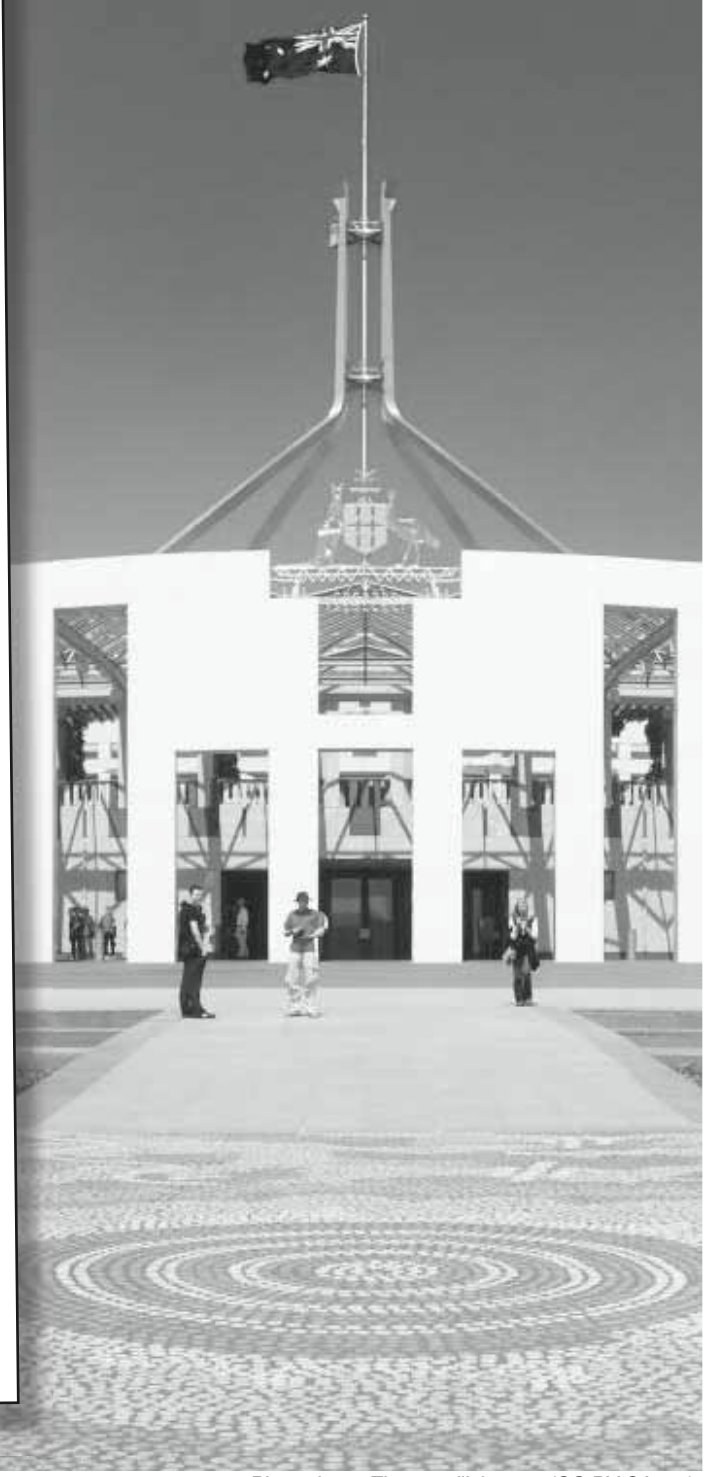

Photo: Long Zheng – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Op-Ed: Kumajayi Walker inquest

Lachlan V

This week saw Former NT Police constable Zachary Rolfe finally take the stand in the coronial inquest into the tragic shooting death of Warlpiri man, Kumajayi Walker in 2019. Following months of delays and debate relating to various other legal proceedings, Rolfe is the final witness to testify before the inquiry before final submissions in May.

The evidence he gave this week should have come as no surprise to readers of the *Guardian*. Rolfe alleged an insidious culture of racism, violence, and arrogance within the Northern Territory police. Whilst Rolfe's own conduct is abhorrent, it is clearly part of a pattern within the NT force.

Rolfe's testimony alleged the use of appallingly racist language by police officers, including those members of the Territory Response Group, and equally appalling behaviour. Whilst the specifics will not be repeated here, nor the officers' words quoted such behaviour included an annual ritual competition that denigrated Indigenous peoples. Rolfe further asserted that police force members who used such language and participated in these events were further promoted through the force, alleging that the cultural issues start at the very top. Whilst these criticisms and evidence can be seen as an attempt to divert blame for Walker's death from Rolfe himself, the violence and racism on display should not be a surprise.

These behaviours, are of course, a continuation of almost 240 years of colonial oppression which has seen First Nations peoples killed by the state, driven from their land, and disenfranchised. They are a continuation of over a century of "protection policies" which cemented near-total government control over Indigenous Australians, and saw wages, children and land rights confiscated by the state. They are a continuation of decades of settler violence, widespread racial hatred, and continuing ignorance of community values. They are a continuation of decades of government neglect, impoverished health and community services and inadequate social support.

The behaviour of the NT Police makes clear their status as an occupying force. Police forces since colonisation have largely been used to murder or incarcerate Indigenous peoples, destroy communities, and protect settler property and capitalist interests. Colonial policing has never been a solution to the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women, nor has it resulted in any substantial change in economic conditions, community safety or family cohesion. Instead, hundreds have died in custody since 1997, land rights have been revoked, human rights acts overturned and children removed at ever increasing rates.

The state continues to oppress and subjugate First Nations' peoples. Communists, and progressives of all stripes need to make First Nations' liberation a priority. This requires struggle on all fronts; in workplaces, in the unions, amongst families and friends, sporting teams and communities. Racism must be stamped out, state oppression dismantled and liberation fearlessly fought for. ✪

Victoria: RTBU show of strength

Victoria: In a show of strength, Road Train and Bus Union (RTBU) members across V/Line operations brought the network to a halt on Wednesday to advance claims in Enterprise Agreement negotiations.

The action saw stoppages from 3 am until 7 am with consequences across the state into the afternoon.

The union says members are "fed up with V/Line's poor management practices" and that they've sent a powerful message to V/Line bosses – "*we* run the network. Disrespect us at your peril!"

The action had broad impact that has been felt where it matters most. Saturated media coverage across newspapers, radio and TV news reached all Victorian regions and even the national broadcasts as the union told the story of RTBU members fighting for fairness at work.

V/Line have continuously refused to accept core union claims that tackle job security, work-life balance, and fairness of process across the organisation. Industrial action is the only language that they understand.

The union has sent big congratulations to all members and RTBU representatives involved directly in the action and those supporting the resumption of services after the action.

The RTBU will continue to stand with members as they push for the best possible agreement that ensures members get what they deserve.

V/Line management have been put on notice; start making progress towards resolving members' major issues or the campaign will escalate. Members have shown that they are disciplined in taking action.

RTBU bargaining representatives have made it clear to V/Line that they are willing and ready to bargain.

With growing patronage and major projects on the table, now is the time to lock in conditions for the future.

RTBU ✪

AWU wins $30k backpay

If anyone thinks wage theft is a thing of the past, they should think again. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) has reclaimed $30,000 for two migrant workers in Victoria. The workers were employed as cleaners in a packhouse in country Victoria, and were not paid weekend and evening penalty rates, overtime, or shift allowances. Action by an AWU organiser after one of the workers mentioned his flat hourly rate, uncovered what the organiser has called "intentional" wage theft.

Photo: rawpixel.com (Public domain).

"Everyone knows the company is dodgy", the organiser, Shenae, explained "and it's really hard for PALM [Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme] workers to understand their rights and entitlements and how the Horticulture Award works. Almost no other country in the Pacific has the same wage system with penalties and overtime."

These stories are all too common. Despite securing a minimum wage for piece-rate workers in 2021, the AWU still frequently encounters the exploitation of PALM and seasonal workers in the horticultural industry, including underpayments, excessive deductions, and overcrowded, substandard accommodation.

As well as enforcing minimum standards across the country, the AWU has pushed to strengthen the PALM scheme to provide protections and support to migrant workers. These recent changes include a minimum guaranteed 30 hours of work per week averaged over a month, a minimum weekly take-home pay of $200 a week, and a low hour safety net so that no PALM workers can be charged for their accommodation and travel if they are offered less than 20 hours of work per week.

AWU National Secretary Paul Farrow says the changes are a necessity for the horticultural industry. "Workers in Australia deserve to be paid Australian wages and entitlements," he says.

"When we welcome our neighbours in the Pacific to come and work on our farms, and pick and pack the fruit and vegetables that end up on our dinner table, we have a responsibility to provide decent wages and conditions."

"The widespread exploitation and abuse we have seen on Australian farms has got to stop, and the AWU is taking every effort to both enforce minimum standards and make the PALM scheme fairer for workers."

In Mildura, Agassi has since found a new job – that pays his full wages and entitlements. He reckons without the AWU, he'd never have known he was underpaid, and wouldn't know how to fight for his entitlements.

It's important to speak up, he says. Any horticulture worker who needs it should seek the AWU's support – and not to worry about bosses. "The union is here to help!" He says. "If you're afraid of letting your boss know you've joined the union, they'll handle everything."

"My advice? It's just join the union!"

AWU

(edited for reasons of space) ✪

NSW: More work needed on safety

Unions NSW has endorsed a recommendation to transform SafeWork into a standalone regulator following a 12-month inquiry led by former judge Robert McDougall KC.

"We endorse the government's ongoing efforts to reform and rebuild a broken system," Unions NSW Secretary, Mark Morey said. "Transforming SafeWork into an independent statutory corporation is an important step. Workers need a robust regulator that will actively keep them safe at work."

The report also calls for improvements in SafeWork's incident triaging capabilities, the responsiveness of contact centre staff, and the consolidation of SafeWork staff. These reforms are essential to building a more efficient and effective regulator.

"The establishment of a dedicated SafeWork NSW investigations and enforcement team is a long overdue reform that will significantly benefit NSW workers," Morey said.

However, Unions NSW believes important elements of SafeWork's conduct and operations are overlooked in Justice McDougall's report.

In the last two years SafeWork has been the subject of a series of concerning allegations about its slowness to act, failure to keep workplaces safe, and internal issues about bullying.

"Unions have been consistently unsupported by the regulator when advocating for safe workplaces," Morey said. "If these cultural changes are not dealt with the regulator will continue to fail to live up to expectations no matter what the structure."

Unions NSW now awaits the NSW Auditor General's report into SafeWork so both reports can be used to ensure the effectiveness of the body responsible for ensuring workplaces are safe, prosecuting breaches of safety and investigating accidents or deaths.

Unions NSW ✪

Foul Water in Yass

A Carruthers

Residents in Yass, a town outside the ACT, have been without clean water for weeks. It's ironic because the word "Yass" derives from an Indigenous word for water, Yarrh, and is how the town got its name. Boil water alerts have been issued. The cause of the problem is bacteria that has crept into the supply because of erosion and agricultural runoff. Due to floods and high rainfall, bacteria attaches itself to the mud and silt in the water.

NSW Health only found out because of the uptick in gastroenteritis cases in the town. Yass residents are outraged. Aldi is only allowing purchases of three batches of bottled water per resident.

This is not an isolated problem; rural residents in Australia regularly have to put up with failures by councils and crumbling public works.

The problem is twofold: on the one hand wild weather, climate change, erosion of rivers, and on the other hand the wider issue that in Australia we have no plans for even development of the continent, or the construction of high-quality inland cities.

The latter issue is because of the style of government and economic system we've had for decades: Australian governments and councils don't plan ahead. They don't think about the future, or ecology.

Sooner or later they're going to have to. For now it's lots of bottles and bathroom visits in Yass. ✪

Dingo bytes

Dingo has noted previously the big noise in the mass media about the anti-Russian sanctions of the US and the European Union over the operation to liberate Ukraine from Bandera fascism. We should know not only those who support sanctions, but also those who are against them. Among these are the BRICS group of countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. They account for 43 per cent of the planet's population. China is the world's number one economy in terms of GDP, India is in third place. In fact, the most of Asia does not want to take the side of the USA. The only exceptions are Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia, whose governments accommodate US bases and US forces of occupation on their territories. The leading Middle Eastern countries – Pakistan, Iran and Turkey – are not enthusiastic about the boycott which the US is trying to force on everyone (in Pakistan opposition to US plans is the reason former PM Imran Khan is in prison). The Middle East Arab countries, including those which have friendly relations with the US, have declared their neutrality. Latin America, which has suffered more than anyone at the hands of US imperialism, does not support sanctions. This applies not only to Socialist Cuba and progressive Venezuela and Nicaragua – but to the largest and most influential countries: Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. The leading African country, South Africa, is against sanctions. So where is broad international condemnation of Russia? Europe is the net loser in this. The only winner the US which is hitting not only Russia, but its long-time economic rival, the European Union.

Meanwhile in Britain, the socialist *Morning Star* reports that 5,000 refugees invited into Britain under the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme are homeless or have faced homelessness because the scheme is breaking down. According to a report by the House of Commons public accounts committee, local authorities have reported 4,890 Ukrainian households in England being homeless or coming "close to being so."

More than 140,000 Ukrainians came to Britain through the government-funded scheme after Ukraine announced its intention to have NATO base nuclear missiles in the country, triggering Russia's invasion. Many were housed by sympathetic families who sponsored them, but some became homeless when relationships broke down.

Committee chairwoman Dame Meg Hillier said: "As the war has continued, the challenge now is that thousands of Ukrainian households were homeless or close to it last year. Not only is this a huge problem but our report finds that there is no full oversight of homelessness within the scheme itself." She said the government "must ensure it has a plan to support those who have sought safety in the UK."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: The Albanese government on its path into NATO membership can now consider Australia the next candidate after Sweden's compliant government joined the imperialist military spearhead. Along with the US spy facilities here – including the biggest at Pine Gap – there would also be a NATO base with nuclear missiles aimed at China.

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Op-Ed

We need economic planning now

Economic planning? Seriously? In 2024?

Why mention planning now? In mainstream media it's a non-issue. Nowadays the word "planning," if it gets used, brings mostly negative connotations. Planning leads to 'rigidity.' We don't need planning, we need 'flexibility.'

But it's not completely nuts to speak of it. In a sense we've already had some degree of economic planning. Right here in Australia, certain things have been built using plans; railway lines, towns, cities. In fact, some degree of planning is essential for our collective existence. Not all of it's good, not all of it very forward-thinking. If you've seen the ABC satire *Utopia* you'll know what I mean.

Since the partial collapse of twentieth-century socialism and the financialisation of the globe in the 1990s, the dogma that forward-thinking economic planning only leads to economic stagnation, that it didn't work and it'll never work, that it was rigid and inflexible took root. It's not true. Economic planning *did* often work. When done well, and done scientifically, planning worked better than monopoly capitalism. It brought real benefits.

Not only is economic planning a good idea, we need *socialist* economic planning now before it's too late. We need high-quality economic plans to save us from our current predicament.

What we have now is too much chaos and not enough order, no direction and no big-picture thinking.

If we're to tackle climate change, for instance, we need plans, gigantic plans, both government planning and cooperation between governments. To get high-speed rail we'll need planning. To build enough houses we'll need planning. It's foolish to think private capital will do all this work by itself.

Economic planning is not just an option, for the future. I argue it will be a necessity, but nobody talks about it, even on the left.

What level of economic planning do we have in Australia currently? Almost none. We've got plenty of 'policies' but no plans. Take housing. The CFMEU construction union reports that we'll soon be short of a million houses (see their End the Housing Crisis campaign). Everyone agrees we've got a major problem with housing, but the way development works is chaotic. Developers buy up land from corrupt local councils with no commitment to people. They then commission the building of

whole estates with heat-absorbing black roofs, squashed together to squeeze as much money out of the land as possible, taking mega profits. Then once this is all done, if it gets done, Westfield moves in, and voilà! That's development! Only there's no buses or trains and no transport, no community square, no town street, and no trees. Just a Maccas. Whoops!

Is this the best we can do?

Economic planning means oversight of the whole process: how an economy can be truly built by and for workers, for people and for communities, for the next generation of families, for the youth, for the future, for the environment, and for a healthy and harmonious society.

We're so far off from it we've forgotten that another way of doing things is possible.

Economic planning is creativity. It's about overcoming capitalism in stages. It's about exploring the socialist path, putting workers first by making work meaningful, by making work part of a larger plan. Economic planning even goes beyond nationalisation; we can create pioneering state-owned enterprises in areas Australia needs, like green energy, high-speed rail, electric vehicles, public housing construction. We can lay the groundwork for reducing our reliance upon unpredictable markets. We can abolish bad markets, regulate volatile markets, and create new ones in areas that benefit people. We have better scientific, administrative and technical abilities than ever before. We can do it more efficiently than ever before. We can use the market as a measuring rod for demand without letting the anarchy of capitalism run riot. We can encourage domestic circulation and production. We can ensure housing is constructed in an orderly manner with amenities, provisions, transport, spaces for cultural nourishment. We can plan ahead and plan well.

The only problem is that we have a government sold to the bourgeois class and commanded by the bourgeois class. Labor governments have given up on long-term planning, and we're paying the price. Under a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie there can be no planning for the future. Their interest is simply short-term profit. The anarchy of capitalist development suits them well.

For long-term planning we need socialism. Modern communists advocate a visible hand of the people grasping the levers of the state, a visible hand that commands the so-called "invisible hand" of the market. Modern communists have learned a lot both by reflecting on our past and learning from the successes of China and other socialist countries. Socialism takes time, it develops in stages, but you can't have it unless you're on the path. People-centred, long-term planning is the only way out of this mess and it's something the best Communist and Workers' Parties of the world know a lot about.

If you agree that our system is broken, that its flaws have been exposed, then you'll agree also that we can't just run away and hope for the best. We have to analyse our problems, confront the failures of our system. We have to seek truth from facts. The facts tell us that having no plan makes no sense.

Let's ask our governments a very simple question: what's your plan? ✪

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

PEACE NOTES

Hannah Middleton

Domicide is a new word, defined as "the planned, deliberate destruction of someone's home, causing suffering to the dweller."

On 30 January, the BBC reported that more than half of Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed since Israel launched its invasion after the Hamas attacks of 7 October.

Satellite imagery suggests that between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings across the whole Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. That's between 50 and 61 per cent of Gaza's buildings.

This is domicide – the mass destruction of dwellings to make the territory uninhabitable.

In a 4 November video, Yogev Bar-Shesht, deputy head of the Civil Administration, said in an interview from inside Gaza: "Whoever returns here, if they return here after, will find scorched earth. No houses, no agriculture, no nothing. They have no future."

Across Gaza, residential areas have been left ruined, busy shopping streets reduced to rubble, universities, schools and mosques destroyed and farmlands churned up, with tent cities springing up on the southern border to house many thousands of people left homeless.

"GAZA WILL BECOME A PLACE WHERE NO HUMAN BEING CAN EXIST."

The scale of the infrastructure damage is part of a covert plan to expel Palestinians from Gaza.

Leaks from inside the Israeli government, show officials have been examining ways to force Palestinians to leave Gaza, either voluntarily or forcibly.

Giora Eiland, a former head of the Israeli national security council, wrote in an Israeli newspaper: "The state of Israel has no choice but to turn Gaza into a place that is temporarily or permanently impossible to live in. Creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a necessary means to achieve the goal ... Gaza will become a place where no human being can exist."

When it launched its campaign against Hamas, Israel told Palestinians living in north and central Gaza to move south for their own safety.

About 1.7 million people – more than 80 per cent of Gaza's population – are displaced, with nearly half crammed in the far southern end of the strip, many in and around the city of Rafah.

Now Rafah is being bombed.

The IDF has repeatedly justified its actions by noting that Hamas deliberately embeds itself in civilian areas and explained destruction of buildings in the light of targeting fighters. But questions have been asked about destruction of buildings in the control of the IDF.

One example was Israa University, in northern Gaza. It was badly damaged but then blown up completely in a massive explosion. The IDF now says the approval process for the blast is being investigated.

CULTURAL GENOCIDE

Gaza's antiquities ministry has accused Israel of bombing the enclave's historical and archaeological sites.

A recent report by *Al Jazeera* estimates that at least 195 sites of historical importance, some dating back 4,000 years, have been damaged or destroyed.

An ancient harbour dating back to 800 BC, a mosque that was home to rare manuscripts and one of the world's oldest Christian monasteries are just a few of at least 195 heritage sites that have been destroyed or damaged since Israel's war on Gaza began on 7 October.

DESTRUCTION OF FARMLAND

Large areas of previously cultivated land across Gaza have been extensively damaged.

Although Gaza was heavily dependent on imports before the start of the war, much food came from farming and food production inside the strip.

Conflicts such as those in Syria and Ukraine have shown rehabilitating farmlands is extremely difficult.

Unexploded weapons make it dangerous for farmers to return and work.

Cleaning contaminated land and rebuilding infrastructure such as water, energy and transport systems are also considerable challenges.

Women March for Peace!

Women March for Freedom!

Women March for Equality!

Women March for Palestine!

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US vetoes, a brief history

Like all the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the US can veto UN resolutions. Unlike China, Russia, the UK, and France, the US is particularly keen on using its veto in the interests of Israel. Since 7 October 2023, the US has vetoed three UN resolutions 'on the situation in the Middle East including the Palestinian question.'

As Joe Biden says in a recent cartoon, "It's not that we're anti-ceasefire so much as pro-not standing up to Netanyahu." Like the Israeli genocide on Palestinians, the US history of blocking UN resolutions against Israel goes back a long way before 7 October 2023.

According to UN data the United States has vetoed dozens of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions critical of Israel, including at least 53 since 1972, according to UN data.

Ten days after 7 October, Washington blocked a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas – the US's third such veto reportedly within a week.

The US' unequivocal support of Israel has seen it thwart resolutions that condemn: violence against protestors, illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, and even calls for an investigation into the 1990 killing of seven Palestinian workers by a former Israeli soldier.

Critics say Washington's blanket support of Israel encourages a disproportionate use of force against Palestinians.

GREAT MARCH OF RETURN

Palestinians in Gaza began protesting at the Israeli border fence in March 2018, calling for the "right of return" to ancestral homes from which their families were expelled in 1948 during what Palestinians call the "Nakba," or the creation of the state of Israel. The UN estimates 750,000 Palestinians were expelled that year.

Palestinians faced sniper fire from Israeli forces during the year-long protests, which killed at least 266 people and injured roughly 30,000 more, according to Gaza's health ministry.

On 1 June 2018, the UNSC drafted a resolution expressing "grave concern at the escalation of violence and tensions" since the protests began and "deep alarm at the loss of civilian lives and the high number of casualties among Palestinian civilians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, including casualties among children, caused by the Israeli forces."

The US vetoed the resolution, with then-US Ambassador to the UN, and current Republican presidential runner-up Nikki Haley saying it presented "a grossly one-sided view of what has taken place in Gaza in recent weeks."

A draft resolution from 18 December 2017, wrote "that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered, the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council."

In vetoing the resolution, Haley said the US "had the courage and honesty to recognise a fundamental reality. Jerusalem has been the political, cultural and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people for thousands of years."

DEMANDING AN END TO ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE DURING THE SECOND INTIFADA

The Second Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, ignited on 28 September 2000, when then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon, accompanied by heavily armed forces, entered the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem.

The provocative act sparked long-simmering frustrations over the failed promises of the Oslo Accords to end Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands.

The Oslo Accords were signed by then-Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1993.

But the occupation continued into 2000, with Israeli settlements increasing and Palestinian sovereignty nowhere in sight.

In contrast to the First Intifada in the late 1980s and early 1990s that was largely peaceful, the Second Intifada was very violent, with Palestinian armed groups attacking Israeli forces and a sharp increase in suicide attacks against Israeli civilian centres.

The death toll stood at over 3,000 Palestinians and close to 1,000 Israelis, along with 45 foreigners.

A draft UNSC resolution from December 2001 expressed "grave concern at the continuation of the tragic and violent events that have taken place since September 2000," condemned attacks against civilians and called for peace talks to resume.

When vetoing the resolution, then-US Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte said "the draft resolution before us fails to address the dynamic at work in the region. Instead, its purpose is to isolate politically one of the parties".

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

The US has vetoed at least four UNSC resolutions condemning Israel's settlements on Palestinian land, which are considered illegal under international law.

There are between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers in at least 250 settlements (130 official, 120 unofficial) in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

These settlements have exploded under the rule of hawkish Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They have long been considered a major roadblock to achieving a Palestinian state.

US vetoes of resolutions condemning Israel's settlements date back to at least 1983. The most recent was in 2011, when a draft resolution aimed to reaffirm "all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of peace on the basis of the two-State solution."

Palestinian woman with baby in 1948 Nakba.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons – (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Then-US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice said Washington agreed that settlement activity is illegal, but "we think it unwise for this Council to attempt to resolve the core issues that divide Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, regrettably, we have opposed this draft resolution."

Rice served under former President Barack Obama, who caused diplomatic controversy in 2016, months before he left office to be succeeded by Trump, when he instructed the US to abstain from vetoing a similar UNSC resolution against settlement activity.

US President Joe Biden, who served as Obama's vice president, is known for his support of Israel.

Biden has stuck with Washington's long-established policy of failing to acknowledge the deeply asymmetric nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by expressing his unwavering support for Israel and its "right to defend itself."

P Bauer, material from *Al Jazeera* ✪

US 'always planned' for Assange to die in prison

Ian DeMartino

On Tuesday, the final appeal for WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange to avoid extradition to the United States began. Days earlier, his wife and lawyer, Stellar Assange, warned that if the journalist is not released soon, the stress of the case and his confinement could kill him, adding that he "will die" if extradited to the US.

"His health is in decline, mentally and physically. His life is at risk every single day he stays in prison, and if he's extradited, he will die," Stellar Assange said at a media briefing in London.

Julian Assange, an Australian national, could face up to 175 years in prison if extradited to the United States on espionage charges.

But the US has no plans for Assange to stand trial in the United States, Dan Kovalik, a professor, human rights lawyer and peace activist told *Sputnik*'s 'The Critical Hour' on Tuesday.

"If [Julian Assange] is sent to the US, they're just going to delay the trial as long as they can so that they can guarantee that he'll die in jail," Kovalik explained. "That's always been the plan."

Kovalik noted that there is documented evidence that the CIA plotted to kill Julian Assange in 2017 which revealed their intentions. "Here's a guy, even if you believe everything is true, that they're charging him with, he is not charged with any violent crime. There's no reason for him to be in jail while he awaits extradition …. They're holding him so that he'll die," Kovalik said.

WORLD

The US government would like to avoid an actual trial with Assange, Kobalik contended, because their misdeeds would come to light. "[Defense lawyers] could call a former secretary of state [or] a former secretary of defense. It would be a circus and it would not go well for the United States."

"People would be called from the US government, present and past, to talk about their crimes, to talk about the war crimes, the things that Julian Assange and WikiLeaks have exposed. So they don't want any part of that," Kovalik predicted.

Co-host Wilmer Leon mentioned the seeming lack of support in US media for Assange, even as WikiLeaks' revelations are reported on by those media outlets. Pointing to a *Washington Post* article that included the passage "US prosecutors want him to stand trial. They allege he violated the Espionage Act when he conspired to obtain thousands of classified documents related to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

"Well, if he has conspired to obtain, then what does *The Washington Post* do? What does The *New York Times* do? What do most mainstream media outlets do as they gather information for their stories?" Leon asked.

"They even gathered [information] from WikiLeaks," Kovalik replied. "The *New York Times*, *The Washington Post* …. And those papers haven't stood by Julian Assange when they've used his materials for their own stories. It's just a disgrace.

"I mean, the whole thing is just a travesty. It's an absolute travesty of any idea of due process and justice," he concluded.

Sputnik

Editor's note: YOU can help! Contact your MP and the Senators for your state to demand that Australia presses for Assange's release. Visit assangecampaign.org.au to make this process easier, and for more information. ✪

Book Review by Manden Murphy

Radical Housewives

by Julie Guard

Working people are living through the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, so there has never been a more appropriate time to draw lessons from our progressive past to strengthen the fight back to roll back prices on essentials and win real concessions for working people.

Julie Guard's *Radical Housewives: Price Wars & Food Politics in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada* provides such a lesson. This in-depth and rigorously researched account of Canada's Housewives Consumers Association (HCA) maps the successes and gains won through this grassroots women-led organisation, while putting its trials and tribulations into historical context.

The HCA was a community-based women's organisation with cross-pollination from the Communist Party of Canada/Labor Progressive Party's membership and the social democratic Co-operative Commonwealth Federation that, from 1937 until the early 1950s, led a broadly based popular movement for state control of prices.

As radical consumer activists, the Housewives engaged in gender-transgressive political activism that challenged the government to protect consumers' interests rather than those of business, while popularising socialist solutions to the economic crises of the Great Depression and the immediate postwar years.

It is a complex and messy history. Guard repeatedly describes the Housewives' maternalism as an important political tactic with an Achilles heel. Maternalism was a "genuine expression of their identities as wives and mothers and integral to their political activism." This, Guard argues, shielded them from the rampant "red baiting" that was part of the Canadian political landscape at the time, and made them palatable to a vast cross section of working-class women and homemakers.

However, this same maternalism made their movement vulnerable to reactionary attacks. Demeaning and sexist mainstream news reports often described the Housewives as "attractive" yet "determined and articulate." Business interests focused on how the Housewives' "attacks" on capitalism and the state supposedly "promoted an unnatural subversion of genuine motherhood ... by corrupting citizenship and promoting moral decay." By meeting their maternity head on, business hoped to highlight the moral subversion "inherent" to the HCA. It failed.

Despite these attacks, the Housewives' maternalism was an extremely effective tool for political agitation and a temporary antidote to the anti-communist attacks that devastated the movement in the years to come.

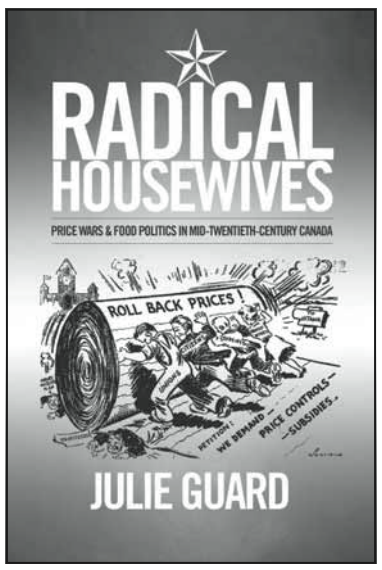
Anti-communism was with the HCA since its founding. Occasionally this surfaced as minor ruptures inside the organisation; however, these were never terminal. Most of the non-party-affiliated Housewives recognised that women with experience in the Communist Party were some of the most effective organisers and that their work within the HCA was inspired by genuine concern for working people and their families.

But as the Housewives moved into the second half of the 1940s this cross-pollination with known communists became the focus for big business, which found it could manufacture sympathy as fears of Soviet communism hit hyperbolic proportions during the early days of the Cold War.

This shift in emphasis by big business sought to prove that the HCA was nothing more than a communist front. In the process, the Housewives' humanity became collateral damage. As Guard demonstrates: "In their translation from genuine housewives into subversives, they were stripped of not only their maternalism, but also their protective femininity ... the Housewives were publicly redefined as subversives and communists and thus not entitled to be treated with respect."

Guard shows that communists were some of HCA's most effective members. But to describe it as a front was not only disingenuous but did a disservice to the broad appeal of their aims. As an HCA activist observed: "if the [HCA] was really dominated by Communists, then there are a lot of Communists in Canada."

The HCA's research demonstrated how effective government price controls were in bringing down inflation and the cost of living for working people during WW2: "price ceilings ... stopped war-induced inflation in its tracks. During the first two years of war ...



the cost of living [increased] 18%. But price ceilings ... ended inflation by fixing the retail price of virtually all goods."

The HCA orchestrated street performances, boycotts, countless petition drives, letters to MPs, delegations to Ottawa, educational sessions, and endless literature advocating for price controls during "peacetime." They enjoyed mass support and won many victories such as being invited to sit on the Wartime Prices and Trade Board and receiving endorsements from the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress.

This book shows that Canadian state and business interests were terrified of the mass support these women generated in such a short time. It's a testament to their organisational capacities and their clear vision for a more equitable future for working people.

Radical Housewives is an indispensable read at a time when the government would sooner provide Loblaws [Canadian supermarket chain] – which has a track record of price-fixing and who is experiencing record profits – with a $12 million [AU13 million] grant to refurbish old refrigerators than provide rent/price controls working people so desperately need. As working people continue to struggle to make ends meet, we can look to the *Radical Housewives* to strengthen our fight to roll back prices on food, fuel and rent.

People's Voice
(edited for reasons of space)
Radical Housewives by Julie Guard
University of Toronto Press ✪

Yemen's Houthis attack Israeli city and two ships

On 22 February Yemen's Houthi group launched attacks on an Israeli city, a British cargo ship, and a US warship, in what it called a response to the 'US-British aggression' against Yemen and its support for Palestinians.

The Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said that the first attack targeted the Israeli city of Eilat with ballistic missiles and drones. The Israeli army said it had intercepted a missile from the Red Sea heading for Eilat, while Israeli media cited Israeli officials as saying the missile was "apparently" from the Houthis.

The second attack hit a British-owned cargo ship, MV Islander, in the Gulf of Aden with naval missiles, causing a fire on board, Sarea said. He said the third attack targeted a US Navy destroyer in the Red Sea with drones.

Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi vowed to launch more attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

He dismissed the impact of the US-led coalition airstrikes on his group's military capabilities, saying, "the coalition strikes have no effect." He also said his group had submarines and would use them in future attacks.

The Houthi group controls much of northern Yemen since it ousted the internationally recognised government in late 2014.

Telesur ✪

Global Briefs

SOUTH AFRICA: South African ruling party the African National Congress (ANC) has launched its election manifesto. The 29 May elections will be crucial for the ANC as recent polls suggest it is at risk of losing its parliamentary majority. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined the party's successes in the last 30 years after the overthrow of the apartheid government in 1992. The ANC has been able to meet the needs of poor South Africans by providing low-cost free housing, water, and electricity. "Our economy has grown three times since 1994, There were only 8 million South Africans in employment then, now it is 14 million people," said Ramaphosa. However, high unemployment is a huge problem in the country. It is standing at 32.1 per cent, one of the highest in the world, and could certainly impact the elections.

INDIA: India's maritime labour force answered the Palestinian trade unions' call for solidarity and support. The Water Transport Workers Federation (WTWF) declared that they will refuse to handle weapons destined for Israel. The union' general secretary said that "If any vessel or any ship is carrying arms or ammunition or weapons cargo to Israel, we decided to boycott. We will not cooperate with that." The union stated that its action was an act of solidarity, and condemned a war in which "women and children have been blown to pieces. parents were unable to recognise their children killed by bombs exploding everywhere."

JORDAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II has warned of a wider regional war if Israel continues with its military action in the Gaza Strip during the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is to begin on March 11 this year. Israel had earlier warned that it would continue fighting during Ramadan if Hamas failed to free the hostages. Israel has also threatened to attack Rafah where around 1.5 million Gazans sought refuge.

ISRAEL: Israel has refused to renew visas and work permits for relief workers providing essential services to the blockaded Palestinians. Visas were denied not only to directors and managers of the relief organisations but to ordinary aid workers as well. Among the targeted groups are such well-known and respected organisations as Oxfam, Amnesty international, Action Against Hunger, Catholic Relief Services and Care International. Over half a million Gazans could die of starvation and diseases if current conditions continue.

UKRAINE: *Le Figaro*, a French newspaper, reported on "the story of the confrontation of the Western military equipment with reality." No, it was not about tanks stuck in mud or frozen solid in a bog. This time it was about mice and rats who feasted on eco-friendly weapons provided to the Ukrainian military by their foreign backers. *Le Figaro* quoted an unnamed French fighter who explained that "some of the protective sheaths of electrical wires are made of corn fibre." "Western vehicles were designed as a technological showcase. But in the mud and cold they don't always work," the French fighter complained. Corn fibre makes a very attractive meal for rodents as well. In the immortal words of the Good Soldier Schweik, "It takes a special kind of genius to do something so stupid."

Calling all readers

Give us a laugh

The *Guardian – the Workers Weekly* is in need of cartoonists, or humourists

If you can draw a cartoon, tell a joke, or write up a quick parody, send it to us at editor@cpa.org.au

Response to Gaza genocide highlights global capitalism's descent into barbarism

Perth Cultural Centre 16 February. Photo: Vinnie Molina.

Prabhat Patnaik

In the Junius Pamphlet written from jail in 1915, Rosa Luxemburg said that the choice before humanity was between barbarism and socialism.

Liberal opinion would contest this, arguing that the barbarism that marked the two world wars and the period in between was unrelated to capitalism; indeed, the liberal tendency that comes to the fore under capitalism, it would claim, fought against the barbarism of that period. Capitalism, it would assert, has been characterised by the ascendancy of humane values to an unprecedented extent, as the post-war years have shown.

To talk about humane values coming to the fore under capitalism, however, is to ignore the phenomenon of imperialism altogether.

It's well-known that British rule inflicted famines on India. This rule began with a famine in Bengal in 1770 that killed ten million persons, a third of the population of the province, because of the rapacity of its revenue demands. Towards the end of this rule there was yet another famine in Bengal in 1943 because of the utterly cruel war-financing policy pursued by the government, which again killed at least three million persons.

German rule in (today's) Namibia introduced death camps that exterminated large numbers of the population and constituted the models for Hitler's concentration-cum-death camps in the 1930s. Belgian atrocities in the Congo under Leopold's rule involving the mutilation of human beings are too well-known and too gruesome to recount.

European settler colonialism in the temperate regions of the world eliminated local populations on a vast scale, herded those who survived into reservations, and took over their lands and habitats.

One can go on with this litany of cruelty; what is important is that the motive for this cruelty was plain material gain, which is what characterises capitalism.

It would of course be argued that loot and plunder have provided the motive for wars and conquests even earlier, long before capitalism came into being, so why should one drag capitalism into it? The answer is two-fold: first, all talk of capitalism advancing humane values, it follows, is just hyperbole; at best it is no better than what had preceded it.

Second, loot and plunder of the earlier periods were very different from what happens under capitalism. The earlier loot still left something with those who were plundered, or at least allowed them to recoup their losses over time (even though this might invite further plunder later), but under capitalism there is a permanent expropriation of the oppressed.

HUMANE CAPITALISM?

Capitalism projected this image of itself – as a humane force that fought all barbaric tendencies. Hollywood movies, gave the impression that the second world war was essentially a fight between western liberal democracy and fascism, downplaying the decisive role of the Soviet Union.

As a result, the immense sympathy that had existed for the Soviet Union all over the world, including in the west, was systematically diminished among the people of the advanced capitalist countries. They were given the impression that they were living within a humane system the like of which had never existed before. Rosa Luxemburg's remark was portrayed as lacking any relevance, notwithstanding the Vietnam and other wars that marked the post-war period, and not to mention the depredations of the CIA all over the world in effecting regime change and acts of terror during those years.

This illusion of capitalism being a humane force, however, is now over. The barbarity of capitalism is evident as never before, and the most heart-rending, the most incredibly cruel instance of it is the genocide of the Palestinians that is currently occurring with the combined blessings of all advanced capitalist countries.

At least 28,000 of the civilian population have been killed, of whom almost 70 per cent have been women and children. In fact, more than 100,000 are missing, a large number of whom are believed to have been killed, taking the toll well above 28,000.

Much of the population has been bombed out of their homes. Even relief operations have been impaired, with the UNRWA funding being suspended by the capitalist powers. The Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, a UN body, has called what is happening in Gaza the "deadliest 100 days in the 21st century."

We are, in short, witnessing a human catastrophe which is unleashed by an utterly inhumane and aggressive Zionist regime with the active support of the big capitalist powers.

The aggressiveness of the Zionist state is so blatant that it even threatened the South African foreign minister with dire consequences for herself and her family when South Africa went to the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide. The court upheld the substance of South Africa's case, and asked Israel to desist from any genocidal actions, though it stopped short of ordering an immediate end to its war in Gaza. What was striking was that every one of the advanced capitalist powers supported Israel, with the US calling the legal action "meritless" and France and Germany arguing that accusing Israel of genocide is to cross a "moral threshold."

What is striking is that as in 1915 when Rosa Luxemburg was writing, social democracy has been fully complicit even today in the barbarism of advanced capitalism. While ordinary people in the streets everywhere in the world have demonstrated in large and impressive numbers against Israeli aggression, the entire political establishment in the west from the extreme right to social democracy and the Greens – and even a segment to the left of social democracy, such as Die Linke in Germany – has lined up behind imperialism and its protégé, Israeli settler colonialism.

WHY NOW?

Two questions immediately arise. How has imperialism become so emboldened as to reveal its barbaric self, despite the abhorrence towards this barbarism displayed by world public opinion, especially in the global south? And why has imperialism suddenly become so desperate that it needs to show its barbaric nature?

The answer to the first question lies in the collapse of the Soviet Union and in general the socialist challenge. As long as the Soviet Union lasted, it acted, at least in the post-war years, as a restraining influence on imperialist barbarism vis-à-vis the global south. The fear of socialism, in other words, restrained imperialist barbarism, thereby in a sense vindicating Rosa Luxemburg's assertion. That restraint is now gone.

The answer to the second question lies in the fact that the imperial order – which was destabilised earlier and made to yield to the drive for decolonisation and third world dirigisme, but which reconstituted itself through the imposition of the neoliberal regime – is again facing a mortal threat. There is a vital difference between the earlier order and the present one; namely while the earlier pre-war order was characterised by inter-imperialist rivalry, the present imperial order is characterised by a muting of rivalry and by an unprecedented unity among imperial powers, because it is presided over by international finance capital that does not want the world divided.

The present order therefore has united global capital facing the working people of the world, not just the workers in the advanced capitalist countries but also the workers and peasants in the global south, all of whom have been the victims of this new imperial order.

This very victimisation of the world's working people has produced a crisis for this imperial order, since it has kept down consumption in the world economy and thereby curbed the growth of markets and produced a crisis of over-production. Within the neoliberal regime itself there is no solution to this crisis, since state activism such as a fiscal deficit-financed increase in state expenditure is anathema for neoliberalism. As a result, the working people of the world who were already victimised by globally united international capital are now being further victimised via unemployment, making the threat against the new order even more serious.

The crisis has produced fascist regimes within many countries, but it is also producing an acutely repressive global order where both fascist and non-fascist capitalist powers combine to suppress the working people both at home and abroad. There is no scope for any morality in this repression – barbarism is in full display and the capitalist powers stand together in defence of this barbarism, no matter which of them is perpetrating it.

People's Democracy
(edited for reasons of space) ✪

Polish farmers blockade Ukraine

Oleg Burunov

Tractors flying Polish flags have blocked highways and major intersections at the country's border crossings with Ukraine, part of weeks of protests by Polish farmers.

There are several major "blocks of issues" regarding the Polish farmers' drive to stage mass cross-border protests, Konrad Rekas, Polish politician and independent commentator, said in an interview with *Sputnik*.

First and foremost, the protesters are unhappy with "preferential treatment of agricultural products imported from Ukraine on the Polish market, and as a result also to the EU market," Rekas said.

He also noted that Poles are well aware that Ukraine's agri-food production has been taken over by international corporations "or is still in the hands of cosmopolitan oligarchs, just as the so-called Ukrainian transport companies have owners in Germany or the Netherlands."

"However, this does not change the fact that contaminated food (the infamous 'technical flour') often reaches Europe in uncontrolled quantities from Ukraine (often via Lithuania). Major foreign discount chains in Poland also already source basic products from Ukraine. In turn, the so-called Ukrainian transport companies are neither bound by the legal EU regulations regarding the minimum wage nor do they comply with health & safety principles," the Polish commentator stressed.

Poles feel economically dominated by Kiev

Asked what Kiev's reluctance to address the impasse says about the relationship between the two countries, Rekas argued that Poles feel economically dominated by Kiev. He went on to say that over the past two years, Polish resources have been shrinking while Ukrainians' demands are growing.

"The average Pole no longer wants to shop in a European store for the Ukrainians, and we are horrified to see the falling incomes and rising costs of living of Poles. Ukrainians in Poland are free from these worries because the new Sejm (parliament) extended the tax and social rights of Ukrainians in Poland until June. All this causes more and more Poles to raise the question: help for those in need – yes! Ukrainian privileges – never!" Rekas concluded.

Polish-Ukrainian relations deteriorated significantly last year due to the influx of Ukrainian grain into the EU. Poland, along with Slovakia and Hungary, unilaterally extended a ban on duty-free imports of Ukrainian grain after EU-imposed restrictions expired on 15 September 2023

Ukraine responded by filing a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Ukrainian Deputy Economy Minister Taras Kachka said in late September that Kiev would withdraw its WTO complaint against the three EU countries if they provided guarantees that they would not restrict grain exports in the future.

Sputnik

UK: Trident damned as 'colossal waste' after second missile failure

The British nuclear missile program Trident must be scrapped, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) said today as it branded two consecutive missile test failures a "colossal waste of public money."

The government admitted an "anomaly" had occurred during an exercise off the coast of Florida, United States, on 30 January. A missile that was supposed to go thousands of kilometres, from the US to somewhere near West Africa, dropped into the ocean near where it was launched, close to where UK Defence Secretary Grant Schapps and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key were witnessing the test.

It is the second misfiring in a row, with a test launch of a Trident missile by the Royal Navy off the coast of the US in June 2016 also reported to have been a failure. [Each missile costs just under $33 million AUD]

CND general secretary Kate Hudson said: "The government can try and spin this, but nuclear weapons are clearly useless – as well as being a colossal waste of public money at the expense of vital public services.

"It's time to stop the waste and get rid of these weapons of mass destruction once and for all."

Today Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said that the government retains "absolute confidence" in the nuclear deterrent.

In a written statement to Parliament, he said the "anomaly" during an exercise involving the ballistic missile submarine HMS Vanguard had "no implications" for Britain's ability to deploy nuclear weapons.

He also reiterated the country's commitment to its nuclear deterrent, saying that its "resolve and capability" to deploy nuclear weapons if necessary "remains beyond doubt."

Scottish National Party defence spokesperson Martin Docherty-Hughes MP said the failure was "symptomatic of the UK's government's wider defence spending and strategy."

"This is the second failed test in a row of weapons that are costing us tens of billions — an embarrassing and scandalous fact that should serve as a wake-up call to the UK government," he said.

Scottish Green MSP Mark Ruskell said: "Nuclear weapons are a grotesque and destructive moral abomination that have no place in any kind of vision for a peaceful future."

Morning Star (edited)

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Half the Sky

Women's Economic Inclusion

This year, UN Women Australia has set the theme for International Women's Day as 'economic inclusion for women,' but what does economic inclusion for women look like? In the lead-up to IWD on the Eighth of March, we will hear many ideas on this topic from the media and politicians, but do they hold any weight, and if not, how should our perspective differ?

Every year on International Women's Day, we hear statistics along the lines of there being more CEOs named John than there are CEOs who are women, and how the vast majority of management and executive positions are held by men even in woman-dominated industries. Are there important conclusions that can be drawn from these statistics? Absolutely! But the conclusion that we hear repeated *ad nauseam* is that we need to expand the access to capital that a select few men in bourgeois society have to a select few women and integrate those women into bourgeois society as well. Given how often this argument has been repeated since the 1970s, you would think that the liberal reformers would have achieved some success by now, but as the statistics they repeat every year show, they have not. What they should be drawing from the statistics but continue to dance around is a very simple truth; capitalism, by its nature and history, disempowers women.

The insurmountable hurdle that the liberal reformers cannot overcome is that capitalism is a system of wealth accumulation. The profit that capitalists make is a cut of the labour done by workers. When capitalism came from feudalism, a fundamentally patriarchal system, naturally the capitalists were men, who created laws to exclude women from the new system from the first day. No matter how much those laws were changed over capitalism's history to make capitalist accumulation nominally something that women could do, the world's wealth had already been accumulated in the hands of bourgeois men at the expense of working women and men. Under capitalism, this wealth will continue not only to transfer from one generation of bourgeois men to the next, but to accumulate, leaving less and less of it available to working women and men for them to have their shot at getting in on the exploitation of workers. The liberal reformer ignores this in order to either believe or pretend that a system of accumulation for one class at the expense of another can actually be a system of *transferral* between classes, if only the right technocrats can get their hands on shaping it in their image. This can only ever get concessions for the needs of women.

So what perspective do we need instead? We must view women's struggle as part of the working class struggle against capital, rather than the struggle to be integrated into capital. We must fight for the proper valuation of the labour done in women-dominated industries such as nursing, midwifery, education, and aged care. We must fight against imperialism, which disempowers women everywhere while decimating them. We must fight for supports for working women at the local, state, and federal level. And we must do all of this as a part of the fight for socialism, a system under which women actually can achieve their liberation as a part of the working class through working class power.

(The NSW Women's Fraction will be running a panel called "Women's Economic Empowerment: a Left Perspective" at the MUA HQ (365 Sussex St, Surry Hills) at 2:00 on the 9th of March, where we will discuss what we can do to achieve women's liberation.)

Palestine: no let-up in genocide

Anna Pha

More than 35,000 innocent Palestinians have been slaughtered by Israel's US-funded, military machine and more than one million people driven south to Rafah on Gaza's southern border with Egypt.

Yet, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese continues to support Israel and express "concern," when tens of thousands of defenceless Palestinians – innocent children, women, and men – continue to be slaughtered and many more injured.

Israel continues to deny the people of Gaza water, food, medical supplies, and electricity. Children are dying of malnutrition and starvation. Housing, hospitals, schools, mosques, and other infrastructure have been destroyed. These are crimes against humanity. The International Court of Justice has found the case of genocide is plausible.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip with the Palestinian people hasn't happened at any other moment in history. Actually, it has happened: when Hitler decided to kill the Jews," Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said, speaking at a recent African Union summit in Ethiopia.

"It's not a war of soldiers against soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared army, and women and children."

Palestinians are human beings, not "animals" as one Israeli minister has called them.

UNRWA, the UN humanitarian agency, reports that it has been unable to deliver food to northern Gaza since 23 January.

Australia and 17 other countries have suspended their funding of UNRWA. They have blood on their hands – the same Palestinian blood lubricating the profits of the arms manufacturers, after Israel alleged, without providing any evidence, that 12 of its staff were involved in the Hamas attack on Israel. This collective punishment is illegal under international law.

Taking a principled stand against genocide and displacement is *not* antisemitic.

The Australian government, kowtowing to its masters in Washington, is turning a blind eye to the genocide.

ISRAELI PLAN

At the time of writing, Israeli negotiators are about to arrive in Qatar for talks around a pause.

But before the talks even began Netanyahu *declared that its military would invade Rafah, regardless of any deal to free some of the 130 remaining hostages held by Hamas*.

The Israeli army is constructing a wide road across central Gaza in parallel with an existing road. It brings a new meaning to the original Palestinian slogan 'from the river to the sea' – from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. In the process it is destroying houses and anything else blocking its path. Israeli authorities claim it is to facilitate its military operations, part of its plans to maintain security control over the strip.

The road would create a divide between northern Gaza and the rest of the strip with north-south crossing points that would be guarded. Whether a wall will be built is not known but it does raise the question: Is Israel planning to partition Gaza, not allowing a return to the north and thus denying Gaza access to its offshore gas resources? Or is it to make more land available for settlements? We can only speculate.

Israel military already controls major north-south roads in Gaza.

According to Israeli officials, 150,000-200,000 Gazans are still living in Gaza City, north of the new road, a fraction of its pre-war population of 1.2 million. Fighting there is intense.

Israel is also building a wall inside Gaza's border with Israel as a 1 km buffer zone, where Palestinians would be barred from entry.

It has set a deadline of March 10, when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins for Hamas to release hostages or else it will launch a military operation in Rafah where more than a million Palestinian civilians are crammed.

In fact, Israel has not waited until then, bombing of Rafah has already commenced.

US president Biden hypocritically describes Israel's assault as "over the top," while pushing for $15 billion more in military aid to be supplied to Israel – two-thirds of it for offensive weapons. That is 15 times more than he wants for humanitarian aid for Palestinian

The US has vetoed all resolutions before the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire and has voted against those that went before the General Assembly.

Egypt is standing firm, refusing to allow humanitarian corridors into Egypt or let Palestinians flee to the Sinai. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said to do so would "liquidate the Palestinian cause."

The UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, who said displacing Gazans to Egypt would be "catastrophic" for both Egypt and the Palestinians, who, he indicated, would likely not be allowed to return.

Clearing the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem of Palestinians is consistent with the Zionist plan for a Greater Israel.

Israel has approved another 3,344 illegal settler homes in the occupied West Bank since 7 October. There are already 750,000 settlers there. East Jerusalem NGO Ir Amin says the demolition of Palestinian houses in the city has also been stepped up. Homes are being bulldozed and Palestinians driven off their land by armed settlers and soldiers.

Under UN resolutions, Gaza, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem should be the basis of a two state-solution, but each day of Israel's war on women and children makes this more difficult.

Leading figures in the Israeli government have made it clear that there will not be a Palestinian state.

ACT NOW!

Write to Albanese, Wong, your local MP and Senators. Demand they:

- Reinstate and increase funding for UNWRA
- Cease military and other support for Israel
- Support the South Africa's genocide case in the ICJ
- Impose economic sanctions on Israel
- Expel Israel's diplomatic representatives
- Withdraw Australia's diplomats from Israel.

Australian people did support apartheid South Africa. They should not support genocidal, apartheid Israel. ✪

Photo: Brahim Guedich – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Israel ignores international court order

Israel has failed to comply with an International Court of Justice (ICJ) order to provide urgently needed aid to Gaza, instead intensifying its brutal military campaign, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said today.

A quarter of the Palestinian territory's 2.3 million people are currently facing starvation amid Israel's ongoing war, with an average of just 57 aid lorries entering the region daily in the past month.

The United Nations has said that around 500 daily deliveries are needed to address the situation.

Last month, the top UN court responded to a South African petition by ordering Israel to do all it could to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide.

The ICJ ordered Israel to take six provisional steps, including "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

Israel was also ordered to submit a report within a month on what it was doing to implement the measures.

Today marked a month since the court's orders were issued and it was not immediately clear whether Israel had handed in such a report.

HRW said Israel was not complying with the court's order on aid provision, citing a 30 per cent drop in the daily average number of aid lorries entering Gaza in the weeks following the ruling.

The human rights group added that Israel was not adequately facilitating fuel deliveries to hard-hit northern Gaza and blamed Tel Aviv for blocking aid from reaching the north, where the World Food Programme said last week that it had been forced to suspend aid deliveries because of increasing chaos in the isolated part of the territory.

HRW Israel and Palestine director Omar Shakir said: "The Israeli government has simply ignored the court's ruling and in some ways even intensified its repression, including further blocking lifesaving aid."

Morning Star ✪

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