The Workers' Weekly
Guardian
#2131 3 February 2025
$5
COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA
We acknowledge the sovereignty of the First Peoples of Australia.
www.cpa.org.au
ISSN 1325-295X

DESCENT TOWARD FASCISM

CJ Atkins*

> "One of the most 'democratic' republics in the world is the United States of America, yet nowhere is the power of capital, the power of a handful of multimillionaires over the whole of society, so crude and so openly corrupt as in America. Once capital exists, it dominates the whole of society."
>
> VI Lenin, 1919

Donald Trump's real people, the ones he fights hardest for, weren't sitting in the bleachers at Capital One Arena during the inauguration.

Trump's real people were the money-eyed interests plopped down in the chairs right behind him during the inauguration ceremonies. Lined up in a row, in spots usually reserved for close family or former presidents, were the tech titans of the 21st century economy.

Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Sundar Pichai – add up their estimated wealth and you get close to a trillion dollars of combined economic power sitting on the stage. They were the perfect image of capitalist politics in the US today. These billionaires invested hundreds of millions of dollars in their candidate, and they came to DC to celebrate their conquest.

Of course, no matter which of the two parties is in *office* in Washington, it's always the capitalist class that is in *power*. The second Trump administration, however, is taking it to the next level.

No longer are the leading lights of finance, tech, and commerce content to simply buy influence in the government via lobbying dollars and campaign contributions alone. Now, they're directly taking over the instruments of the state themselves to guarantee the conditions for their increased profits and power. In addition to the billionaire president, at least a dozen other billionaires and multimillionaires are set to take over government posts.

- Soros Fund Manager Scott Bessent as Treasury Secretary
- Cantor Fitzgerald CEO Howard Lutnick as Commerce Secretary
- Wrestling promoter Linda McMahon as Education Secretary
- Former JPMorgan Chase and Fiserv executive Frank Bisignano in charge of the Social Security Administration
- "PayPal Mafia" boss David Sacks as the new AI and cryptocurrency czar
- Financier Warren Stephens in the UK ambassador spot
- Conair executive Leandro Rizzuto, Jr, at the Organization of American States
- Real estate tycoon (and Jared's daddy) Charles Kushner as ambassador to France
- Another property mogul, Steve Witkoff, as "peace" envoy to the Middle East
- Quack TV doctor Mehmet Oz as administrator for Medicare and Medicaid
- Crypto trader Kelly Loeffler heading up the Small Business Administration.

The list goes on.

The new Trump cabinet is expected to be worth at least US$7 billion, dwarfing the wealth of his own record-breaking first cabinet, which came in at US$3.2 billion, and leaving the combined US$118 million net worth of Joe Biden's cabinet looking like pocket change by comparison. And that's just the cabinet; throw in those tapped to lead new agencies, like Musk at the crypto-named DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency), and the calculations soar higher still – well north of US$450 billion.

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)

The Trump administration is giving the capitalist class personal control over the economic powers of the state, which it will use to manipulate interest rates, tariffs, taxes, regulations (and de-regulations), and all the other tools of government, with the aim of enriching themselves at the expense of the workers.

But unlike the typical capitalist state, which intervenes in the economy to stabilise the system on behalf of the entire bourgeoisie, the Trump government has been captured by particular sectors – high tech (which has shifted sharply to the right), crypto and speculative capital, fossil fuels, large segments of finance and banking, parts of the pharma industry, and "small capital," like mid-level US-based manufacturing and independent businesses.

Others, like defence contractors, always play both sides of the aisle and make money no matter who's running Washington. That will continue, but in the boardrooms of the arms makers, hopes are surely running high that more wars and international tensions (especially with China) are on the horizon. Politically, the character of the new regime also symbolises the initiation of a descent toward fascism.

Continued on page 2

6

Invasion Day Report

16

That strong spirit of Palestinian emancipation

The *Guardian* has a podcast
Search for "Communist *Guardian* Podcast" or use the QR code

Guardian

Issue 2131 3 February 2025

Public first!

"Unrealistic public sector pay claims risk an inflation budget hangover," according to a recent *Australian Financial Review* (*AFR*) headline. The article is one in a number attacking "unrealistic" state government increases in public sector employment and wage rises.

"The wage rises have fed into a surge in government spending, which some economists say has added to inflation and prevented the Reserve Bank of Australia from cutting the cash rate."

The claims do not stop there: "Ironically, public servants are seeking compensation for high inflation that has been exacerbated by the growth in the size and cost of the public sector." Apparently the *AFR* can't see the irony in the fact that public sector pay deals have "pushed public sector wages growth above the private sector." No mention of how historically the public sector has led on wage rises or the decades where wages stagnated or declined in real terms.

Wages for many public sector workers are too low to afford housing and other essentials. Public sector wage rises are catch-up with inflation. It's not surprising that public sector workers are taking actions across Australia seeking a living wage and better working conditions. Wages chase inflation.

It ignores the importance of the public sector to working people and their families. It fails to mention the critical role the public sector plays in the economy or the times when public spending has prevented a recession. If the ruling class the *AFR* speaks for had its way it would slash the public service and privatise whatever it could.

Woolworths and Coles have made a major contribution to price rises, hiking prices of food and other products by anything upwards of 15 per cent or 25 per cent in one year. Governments have to all intents and purposes destroyed public housing. With the private sector moving in, with no competition from the public sector, housing prices have gone through the roof – another source of inflation and a major contributor to the cost-of-living crisis.

The public sector supports demand through government spending on public goods and services. It creates jobs through public investment in infrastructure and other projects. Its employees create demand through the purchase of goods and services across society. Increasing the wages of public sector workers would increase demand, create jobs and so boost the economy.

Above all, the public sector provides essential services for the good of the people such as public healthcare, public education and public transport. Increasing public early childhood and education centres, residential and in-home aged care funding, and public housing would result in cheaper and high quality services. It would remove the profit motive. Directing funding from private to public education would see public education adequately staffed and resourced with better outcomes for students. Nationalising previously privatised utilities, transport, telecommunications and other essential services provides the basis for quality and affordable services.

Are all of these inflationary? No. Are workers' wage rises inflationary? No. Are workers to blame for the Reserve Bank not lowering interest rates? No. Is the private sector to blame with its profit-driven hiking of price rises? Yes.

Under monopoly capital the government is the means to an end. It is used to hold down wages and working conditions and suppress struggle. It conducts foreign policy in the interest of the largest corporations; acts in their interests with deregulation, privatisation, free trade agreements, provision of infrastructure, tax concessions, handouts; and comes to their rescue during times of crisis.

This relationship with monopoly capital goes much deeper than just legislation and state machinery. An examination of leading policy making bodies, government inquiries, ministerial advisers, and the like reveals that corporate representatives play a critical role in the processes of government and policy making.

Put public first, award a living wage to all workers!

Shaping the future of care

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is focused on driving meaningful change in 2025 to ensure better conditions for nurses, midwives, carers, students, and to meet the health and aged care needs of the community.

The ANMF's vision is to prioritise reforms that support recruitment and retention, empower nurses and midwives to work to their full scope of practice to ensure accessible and affordable healthcare, and deliver improved outcomes for women.

ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE

Historically nurses, midwives and other disciplines have been locked out of providing the full scope of primary health services as autonomous practitioners.

The federal government's *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – scope of practice review*, has made several recommendations that will improve accessibility for health consumers.

The ANMF has welcomed several key reforms including allowing nurse practitioners, remote area nurses, and endorsed midwives, to make direct referrals for a wider range of procedures and services with Medicare rebates.

"Many of the recommendations align with the ANMF's draft policies and submissions for the introduction of innovative multi-disciplined and nurse-and-midwife-led models of care. We now look forward to working with the Albanese government, other nursing and midwifery peak organisations and key stakeholders to deliver these reforms in 2025," said ANMF Federal Secretary Annie Butler.

GENDER EQUITY

With a predominantly female membership, achieving gender equity is central to the work of the ANMF. There has been an unprecedented focus by the current federal government towards gender equity, with substantive wins for women overall this past year. The full-time gender pay gap has dropped to 11.5 per cent (from 13.3 per cent in 2023) and women's workforce participation has risen to a record high of 63.2 per cent.

Progress has been made in making gender equality an objective of the Fair Work Act, banning pay secrecy clauses, legislating for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to publish gender pay gaps of employers with 100 or more workers, introducing a new positive duty on employers to prevent workplace sexual harassment and discrimination, and increasing wages for aged care workers, a sector that is highly feminised and historically undervalued.

Gender equity is also about workplace policies. We know that flexible working arrangements are critical to support gender equality and women's leadership in the workplace.

The ANMF will continue to advocate for a national policy to address the diminished earning capacity throughout a woman's lifetime. Until this is achieved, inequalities between men and women will remain.

WORK VALUE CASE 2

In the past two years, the ANMF and union movement have won the biggest changes to workers' rights and conditions seen in generations.

Industrial relations reforms, achieved through Closing Loopholes and the Secure Jobs Better Pay Act, helped deliver new right to disconnect laws, better protections for union delegates, and new minimum standards and protections for 'employee-like workers' and casuals, just to name a few. Meanwhile, the ANMF's landmark Aged Care Work Value Case at the Fair Work Commission (FWC) secured significant wage increases for nurses and Assistants in Nursing working across the sector.

Winning pay rises for aged care workers was just the beginning. In 2025, the ANMF will shift focus to its second Work Value Case, which seeks to vary the *Nurses Award 2020* to lift the minimum award wage rates for all registered and enrolled nurses, midwives, and Assistants in Nursing who work in other settings.

AGED CARE

For many years, the ANMF has campaigned for meaningful and substantial reforms in aged care.

Promisingly, recent wins have included the introduction of Registered nurse 24/7, mandatory minimum care minutes requirements, and wage increases for aged care workers through the ANMF's Work Value Case at the Fair Work Commission (FWC). But significant work remains.

Attraction and retention remain some of the biggest challenges facing aged care. Numerous strategies should be considered, such as creating more genuine career pathways, utilising nurse practitioners more strategically, and investing in the existing workforce, particularly enrolled nurses and the vital contribution they provide to the skills mix.

The ANMF remains committed to the development of strategies to: enhance the recruitment of nurses and midwives, especially new graduates; reduce undergraduate attrition; and address workforce retention.

Unsustainable workloads are a key driver of the workforce crisis. The ANMF is advocating for a range of strategies to improve retention, including increasing nurse practitioner positions; boosting the nursing and midwifery workforce through scholarships; increasing support for continuity of care models; and improving clinical placements.

Descent toward fascism

Continued from page one

The most reactionary and violence-prone of capitalists are moving to occupy the seats of power, with Trump's MAGA mass movement providing a support base that – when combined with the financial power of the monopolies and the philosophical influence of the free-market ideologues and Evangelical fanatics – provides the means for splitting the working class and weakening bourgeois democracy, limited as it may be.

The months leading up to the inauguration and the days since have been nothing short of an orgy of greed – a celebration of corruption, exploitation, and unbridled power.

Executive orders gift-wrapped for the oil and pharmaceutical companies, among others, were delivered on a silver platter by the White House occupant on day one.

Miriam Adelson and other big donors who back Israel's war received a wink and a smile, with strong signals that, despite bragging about winning the Gaza ceasefire, the new government will support the eventual annexation of the West Bank and the opening of Gaza to settlement and sell-off.

Tax cuts for the wealthy, wage-crushing layoffs, and privatisation of everything from the Post Office to Social Security are dangled as the prizes still to come.

Marx noted that "One capitalist always kills many," referring to the process of concentration and centralisation of capital inherent to monopolisation. The same saying could also be used to refer to the circular firing squad that we're likely to see Trump's regime devolve into if his first administration is any indicator.

Firings, resignations, backstabbings, factional divisions in Congress – all that and more will destabilise his administration and present opportunities.

So, while the new administration is making a big show of its power and executing a shock-and-awe blitzkrieg-style assault on working people and democracy with a flood of executive orders, Trump's government is not as invincible as it might seem.

He and his coterie of billionaire politicos will definitely cause some serious damage, but soon enough, it will become obvious to many who voted for him that his policies aren't delivering a better life for them, their families, or their communities.

The resistance has to be built up – in the streets, in city councils, state legislatures, and in Congress – to frustrate Trump's schemes and prove that the people can win again.

(Abridged)

*CJ Atkins is the managing editor at *People's World*, paper of the CPUSA. He holds a PhD in political science from York University in Toronto and has a research and teaching background in political economy and the politics and ideas of the American left.

People's World

www.cpa.org.au

Appeal to all members and supporters to act now on issues arising from the National Cabinet on AntiSemitism.

Please send the below letter to the PM

Of course, we deplore and discourage property damage being inflicted on property belonging to any group and in the current case the Jewish community. The Zionists and the enemies of Palestine are using this issue to direct attention away from their prosecution of a genocide on the Palestinian people.

There is no antisemitism crisis in this country, it is a lie! We quote from a recent twitter (X) post from Jews against Occupation: "*Antisemitism is no more heinous than any other form of racism, yet its potential for cynical weaponisation against free speech and the democratic right to protest make it a favourite of unscrupulous politicians.*"

We are calling on state and federal governments to be just as vigilant about genocide as they are about property damage. Around 158 countries in the world including Australia called on Israel months ago to ceasefire but the war continued and extended to Lebanon and Yemen.

The PM of Israel has an arrest warrant out for him for genocide issued by the ICJ and there is a case currently before the ICC accusing Israel of genocide. Organisations like Amnesty and others have condemned Israel. Despite all this the Australian government has failed to sanction Israel in any real sense. There has been no expelling of Israeli diplomats, and Australian politicians of the ALP and LNP have been visiting Israel.

And now using this issue of property damage they have ramped up a campaign to criminalise criticism of Israel and pass so called 'hate speech' legislation which is a new variation on an attack on democratic rights.

Hence, to counter this push we are encouraging all our members and supporters to insist that Israel be treated as a pariah state. We demand that Israeli businesses and particularly arms corporations are not given carte blanche to profit in this country.

We are particularly keen that Israeli arms companies are not active in any way in Australia. Hence the request to send the below letter to the PM. We would encourage members and supporters to spread this letter as far and wide as possible to allies in the peace movement, unions and other civil society organisations.

In future we encourage all members to support the BDS movement to put pressure on Israel to change its genocidal and apartheid practices. The opening salvo is to send this letter to the PM. It can also be sent to other parliamentarians once the PM has been contacted.

Andrew Irving
General Secretary
Communist Party of Australia
Romina Beitsen
Coordinator of Peace and Social Justice Committee of the CC

'Ban Arms Sales to Israel'

Draft open letter to PM

Suggested wording which you can alter to suit your views on the issue.

email
https://www.pm.gov.au/contact
type in your details
in subject write : Ban Arms Sales to Israel

or use ordinary mail
Prime Minister Anthony Albanese
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Ban Arms Sales to Israel

You must not allow Israeli arms companies to display their wares at the federal government supported Indo-Pacific Expo due to be held in Darling Harbour in November this year.

This arms fair is to showcase Israeli military products which will be marketed as 'battle-hardened.' Indeed, the bloody rubble of Gaza has been a human testing ground for drones and all manner of new Israeli military technologies.

These companies will boast of their effectiveness in pursuing genocide, yet they will suffer no sanction or censure. Given your campaign against antisemitism, it would be hypocritical if the perpetrators and beneficiaries of genocide were welcomed in NSW.

We call on you to ban all Israeli arms companies from the NSW and federal government sponsored Indo-Pacific Expo due to be held 4-6 November this year.

Yours sincerely
Signature: .....
Name: .....
Address: .....
..... Postcode: .....

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15 pm till 5:00 pm Monday 17 February
USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

Looking for the truth?

Want a paper you can trust?

Which is on your side?

Special *Guardian* Subscription Offer

10 issues for $20

See subscription form page 15

Wage theft a criminal offence

Photo: Peter Walsh – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

As of 1 January 2025, wage theft is now a criminal offence across Australia. Due to legislation passed by the Albanese government and pushed by the union movement, employers found to have intentionally underpaid staff could face up to $8 million in fines and possible jail time.

Finance Sector Union (FSU) member and former Commonwealth Bank employee Andy Swift knows all too well the consequences of big corporations exploiting their workers. He was ripped off thousands of dollars in wage theft and was one of 7,000 employees at the bank who fought to win their money back.

"When I started working at CBA, I defaulted onto an individual agreement (IA)," said Swift.

"I didn't have any experience to know that was unusual, I didn't even really know what the enterprise agreement (EA) was, and the bank didn't go to great lengths to explain it."

It turned out that this IA, which was much weaker than the EA and was only supposed to be allowed in very specific circumstances, was being rolled out more broadly.

"They told us that the IA was a better deal because of the increased salary, but there was no real deep discussion or information provided, and it was presented to us as the default option, not something we could opt for."

After the FSU took CBA to task and the Federal Court found the bank guilty of these practices, Swift received backpay totalling thousands of dollars.

"While it was never explained how that figure was calculated, they said there had been mistakes made to the 'better off overall test,'" Swift explained.

"I'm guessing it was mostly to do with overtime – I did a lot of overtime when I first started, I was doing 60 hours a week, and while I was still getting paid for it, I suspect it wasn't enough."

Ultimately, these new wage theft laws are about balancing the scales of fairness. The Federal government argues it has always been the case that workers face criminal charges if they steal from their employer, so it is only fair that employers who deliberately steal from their workers also face criminal charges.

Peter Dutton and the Coalition voted against the changes.

Swift said he was pleased to see these changes, but did wonder how high the bar would be set for a company to be found guilty of this criminal behaviour.

"It's a step in the right direction at the very least.

"I do think it will make big corporations think twice, and I'm guessing there will likely be some precedents set early on showing that claiming ignorance is not necessarily a get out of jail free card."

Fee-free TAFE welcomed

The country's largest union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), has welcomed the Albanese government's commitment to expanding fee-free TAFE courses.

ANMF Federal Secretary Annie Butler said enduring funding for free TAFE study would help address skills shortages in the nursing and aged care workforces and save students thousands of dollars a year in TAFE course fees.

The union says TAFE courses have proven to be a success in providing students with 'hands-on' training and placements in relevant healthcare settings, helping build the nation's nursing and aged care workforce, to meet the needs of our growing, ageing population.

"We've been delighted that, so far, over 300,000 women have enrolled in fee-free courses across various sectors, including nursing, aged care, and disability services," said Butler.

"In a cost-of-living crisis, the Albanese government's commitment to continue with free TAFE courses, will save a student nurse thousands of dollars a year in course fees. For example, in Queensland, a student enrolled in a Diploma of Nursing course would save almost $16,000.

"We need to urgently grow the next generation of high-quality health and aged care workers and removing cost-barriers like these will continue to attract students into care industries which are still struggling to find suitably-trained staff.

"Fee-free TAFE courses will help recruit new enrolled nurses into the profession and deliver a pipeline of suitably-trained job-ready workers and the ANMF commends the government on its commitment to supporting the health and aged care workforce."

More broadly, reductions in funding for vocational education such as TAFE are both a cause and a consequence of the decline in participation in programs, contributing to a damaging cycle of cumulative causation: reduced enrolments allow governments to further cut funding, which in turn further damages the quality of vocational training, and further reduces the incentive for students to enrol (and undermining the confidence of employers in the whole system).

Continued collapse in enrolments and 8 years of declining apprenticeship completions make it very clear: Australia's domestic skills pipeline is in disarray. This has implications for whether Australia will have the right workforce with the right skills for the future economy.

TAFE and the VET system are critical to supporting millions of Australians to access training, facilitating crisis-accelerated employment transitions, and meeting skills shortages.

Dingo bytes

The United Workers' Union (UWU) declares that "Climate change is union business." The union notes that workers in Australia are on the frontlines of the climate crisis and that UWU members are already dealing with the impacts of a changing climate. Workers are being left without support as workplaces close, industries begin to transition, and climate change impacts cause risks to health and safety in the workplace.

"As organised workers, we have an important role to play in making sure Australian workplaces, communities and political leaders step up to do what is necessary to limit global warming to well below 2°C.

"We can't let the future of working people and our communities be decided in corporate boardrooms and private meetings. United Workers' Union members are campaigning for just transitions, including sustainable jobs with union agreements, secure jobs and decent conditions for workers.

"Our climate work is guided by our member advisory bodies. At our 2022 member convention the following four climate resolutions were passed."

We endorse a plan for UWU's operations to get to zero emissions on a timeline that is in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

We call for UWU to put pressure on Labor to ensure we do better than 43 per cent emissions reductions by 2030, and to support policies and targets that are in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

We call for UWU to resource a campaign to improve access to Disaster and Emergency Services Leave, with the aim of having universal access enshrined in the National Employment Standards.

We endorse the ongoing collaboration and resourcing of the work with Union and non-Union partners towards achieving climate justice.

Who is the target of the AUKUS alliance? This is explicit in all the writing on the subject and what all the leaders of AUKUS have said: It is China. In other words, this is a containment of China policy with the South China Sea and the Taiwanese Strait as the key contested oceanic regions. Positioning US naval ships, including nuclear-powered submarines armed with nuclear weapons makes Australia a front-line state in the current US plans for the containment of China.

For those who have been following the nuclear proliferation issues, the deal raises a different red flag. If submarine nuclear reactor technology and weapons-grade (highly enriched) uranium are shared with Australia, it is a breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to which Australia is a signatory *as a non-nuclear power*. Even the supplying of such nuclear reactors by the US and the UK would constitute a breach of the NPT. This is even if such submarines do not carry nuclear but conventional weapons as stated in this agreement.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is Alfred Deakin, the author of the White Australia Policy and prime mover of the Aboriginal Protection Amendment Act, which divided Aboriginal people into "full and mixed race" which in practice meant the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their homes, the Stolen Generations. Thus, there's currently a move to have Deakin University renamed.

The White Australia Policy was a set of historical racist policies that aimed to forbid people of non-European ethnic origin – especially Asians (primarily Chinese) and Pacific Islanders – from immigrating to Australia, starting in 1901, in order to create an Anglo-Celtic deal. The policy also affected immigrants from Germany, Italy, and other European countries, especially in wartime.

Menzies the Nazi appeaser

Marcus Browning

The founder of the Liberal Party, Robert Menzies, was an enthusiastic supporter of Adolph Hitler and the Nazis. Amid the current hullabaloo and white noise about "Nazi salutes and symbols" it is worth recalling the "broad church of the Liberal Party" came into existence kneeling before the alter of fascism. And here in the 21st century members of the Coalition make speeches at Neo-Nazi rallies.

Eight days after the beginning of World War II was declared, Menzies wrote to former Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, who at the time occupied the post of High Commissioner to Britain. Menzies told Bruce that Britain should negotiate with Hitler after the fall of Poland to the Nazi invaders. He expected that it would lead to "a resettlement of the whole map of Europe with joint and several guarantees all round."

In reality, the policy of appeasement – acceding to the demands of the fascist dictators rather than resisting them – was a conscious policy to "encourage" fascist aggression.

Far from wanting to "avoid the carnage" of another war, imperialist governments fostered and armed fascist regimes for the express purpose of stopping Communism.

The appeasers helped Germany rearm; helped Hitler, Mussolini and Franco to destroy Republican Spain; refused to lift a finger to stop Japan's conquest of China. All part of their grand plan to have the Axis powers attack and destroy the hated Bolshevik stronghold, the Soviet Union.

The European powers refused to join in any serious consideration of collective security (as proposed time and again by Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov) – which alone could have safeguarded peace in Europe.

Instead, the ruling class of Britain, France, and the USA rejoiced in every new development in Nazi Germany that enhanced the likelihood of war.

And Robert Menzies, a leading light of the United Australia Party (UAP) – forerunner of the Liberal Party – and Attorney General in the Bruce government, shared the same class admiration for the Nazis. He returned from a visit to Germany in the mid-'30s full of praise for Hitler and what he had supposedly done for Germany.

Later, he went out of his way to please the German ambassador in his efforts to "get" the visiting anti-fascist Czech writer Egon Kisch.

His partiality for fascist regimes was not limited to Germany, either. His nickname of Pig Iron Bob stamped on him by the Waterside Workers' Federation (now part of the Maritime Union of Australia) stemmed from his notorious use of legislation to try and force waterside workers to load pig iron for shipment to Japan at a time when Japan had actually invaded China.

The pig iron was wanted by the Japanese imperialists for the making of shells and other weapons, to be used against the Chinese people.

The class-conscious wharfies could also see in the rise of fascism that Australia would be on the receiving end of those shells.

In early 1939, the Japanese government publicly thanked Menzies for his help in keeping them supplied with pig iron for their war effort. If Japan did go to war with Australia, their good friend Menzies would be in no danger.

Menzies is also irrevocably associated with the plan to appease Japan by proposing to give her the northern part of Australia, down as far as Brisbane (the "Brisbane Line" plan, subsequently vehemently denied by Menzies' supporters). On 22 April, 1940, Labor MHR Mahoney told the House (referring to Menzies): "At heart he is a Nazi.

"When I walked along one of Canberra's streets with him some time ago he said: 'I have a great admiration for the Nazi organisation of Germany.

" 'There is a case for Germany against Czechoslovakia. We must not destroy Hitlerism or talk about shooting Hitler ... .' "

The war was only 8 days old when Menzies wrote to Bruce, and it was not yet clear to people that the governments of Britain and France had no intention of actually trying to stop Hitler from conquering Poland.

The Anglo-French declaration of war against Germany was intended to placate public opinion at home and to pressure Germany not to get too carried away with this Non-Aggression Pact it had just signed with the USSR. Hitler was being reminded not to forget who his real friends were and to continue marching east to the Soviet Union.

In the Bruce letter Menzies shows his grasp of the basics of Anglo-French foreign policy as well as his lack of concern for the people of Poland. "Nobody really cares a damn about Poland," he tells Bruce.

But Menzies' main concern is to have Bruce persuade the British government that it would be a mistake to wage war on Germany.

He supplies Australia's High Commissioner with arguments Bruce can use, including that "Germany's defensive position is incredibly strong," that such a war would cost "in the long run, millions of British and French lives," and that "the economic force which will be our ultimate weapon will tend to affect us almost as severely as it does Germany."

Bruce subsequently replied indicating that he had "constantly urged" Menzies' views upon the British government.

A few months later, still anticipating a Hitler victory in the great crusade against the Bolsheviks, Menzies banned the Communist Party of Australia. A year after that, when Nazi Germany finally invaded the Soviet Union, Menzies announced that "Russia won't last six weeks."

Fortunately for us all, he was wrong – again.

Lotte Lenya

Written after World War II

By now we are used to the rubble, which they clear up religiously and indefatigably. What a determination to get on top again! One could admire it, if one would not be afraid that somewhere lurks another Hitler. But you can't seem to find a single Nazi in Germany! Nobody was one! It was all a dream!

Lotte Lenya was an Austrian-American singer and actress, well known for her performances of Kurt Weill's songs and parts in Bertolt Brecht's plays.

Call for reproductive leave

Australia's lack of reproductive leave is costing the economy $26.6 billion a year in lost productivity, new research has found amid calls for 12 days of reproductive leave.

An interim report by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre commissioned by the Health Services Union (HSU, including HACSU, Victoria), Aware Super and Queensland Council of Trade Unions, has revealed the eye-watering economic cost of people missing work days, working through pain and sickness and retiring early due to reproductive conditions.

The analysis also finds that implementing 12 days of reproductive leave for all Australians would only cost employers $920 million a year, one 30th the productivity cost without it.

The report finds that women with severe menstrual pain lose nearly 9 productive days per year, while those experiencing menopause with severe symptoms face a 25 per cent drop in productivity.

Alarmingly, 1 in 3 women with endometriosis have had to change jobs, with many forced to forgo promotions or switch careers entirely due to their symptoms.

HSU National Senior Assistant Secretary Kate Marshall said implementing 12 days of leave would reduce the loss of output due to extended absenteeism and reduced productivity.

"This powerful research exposes the financial impact of ignoring reproductive health. The $26 billion annual cost isn't just an abstract number – it reflects real lives disrupted and real productivity lost.

"It would cost just $920 million to implement 12 days reproductive leave for every Australian worker.

"This would be a game-changer for women dealing with painful periods, menopause and other reproductive health conditions.

"Providing access to paid leave will allow people to rest, heal and treat these conditions without worrying about the financial and workplace consequences of this choice. In Japan and Italy, menstrual leave has reduced absenteeism and staff turnover.

"The current system leaves too many workers facing a painful choice: suffer in silence at work or take unpaid leave. Reproductive leave is about fairness, dignity, and economic sense.

"Reproductive leave is a win-win solution: it reduces absenteeism, improves productivity, and allows workers to manage their health without fear or stigma.

"Women's health issues have long been swept under the rug, but we can't afford to ignore them any longer. Reproductive leave is not just humane – it's economically smart."

Reproductive health leave would cover IVF, severe menstrual pain, endometriosis, vasectomies, menopause, gender transitioning therapies, and other health issues.

The HSU's campaign calls on the federal government to make the 12-day entitlement part of the national employment standards, which set minimum conditions for workers.

Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) Victorian Secretary Paul Healey said reproductive leave was a major opportunity for the country.

"Reproductive leave would be a game-changer for Australia and a world-first because we are pushing for the 12 days to be available to all genders.

"Every worker, regardless of their reproductive health challenges, should be given the best chance possible to stay at work. Too many people are draining other types of leave to deal with their reproductive health."

Invasion Day Report

NAARM/MELBOURNE

DC

This year's Invasion Day rally at Naarm/Melbourne was marked with solemnity and hope intertwined. There was fiery gusto among the Aboriginal and Palestinian speakers as this year the 2 communities combined once again to stand in solidarity against the colonisation of both peoples.

Approximately 40,000 people attended the rally at Parliament House, with almost 2 full hours of community contributions before the march. The march proceeded to Federation Square, where yet more figures spoke, sung, and cried. Despite the failure of the Voice Referendum in 2023, the Indigenous peoples of Australia and their allies have been remarkably resilient, and have continued to push forward in support of Indigenous sovereignty.

The rampant brutality by police against Indigenous communities across Australia, including against children and those in custody, has remained as a talking point at these rallies. It is tragic to hear with every passing year a new list of deaths in custody. A stark reminder that there is no justice for Indigenous peoples in the legal system of the colony.

On the other hand, the movement for Truth-telling and Treaty has seen some progress in the past year. Many speakers were happy to relay their successes and personal involvement in the commissions and committees that have been consulting with the state government for the past few years. Earlier in January, the state government finally announced that negotiations for our first statewide Treaty commence this year, alongside the establishment of a First Peoples Assembly.

Activists and community leaders were eager to relay the importance of these achievements to the crowd. They were just as quick to relay caution, however, as what has been "given" can easily be taken away. The struggle for Indigenous rights will not end with the establishment of a Treaty. In many ways it is just the beginning. In contrast to previous years there was surprisingly less chanting and shouting to be had, midst dour conditions plaguing the world, people are still able to connect and extend solidarity. What we saw was resistance of a different kind. Resistance founded in love.

These stolen lands always were and always will be Aboriginal land. We will not stop until that truth is codified and realised at all levels of our society! The Communist Party of Australia extends its everlasting solidarity to the Indigenous peoples of Australia.

MEANJIN/BRISBANE

Thousands gathered in the heart of Meanjin/Brisbane to support Aboriginal Rights. Speakers proudly advocated a "fair go" for Australia's First Peoples as the longest surviving culture on the planet. Attention was drawn the fact that Queensland's prosperity was founded on stolen Aboriginal land and stolen Aboriginal wages.

It was made clear that the justice system means injustice for Aboriginal People – white justice but certainly no black justice. Although the Queensland government wants to get rid of "truth telling" legislation, Aboriginal People believe "truth never dies" and we should never forget the frontier wars as part of a history of Aboriginal genocide.

As a magnanimous gesture an invitation was extended to non-Indigenous Australians to walk together with Aboriginal Australians into the future.

GABI GABI LAND/SUNSHINE COAST

Che Janz

Invasion Day in the Sunshine Coast is always different to how it's celebrated in the rest of Queensland, especially Magandjin/Brisbane. It's more personalised, but still shows the wider history of the European invasion of this beautiful series of islands we call Australia. Despite the right-wing press trying to put us down stating our numbers were falling, we once against dispelled the misinformation.

Around 350 people attended the rally and subsequent event in the park. A fraction compared to the state capital naturally, but impressive for such an apolitical-conservative area that is the Sunshine Coast. With around a 15 per cent increases from last year's rally (my personal 'guesstimate') it shows that the numbers are indeed growing.

Other than an angry person dangling an "Australian" national flag picnic blanket and another person who tried doing a lone stampede into the crowd (who was instantly removed by police before he was even 30 yards from us), there were practically zero hecklers.

The event concluded with a free barbeque (organised/ran by the Greens), a small market, a corroboree that welcomed audience participation and some excellent local artists preforming poems, acoustic country music, and an iconic didgeridoo performance.

The program also included a collection of different speakers ranging from citizens to public servants, giving their input on their struggles and individual pushes for Indigenous rights in their own way. The organisers invited a representative for the CPA to speak and I volunteered to do so. I kept it rather brief simply going over the CPA's continual support for Indigenous liberation since 1931, how we called not just for equal rights but many progressive proposals such as Aboriginal courts/juries to reassess pre-existing/future legal cases.

The day overall meshed activism for the future of first Australians' rights and prosperity, whilst also being a family friendly event celebrating the world's oldest continuous culture. Before, during and after the march I was approached numerous times by people enquiring about the CPA.

Invasion Day rally attended by about 500 people in Boorloo/Perth on Sunday 26th January 2025.

Gabi Gabi Land/Sunshine Coast.

Magandjin/Brisbane.

Gadigal Land/Sydney.

Pressure the climate wreckers

Australia's two largest oil and gas producers, Woodside and Santos have faced mounting pressure from shareholders to align with global climate goals by delivering credible transition strategies. Yet both companies have repeatedly ignored genuine shareholder concerns about their approach to climate risk management, continuing with dangerous oil and gas expansion plans that are incompatible with the climate goals of the Paris Agreement.

Market Forces (MF) has waged an ongoing campaign against investment by banks, investment houses and superannuation funds investing in fossil fuel companies. It has done extensive analysis of where these institutions invest their funds providing the public with valuable information.

Its website provides links to contact banks and superannuation funds to request information on where they invest their savings and to call on them to divest from fossil fuel companies. MF's new analysis reveals that most of Australia's top 30 super funds failed to vote for greater climate action.

Not a single super fund has disclosed any further steps for increasing pressure on Woodside or Santos to align with global climate goals.

Despite Woodside and Santos being examples of the most climate risk-exposed companies on the Australian share market due to the scale of their oil and gas expansion plans, both companies have consistently failed to deliver credible climate transition strategies.

No super fund has committed to any clear escalation steps in response to this failure, despite identifying this as a necessary feature of an effective climate-related active ownership strategy.

VOTING AT WOODSIDE

Eight super funds backed off pressure at Woodside through their voting activity in 2024: Active Super, Australian Retirement Trust, CareSuper, Cbus, Equipsuper, HESTA, Rest, and TelstraSuper.

Six super funds increased pressure by voting against the re-election of Woodside's Chair: Aware Super, ESSSuper, Qantas Super, Spirit Super, State Super, and Vision Super

Two super funds pre-declared their intentions to vote against the re-election of Woodside's Chair: Aware Super and Vision Super.

VOTING AT SANTOS

Two super funds backed off pressure at Santos through their voting activity in 2024: Aware Super and Rest. While neither fund voted against the re-election of a director in 2024, both voted against the company's remuneration plan.

Photo: rawpixel.com (CC0)-

Two super funds increased pressure by voting against the re-election of Santos' Chair: HESTA and Vision Super.

A further 2 super funds voted against the re-election of another Santos director: Cbus and Qantas Super

After several years of a world record-breaking majority vote against its climate transition plan, the company has since responded by doubling down on plans to further expand gas production, acquiring an undeveloped liquefied natural gas (LNG) project that could boost the company's emissions.

Santos, despite demands from shareholders to change course, is continuing to develop the dirty and highly controversial Barossa gas project and pursuing other new gas fields including in Papua New Guinea and the Piliga Forest area on Gomeroi Country in New South Wales.

Last year's Woodside and Santos AGMs offered crucial opportunities for super funds to prove their claims of using members' investments to drive greater climate action. Super funds could ramp up the pressure on these climate wreckers, as the chairs of both companies' boards were up for re-election.

But MF's analysis found that many super funds lost their nerve, failing to hold Woodside's and Santos' boards accountable for their gas growth plans, which threaten mounting environmental, social and financial risks.

Super fund members have the power to hold funds accountable for failing on climate.

DEMAND ANSWERS NOW!

Visit MF's website, marketforces.org.au, for links to write to your bank or superannuation fund and ask them how they invest and tell them you do not want your money invested in fossil fuel projects.

Acknowledgements Market Forces

Statement by Danish Communist Party (DKP)

Fingers off Greenland!

Greenland's dependence on Denmark is the result of colonial subjugation – not a voluntary choice. If Greenland wants to break this dependence, the choice is the Greenlanders'; but Denmark cannot run away from its obligations.

The Arctic, and thus also Greenland, has enormous geostrategic importance, among other things due to its location close to Russia and China. With the melting of the ice in the Arctic, the coveted northern corridor is moving closer to reality. Trade routes are about to change, and thus interest in Greenland and its resources increases. It is increasing as the monopolies' competition for markets globally is intensifying day by day.

It is an oversimplification to simply explain the recent worsening situation around Greenland with arguments that Donald Trump cannot be trusted. The situation is the result of huge financial interests and not the quirks of a single person.

Therefore, it is hypocritical to witness the Danish government's diplomatic dance with the USA, since Denmark itself is part of the problem for Greenland. Against the background of Denmark as an oppressive colonial power, but also as an uncritical accomplice of the United States, the Danish state is part of the imperialist alliance anchored in NATO and the United States. Denmark itself opened for the USA's military presence in Greenland a long time ago and is also about to open the door for the same in Denmark itself.

Denmark thus contributes to increasing uncertainty in the world. The hostages here are the Greenlanders, who are just a pawn in imperialism's game. The Greenlanders should, if they wish, be their own masters.

The competition of monopolies for markets, raw materials and transport routes automatically leads to territorial redistribution of the world, to imperialist wars and border changes. Imperialist competition aims at supremacy and the exercise of power over weaker states and people.

It aims at the monopolies' profit, profit for the few, but also at weakening opponents. That is why it is relentless and cynical. DKP believes that the people must show the way for the confrontation with the bourgeois and anti-people politics in every version, the power of capital and thus the exploitative and war-making system.

The Danish government must realize that its closest ally is not doing so out of a good heart, but to secure its own financial interests. Exactly the same as is the case with Denmark's grip on Greenland. Therefore, we must respect the Greenlanders' right to determine their own destiny and speak out against any kind of increase of insecurity in the world.

DKP says STOP interference by foreign powers in Greenland's affairs. Hands off Greenland!

Danish Communist Party

GREEN NOTES

We need a renewables revolution

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity and a liveable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition.

Nero was famously accused of fiddling while Rome burned. Today, some leaders are doing worse. They are throwing fuel on the fire. Literally.

Meanwhile all climate indicators continue to break records, forecasting a future of ferocious storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and unliveable temperatures in vast swathes of the planet. Our world faces climate chaos. New funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional. Fossil fuels are not the answer, nor will they ever be.

Renewable energy is the answer – to limit climate disruption and boost energy security. Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. But the battle for a rapid and just energy transition is not being fought on a level field. Investors are still backing fossil fuels, and governments still hand out billions in subsidies for coal, oil, and gas – some US$11 million every minute.

We are still addicted to fossil fuels. For the health of our societies and planet, we need to quit. Now. The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity and a liveable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition. I have called on G20 governments to dismantle coal infrastructure, with a full phase-out by 2030 for OECD countries and 2040 for all others. I have urged financial actors to abandon fossil fuel finance and invest in renewable energy. And I have proposed a five-point plan to boost renewable energy round the world.

First, we must make renewable energy technology a global public good, including removing intellectual property barriers to technology transfer.

Second, we must improve global access to supply chains for renewable energy technologies components and raw materials. In 2020, the world installed 5 gigawatts of battery storage. We need 600 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030. Clearly, we need a global coalition to get there.

Third, we must cut the red tape that holds up solar and wind projects.

Fourth, the world must shift energy subsidies from fossil fuels to protect vulnerable people from energy shocks and invest in a just transition to sustainable future.

And **fifth**, we need to triple investments in renewables. All must step up and dramatically boost investments in renewables.

But current national commitments will lead to an increase of almost 14 per cent this decade. That spells catastrophe. The answer lies in renewables – for climate action, for energy security, and for providing clean electricity to the hundreds of millions of people who currently lack it. Renewables are a triple win.

There is no excuse for anyone to reject a renewables revolution. While oil and gas prices have reached record price levels, renewables are getting cheaper all the time. The cost of solar energy and batteries has plummeted 85 per cent over the past decade. The cost of wind power fell by 55 per cent. And investment in renewables creates 3 times more jobs than fossil fuels.

Of course, renewables are not the only answer to the climate crisis. Nature-based solutions, such as reversing deforestation and land degradation, are essential. So too are efforts to promote energy efficiency. But a rapid renewable energy transition must be our ambition.

As we wean ourselves off fossil fuels, the benefits will be vast, and not just to the climate. Energy prices will be lower and more predictable, with positive knock-on effects for food and economic security. So, let us all agree that a rapid renewables revolution is necessary and stop fiddling while our future burns.

Abridged for reasons of space

30 June 2022

US raises a middle finger to ICC

Vijay Prashad

The International Criminal Court (ICC) in Den Haag. Photo: justflix – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Finally, before history ends, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The indictment stated that there "are reasonable grounds to believe that both individuals intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity."

The court found sufficient reasons to believe that the two men "bear criminal responsibility" for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare, the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts, and the war crime of intentionally directing an attack against a civilian population.

Almost immediately, US President Joe Biden condemned the court's actions, stating that the "ICC issuance of arrest warrants against Israeli leaders is outrageous. "The United States," Biden said, "will always stand with Israel."

A short walk from Biden's White House sits Freedom House, an institution set up in 1941 and predominantly funded by the US State Department. Each year, Freedom House releases its *Freedom in the World* Index, which uses various data points to adjudge whether a country is "free," "partly free," or "not free."

Adversaries of the US – such as China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Russia – are consistently found to be "not free," even if they have electoral processes and legislative bodies of various kinds (in Iran's 2024 legislative elections, for example, 15,200 candidates ran for 290 seats in the Consultative Assembly; while last year in Cuba, the 470 seats in the National Assembly of People's Power were elected by 75.87 per cent of eligible voters).

Meanwhile, the 2024 index accords Israel with a "global freedom score" of 74/100 and proclaims it to be the only "free" state in the region, despite the authors noting that in Israel "the political leadership and many in society have discriminated against Arab and other ethnic or religious minority populations, resulting in systemic disparities in areas including infrastructure, criminal justice, education, and economic opportunity." According to the measurements of this US State Department-funded index, which is routinely used to disparage countries around the world that it deems unfree, an apartheid system built on occupation and now genocide is considered an exemplary democracy.

Indices, such as the one from Freedom House, are not as innocent as they may appear. The design of the index – built on the subjective assessments of analysts and advisors selected from the world of Western establishment think tanks – produces outcomes that are often prescribed.

While Freedom House claims to draw from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights(1966), it ignores the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). The latter would necessitate understanding democracy in a far more capacious way than the mere holding of elections and existence of multiple political parties. Article 11 of the second covenant, alone, would expand the idea of democracy to include the right to housing and the right to be free from hunger.

As Article 4 notes, the purpose of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is to promote "the general welfare in a democratic society." Democracy here is used with the broadest understanding, extending far beyond simple electoralism. And even with regard to electoralism, there is scant concern in the Freedom House index for the high rates of abstention across liberal democracies and for the collapse of a vibrant media culture to hold political parties and leaders to account.

But then, what do those behind such indices care? They think themselves masters of the universe. The reactions to the ICC indictment from the US and Germany – the 2 countries with the largest arms transfers to Israel during this genocide – have been expected, but nonetheless shocking. Biden's cavalier reaction confirms that the US either does not understand or does not care about the gravity of its callousness and that the US fails to grasp that its rejection of the ICC warrants is the final nail in the coffin of the US's 'rules-based international order.'

On the issue of callousness: ahead of the 2024 US presidential election the Biden administration said that Israel had to allow aid into Gaza within 30 days or it would face a weapons' freeze, but this deadline came and went without much concern. The 'rules-based international order' was always a bit of a farce.

In 2002, during the US-driven War on Terror, the US Congress debated the possibility that a US soldier or CIA agent could be charged with a war crime. To immunise that soldier or agent, the US Congress passed the American Servicemembers' Protection Act, which has been widely called the 'Hague Invasion Act.' Although the act does not say that the US can invade the Netherlands to free its personnel from the ICC, it does say that the US president "is authorised to use all means necessary and appropriate to bring about the release of any person ... who is being detained or imprisoned by, on behalf of, or at the request of the International Criminal Court." Around the time of the passage of this act, the US formally withdrew from the Rome Statute (1998) that set up the ICC.

Both US Senators Tom Cotton and Lindsey Graham have invoked the Hague Invasion Act in response to the ICC's issuance of arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, with Graham going so far as to say that the US Senate should place sanctions, even on allies such as Canada, for having the temerity to suggest that they would uphold the warrants.

If the US throws the ICC warrants to the winds, then it has told the world with finality that it does not believe in the rules, or that the rules are only made to discipline others and not itself. It is remarkable to see the list of international treaties that the US either never signed or never ratified. A few examples are sufficient to make the case about its disregard for a genuine rules-based international order:

- Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949, never signed).
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, never signed).
- Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960, never signed).
- Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages (1962, signed but never ratified).
- Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (1968, never signed).
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982, never signed).
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1989, signed but never ratified).
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, signed but never ratified).

Even more horrifying are the arms control conventions that the US has either refused to sign or from which it has unilaterally withdrawn:

- Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty (1972, withdrew in 2002).
- Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty (1987, withdrew in 2019).
- Mine Ban Treaty (1997, never signed).
- Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008, never signed).
- Arms Trade Treaty (2013, signed but withdrew in 2019).

It is because the US unilaterally left the ABM Treaty and the INF Treaty that the conflict over Ukraine has become so inflamed. Russia had made it clear on several occasions that the absence of any arms control regime regarding mid-range nuclear missiles would pose a threat to its major cities, were its neighbours to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

On 18 November, in a provocative and dangerous move, Biden allowed Ukraine to use intermediate-range missiles to strike Russian territory, which drew a powerful response from Russia against Ukraine. If Russia had decided to fire one of those missiles at a US base in Germany in retaliation, for instance, we might already be in midst of a nuclear winter. The US disregard for the arms control regime is only part of its absolute disregard for any international law, sealed in place by its raised middle finger to the ICC.

It is time to revisit the 'great wound,' as Frantz Fanon wrote in 1959, to ride the wound and fight.

Earlier this year, Serote wrote a poem for Palestine, part of which I reproduce:

We hear in our eyes the sounds of the siren and of the explosion
As it blasts our eye and hearing
and the red fire
flares its coming in the air with the power of a storm
The red-hot fire holds human flesh in its red-hot dance
It was preceded by a thick black smoke
Which bellows and rages
On
Oh
Human race

[And then it ends...]

Ah Palestine!
Be.

Tricontinental: Institute of Social Research
(Cut for reasons of space)

The US disregard for the arms control regime is only part of its absolute disregard for any international law

Leonard Peltier: America's longest serving political prisoner

William Briggs

Joe Biden's last days in the White House saw him issue pardons to many Americans serving prison sentences. He commuted death sentences and freed hundreds of inmates serving sentences for relatively minor offences. Why it took so long for a conscience to kick in is an unanswered question. One name, above all others stands out in the Biden list. That name is Leonard Peltier.

This man has been in prison for nearly 48 years. He is America's longest serving political prisoner. He has not been pardoned but has had his sentence commuted to 'indefinite' house imprisonment.

Peltier is a native American activist who was sentenced to two life sentences for shooting two FBI agents in 1975. He has always denied the killings but admitted to being present when the FBI agents engaged with a protest action at the Pine Ridge Reservation. He was a radical. He was an activist but not a murderer. Peltier, a member of the American Indian Movement, had travelled to Pine Ridge to seek to find a way of resolving a dispute between two rival factions in the protest movement.

In all those years, Peltier has remained committed to the cause of social justice. He never ceased protesting his innocence but never bent the knee. He refused to seek a pardon because that would have inferred a degree of guilt. Presidents came and went; Republican and Democrat alike and Peltier remained a political prisoner. Then in a last feeble gesture, Biden released him from prison; but he remains a prisoner.

Peltier's continued activism and protests at his almost perpetual incarceration saw him capture international headlines with a protracted hunger strike. He fasted for 40 days in solidarity with the Irish hunger strikers led by Bobby Sands in 1981. Peltier ran for President of the USA from prison, in the spirit of socialist candidate Eugene Debbs. Peltier's candidacy was for the Peace and Freedom Party in the 2004 presidential election. He ran again, as a vice-presidential candidate in 2020 for the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

The monstrous injustice of the decades long high security imprisonment caught the attention of progressives the world over. The bourgeois media was less than willing to give much space to his condition or his case. This would have drawn attention to the cruelty and barbarity of the US 'justice' system and its sheer bloody-mindedness. Appeals from Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa and the European Parliament all fell on deaf ears. The allegedly progressive Bill Clinton and Barak Obama were equally blind to reason as were Reagan or Bush. Peltier exposed the unanimity of political thought that exists in a bourgeois world.

As the years turned into decades, Leonard Peltier became more and more ill. He has lost vision in one eye. He has diabetes. He has had open heart surgery, has suffered an aortic aneurism, and still suffers from the effects of long COVID. Mid-way through Biden's term in office another appeal was made for Peltier's release.

Nick Tilsen, from the NDN Collective, an indigenous rights organisation in the US was blunt in making that appeal. "The Biden Administration has said that Native American rights are a priority to them, and yet they've got the longest sitting Indigenous political prisoner locked up and we've seen no action from the federal government." He continued, saying that "if he dies in prison this will forever be a part of that administration's legacy as it relates to Native people."

Tilsen and the NDN Collective had little optimism when challenging Biden. To simply remove Peltier from a closed prison to home detention is not freedom. It does not clear his name of murders he did not commit. Peltier's lawyer, Kevin Sharp in petitioning for a parole hearing last year argued that "you've got a conviction that was riddled with misconduct by the prosecutors, the US Attorney's office, by the FBI who investigated this case and, frankly the jury ... If they tried this today, he would not get convicted."

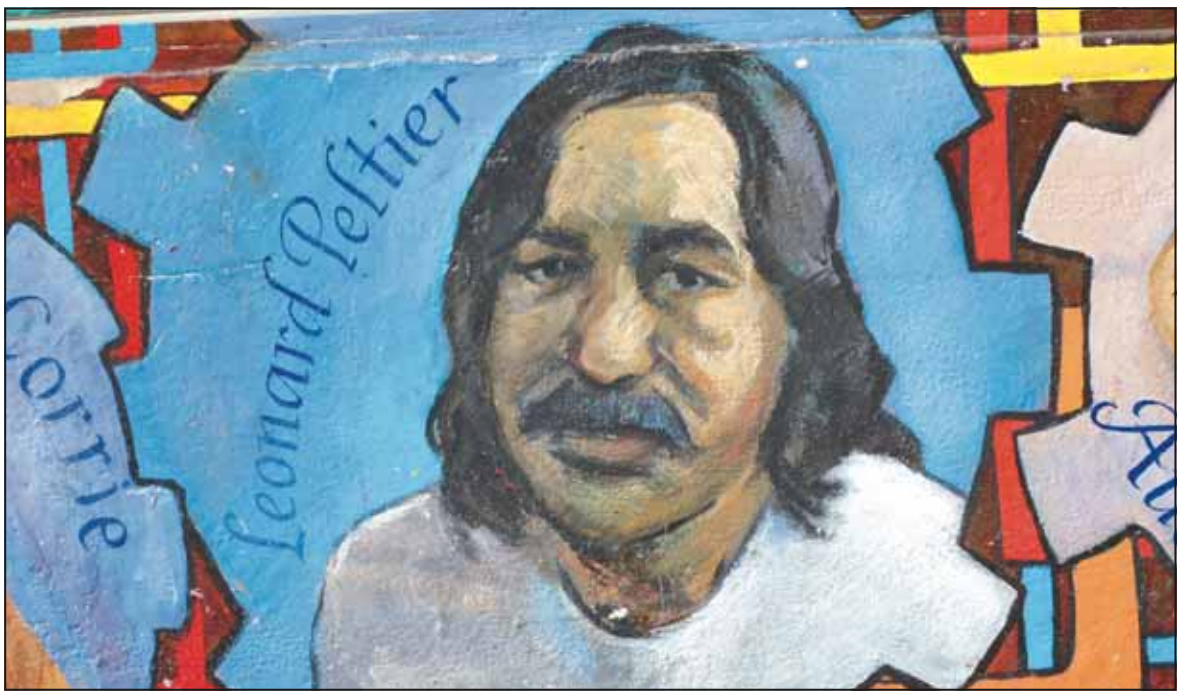


Photo: Gary Stevens – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

In all those years, Peltier has remained committed to the cause of social justice. He never ceased protesting his innocence but never bent the knee. He refused to seek a pardon because that would have inferred a degree of guilt.

Amnesty International joined a long list of those campaigning for his release, as did dozens of members of the US Congress. The lawyer who originally prosecuted the case later agreed that he should be freed.

None of this cuts any ice with those vindictive elements in the US who would be clearly embarrassed if justice were actually served.

Former FBI Director Christopher Wray, whose term of office expired at the same time as Biden, begged the president not to commute the sentence, far less accept that an injustice had been committed. He wrote to Biden, saying that "I urge you in the strongest terms possible: Do not pardon Leonard Peltier or cut his sentence short ... It would ... undermine the principles of justice and accountability that our government should represent." The former head of the FBI saw no irony in speaking about justice. Nor did Natalie Bara, president of the FBI Agents Association who wrote that "this last-second, disgraceful act by then-President Biden, which does not change Peltier's guilt but does release him from prison, is cowardly and lacks accountability."

Peltier remains a prisoner. His incarceration might not be as vicious as it has been for the past 47 years but as he approaches his 80th birthday, he remains unfree.

Patriotic Americans rally to the flag. They place hands on hearts and sing paeans of praise to America as a bastion of justice, of being the land of the free and the home of the brave. It might once have been so. The country was founded on a noble idea. The infamy of Leonard Peltier's life-long imprisonment makes a mockery of all that America once prided itself upon. ✪

UK: Arrest of pro-Palestine marchers an attack on free speech

Although the long-awaited ceasefire in Gaza has now come into effect, demonstrations in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and other places were still a vital necessity.

The agreement itself is divided into three stages, each 42 days long. Its overall aims are the release of all Israelis held in Gaza (alive or deceased), the release of some Palestinian prisoners, the return of "sustainable calm," and for the Palestinians the end of Israeli occupation and siege of the Gaza Strip.

However, over 18 weeks, there is enormous scope for Israel to break or undermine the agreement, as it has done on so many occasions in the past.

Furthermore, while Israel and Western governments would like the genocide of the last 15 months to be swept under the carpet, those responsible for it must be held to account – and that applies too to our own politicians and media who have so shamelessly de facto supported Israel's actions.

Demonstrations – 100,000 strong in London – have not merited even a brief report on the BBC News website, but that's unsurprising given the broadcaster's record of bias over Israel's war on Gaza.

At the end of October, more than 230 people from the media industry, including over 100 anonymous BBC staff, as well as historians, actors, academics and politicians, wrote to the BBC director-general Tim Davie saying: "Basic journalistic tenets have been lacking when it comes to holding Israel to account for its actions."

The London demonstration was therefore absolutely right to direct its protests towards the BBC, and the blocking by the Metropolitan Police, together with the arrest of chief steward Chris Nineham and scores of other people, is an outrageous attack on democracy and the right to free speech.

The statements by the Met and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper that the protest would not be allowed near the BBC because of services at a nearby synagogue are entirely bogus. The nearest synagogue is a few hundred yards away from the BBC and not even on what was the proposed route.

The blocking of the march, and Nineham's arrest, did not take place anywhere near the BBC, but at Trafalgar Square.

Corbyn and McDonnell were at the front of the march, part of a delegation of speakers who wished to peacefully carry and lay flowers in memory of children in Gaza who had been killed. They did not force their way through, but were blocked by the police. Nineham was arrested while organising the presentation of the flowers and the dispersal of the crowd.

Announcing Nineham's release after his being charged under the Public Order Act – essentially for organising an illegal demonstration – Stop the War Coalition national officer John Rees correctly characterised the Met's actions as "a first-rank assault on the right to free assembly, the right to free speech. It is a state attempt to close down protests on the question of Palestine."

However, as Rees continued, this has much wider implications. If the Met – and the government – can get away with it, then this is "a knife held to the throat" of every campaigner and "every trade unionist who wants to be able to demonstrate around an industrial dispute."

The whole labour and progressive movement needs to step up to the mark and demand that the charges are dropped. Our democracy is at stake.

Morning Star Editorial
(Cut for reasons of space) ✪

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

email: editor@cpa.org.au

Feigned concern

Albanese and Wong are delusional if they think their 'mate' in the Whitehouse is their friend or they can do deals with him. He is not one for consultation or concern for others. His "America first" looks after his unelected billionaire patrons who put him in office and are now at the helm of government.

Trump's immediate announcement that the US is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement was met with "concern" by the PM – a term that has become all too familiar in relation to Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Is "concern" the best Albanese can do when a fascist is let loose on the world? (Don't answer that, it is a rhetorical question.)

Apparently emboldened by Trump, Nationals Senator Matt Canavan now wants Australia to pull out of the Climate Agreement.

Trump has pulled the US out of the World Health Organisation. Presumably Albanese is once again "concerned."

What is more than concerning is that Trump has only just got started. Albanese and Wong, can you please show more than concern for the millions of migrants being deported and the US working class who will feel the brunt of Trump's billionaire team.

M Santos

Musk's salute

During Donald Trump's inauguration, hyper-active Elon Musk raised his right arm in what some believed was the Bellamy salute and the majority interpreted it as a Nazi salute. The Bellamy salute was used in the US to pledge allegiance to the US Flag until 1942, when it was banned because a very similar salute was used by the Nazis.

Elon Musk's gesture has caused quite a stir and a lot of criticism exactly because it was viewed as a Nazi salute. Neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups celebrated the gesture and were happy to see it 'normalised.'

The Proud Boys of Ohio Chapter commented on the Musk video with the text "Hail Trump." Musk's gesture, whether it was intended as the Bellamy salute or not, is generally interpreted as a Nazi one because of his embrace of far right-wing policies.

A group of Italian students was certainly convinced that the gesture deserved a similar treatment that Mussolini got in 1945. They hanged the effigy of Musk in the same square where Mussolini's body was hanged. The group posted an image of the effigy on social media with the words "There is always room at Piazzale Loreto, Elon!"

Francis Zavier

Australia Day

Australia Day should be when the Constitution of Australia came into force and that was on 1 January 1901. Therefore Australia Day should be celebrated on the on 1 January each year. Before 1901 there were six separate colonies, most of them penal settlements.

The settlement of New South Wales as a prison was on 26 January 1788. So, 26 January really marks just the establishment of New South Wales prison farm and most of the other colonies as well.

Also, after 1788 came the Frontier Wars and the genocide of the Aboriginal People, the original owners of the land we now call Australia.

So, 26th January really marks the start of a disastrous time for Aboriginal People when their land was stolen and most of them were slaughtered. Aboriginal People and many non-Aboriginal People see no point in celebrating such a disaster.

Dylan Whiteford

Japan: Disaster relief measures insufficient

Japanese Communist Party (JCP) Executive Committee Chair Tamura Tomoko on 16 January appealed for the need to further improve the law on supporting disaster victims which was enacted due in part to the tenacious efforts made by those who experienced the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake occurred on 17 January 1995, destroying about 640,000 homes and causing 6,434 deaths, including disaster-related deaths.

The government at that time insisted that in a country having a private property system, like Japan, individual property should be maintained based on individual responsibility, and refused to provide financial support to the quake victims for repair or rebuilding of their homes. In 1997, in response to demands of the quake survivors and civil organisations, the JCP Diet members jointly with bipartisan lawmakers submitted a bill to establish a program to assist the reconstruction of disaster victims' livelihoods. The bill became law in 1998.

Tamura pointed out that the improvement of the law on support for reconstructing livelihoods of disaster victims has been called for by local municipalities since its enactment, but the national government has turned its back on this demand. She said, "The central government's reluctance to provide relief for disaster-affected people has not changed over the past three decades."

Tamura noted that after the Noto Peninsula earthquake last January, people who took shelter in evacuation centres were forced to endure harsh conditions, such as lack of privacy and no nutritiously balanced warm meals. She said, "For 30 years since the Hanshin quake, the state government has failed to improve the evacuation centre's living conditions. This clearly indicates that the national government is opposed to implementing measures to support the reconstruction of disaster victims' livelihoods."

She stated that after the 2011 massive quake, Tasso Takuya, the governor of Iwate Prefecture which is one of the 3 quake-hit prefectures, stressed that the post-disaster reconstruction should be carried out in line with Article 13 of the Constitution guaranteeing the right to pursue happiness. She said, "I'll work hard to press the national government to take this position."

Japan Press Weekly

Solutions to Crossword

27 January 2025 #2130

Across:

1. **Geopolitics** – What it all boiled down to on why Syria's leadership is of so much interest
6. **Earthquake** – A series of natural disasters that Syria and neighbouring Türkiye recently recovered from
8. **ISIS** – Infamous Terror group with coincidentally a lot of Syrian opposition leaders formerly a part of or adjacent to
9. **HTS** – Initials of theocratic rebel group funded by Mossad and the CIA
10. **Axis** – "_____ of Resistance," a coalition of anti-imperialist countries/groups Syria is now exiting from

Down:

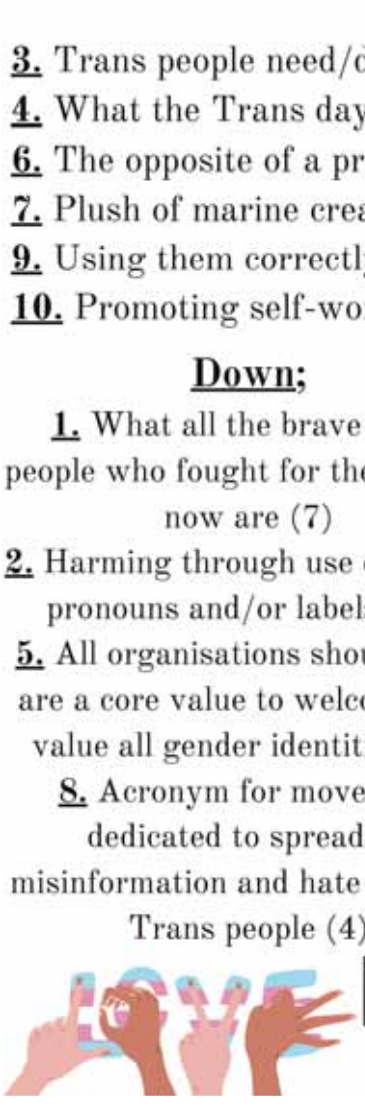
2. **Independence** – What Syria has been robbed of
3. **Invasion** – What Israel has conducted upon Syria as soon as the old government fell
4. **Baathism** – Pan-Arab ideology, firmly Anti-West. Syria was the last government of this type before the invasion
5. **Russia** – Country that gives refuge to the former president
7. **Bashar** – First name of the President of Syria who was couped

Across;

3. Trans people need/deserve more than just acceptance, they also need this (10)
4. What the Trans day of remembrance is celebrated as (5)
6. The opposite of a proactive Ally [aka what you shouldn't be] (12)
7. Plush of marine creature, Trans icon (6)
9. Using them correctly shows respect for someone (8)
10. Promoting self-worth and pride in trans individuals (11)

Down;

1. What all the brave trans people who fought for their rights now are (7)
2. Harming through use of wrong pronouns and/or labels (12)
5. All organisations should have are a core value to welcome and value all gender identities. (9)
8. Acronym for movement dedicated to spreading misinformation and hate towards Trans people (4)

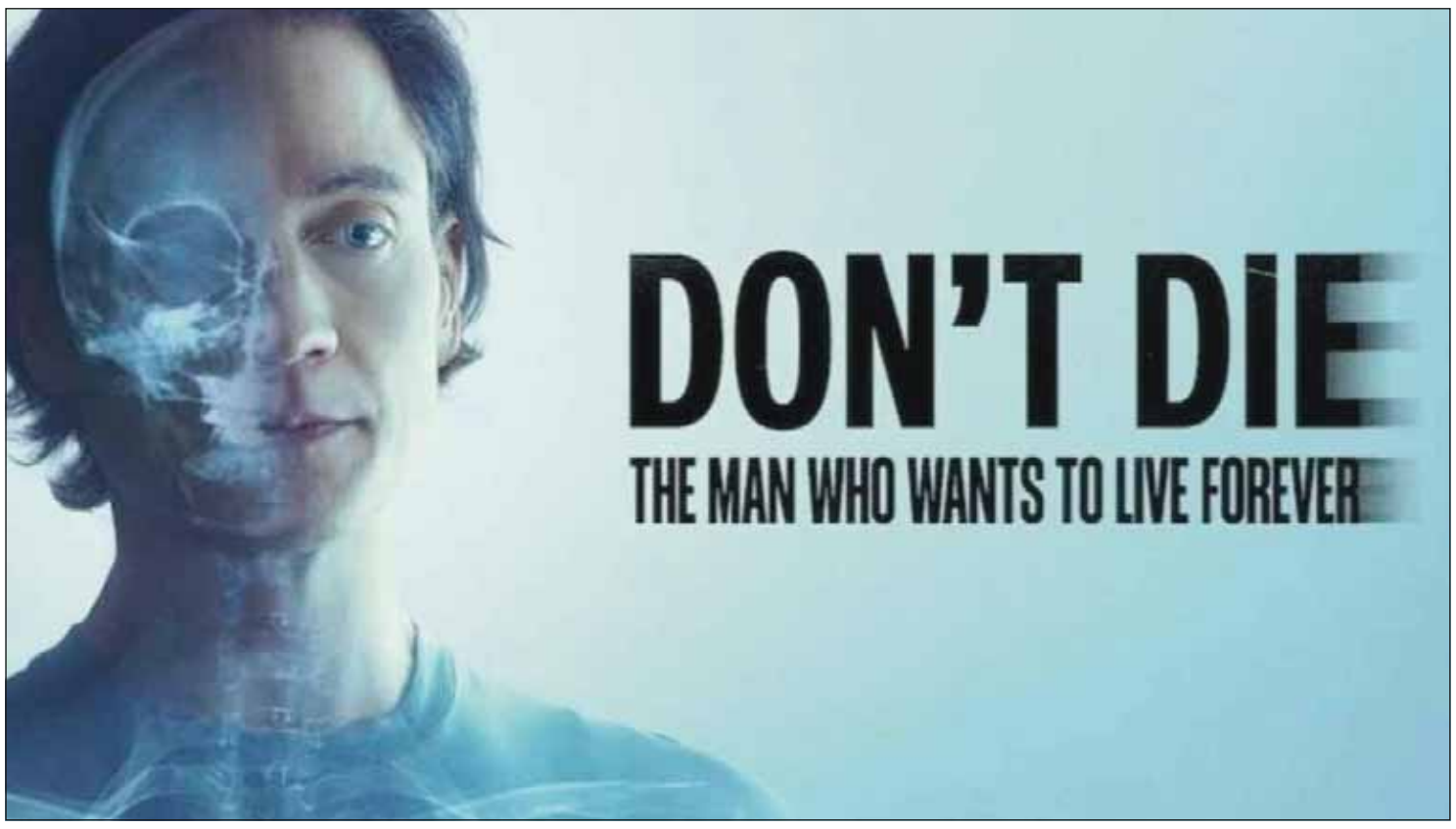


Written and designed by: Che Tanzer

Film review

Don't Die

Chauncey K Robinson



To start the new year, Netflix released the film *Don't Die: The Man Who Wants to Live Forever*, a documentary that walks the line between being a cinematic pep-talk for living a healthier life and a voyeuristic spying on one millionaire's obsession with keeping death at bay with all the money he can muster.

It would be easy to dismiss the documentary as a cash grab indulging society's desire to gawk at eccentric individuals. Yet, the sensationalised, ridiculous, and – interestingly enough – sometimes touching film inadvertently lends itself to a more significant conversation.

By examining Bryan Johnson's over-the-top existence of using all of his resources to reverse the ageing process, viewers can take it further and engage with the idea that Johnson exists because our healthcare system has failed everyday people.

Don't Die: The Man Who Wants to Live Forever is a documentary film directed by Chris Smith. Smith takes us on a journey watching Johnson explore various methods and experimental medical treatments, hoping to make himself physically 18 years old again.

Fortunately, *Don't Die* doesn't attempt to be a complete puff piece, allowing for some opposing views and less than glowing assessments of Johnson's lifestyle. And to be sure, there is a lot to be critical about.

Johnson has a very rigid daily routine and sleep schedule. He wakes up daily around 4am in his mansion, works out for one hour in his home gym, endures red-light therapy for his skin, and eats a strict and repetitive whole-food diet.

In addition, Johnson consumes over one hundred supplements in pill form, expensive oils, and additional nutrient sources. He also regularly collects his stool samples and sleeps with a monitor attached to his penis to record his erections.

This meticulous regime is what he calls the Blueprint Protocol. It is an ever-evolving project with Johnson as the star, attempting to reverse all his organs' age.

According to Johnson, he has been making some headway toward his goals. Johnson claims that the data compiled by his doctors suggests that Blueprint has so far given him the bones of a 30-year-old and the heart of a 37-year-old (Johnson is in his late 40s).

Reportedly, the software entrepreneur funds a team of more than 30 medics and health workers who monitor the functioning of his body and all its organs around the clock, costing more than US$2 million a year.

Before Johnson started his project to keep death away, he was a businessman in the tech industry. His earlier success with the company Braintree, and eventually the buying of Venmo, saw him making millions of dollars.

Yet, Johnson explains in the film that he was unhappy even with all his business success. He explains that he felt run down from constantly working at the office, which led to bad health choices. He also found little solace in his religion of Mormonism. Suicidal thoughts led Johnson in search of something beyond the hustle of money-making, he claims. Going on a journey of self-discovery made the millionaire conclude that he needed to shut off his mind and focus on his organs.

plenty of people could get some of the results he has if they were allowed access to the resources he's permitted to privatise

His current philosophy is that he has tapped into his Autonomous Self by shutting off his conscious mind and listening to his body. He claims he can pay attention to his physical form and become the healthiest he has ever been.

The film interviews scientists in the anti-ageing community who disagree with Johnson. They challenge the scientific method he uses to achieve his results. Others note that while he claims to be doing this for the greater good of research and to start a movement of like-minded people, his money should be spent funding broader studies that include more than just himself. Sometimes, it seems as though Johnson relishes in public attention, even if he isn't entirely comfortable with the criticisms he receives.

Smith focuses on Johnson's relationship with his son and father. This helps provide more intimate, down-to-earth moments to contrast the more elaborate – and often outlandish – times in the movie when focusing on Johnson's anti-ageing journey.

Yet, even the touching moments of working through generational trauma are not unscathed by Johnson's want for immortality. This is clear when the trio swaps plasma for the supposed health benefits. Johnson's son gives him his plasma, and then Johnson gives his plasma to his 75-year-old father.

It's presented as a bonding experience, yet this reviewer cannot help but remember the history of ruthless royalty who bathed in the blood of their young servants, hoping to turn back the age clock. What's even more appalling is learning through the film that transfusing plasma from younger individuals is not something only Johnson does but is a known method for many wealthy people in modern times.

This is where the film's actual value shines through. In this informative moment, viewers can understand that Johnson isn't an outlier in hoarding wealth and self-serving projects – he just so happens to be a more public face.

Peter Thiel and Jeff Bezos were both early investors in Unity Biotechnology, which develops therapeutics to reverse ageing-related diseases. Billionaire venture capitalist and former PayPal CEO Thiel has said he wants to live to 120. Amazon CEO Bezos also bought a share in Altos Labs, a biotech start-up focusing on cellular rejuvenation programming to restore cell health and resilience.

While millions of people across the country struggle to pay medical bills, receive proper insurance, or treat their already existing illnesses, there are individuals like Johnson who can afford to spend money to try to get his rectum to be 25 years younger.

The grossness of the wealth gap is on full display in *Don't Die* as viewers witness a man who has so much money to pay for regular care that he has enough time to attempt to achieve health results that defy the natural laws of science.

Johnson makes the valid point that we live under a system in which many people work themselves to death. Yet his "solution" is to focus on reversing his age and selling people the Blueprint program – including a US$35 bottle of extra virgin olive oil – to receive even a fraction of the resources he has at his disposal.

The US's healthcare system prioritises treating illnesses instead of preventative care. That's because pharmaceutical companies have concluded that there is more profit to be made in treating diseases. Add to this the insurance companies that are allowed to deny people in need of the proper coverage to afford their treatment, and you have a nightmare scenario for most working-class people.

The documentary's existence drives home the fact that there are two realities under a capitalist system: one in which working people struggle daily, unsure about what tomorrow might bring, and another in which the super-wealthy have enough money to attempt to be alive 100 years from now.

Johnson presents himself as a marvel of science, but in reality, his exploits drive home the fact that plenty of people could get some of the results he has if they were allowed access to the resources he's permitted to privatise.

Those interested in science and pseudoscience will no doubt be fascinated by Johnson's lifestyle. Not that he's stumbled upon anything groundbreaking, but the documentary can potentially add to the conversation around inequality in healthcare.

People's World

(Cut for reasons of space)

Houthis threaten to block US ships

The Yemeni movement Ansar Allah, known as the Houthis, is considering a ban on US ships passing through the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the resumption of full-scale military operations in Yemen as retaliatory measures for the US's designation of the movement as a foreign terrorist organisation, a source in the movement told Sputnik.

US President Donald Trump on 22 January signed an order launching the process of designating the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organisation. On the next day, the Houthis said that this decision was directed against the entire people of Yemen and was revenge for Yemen's "noble" position in supporting the Palestinians.

"The movement is considering taking measures against America, including imposing a ban on the passage of US ships through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea," the source said.

The Houthis would also bar the passage of ships from any country that follows the US example of listing the movement as a terrorist organisation, the source added.

One of the possible measures that the movement could take is "countering any military escalation that the US may take in response to the ban on the passage of its ships, as well as ending the truce in Yemen and resuming hostilities on all fronts," the source said.

Sputnik

Gaza education crisis

Eighty-eight per cent of schools in Gaza have been destroyed and 660,00 children are out of school. The lack of schools not only affects learning but also deprives young people of a safe and structured environment amid chaos and violence.

The situation in Gaza has become critical, with an alarming 88 per cent of schools destroyed in the last 15 months due to Israeli aggression, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA). This devastating reality has left approximately 660,000 children and adolescents without access to education since the beginning of the conflict.

Through its X social media account, UNRWA highlighted the magnitude of the education crisis facing the region, stating that the future of an entire generation is at stake.

Juliette Touma, UNRWA's director of communications and media, emphasised the unwavering commitment of the agency's employees, who work tirelessly 24 hours a day to provide essential humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees.

However, the challenge they face is monumental as educational infrastructure has been devastated and humanitarian needs continue to increase.

Rebuilding schools and restoring access to education is urgent to ensure a viable and hopeful future for generations to come in Gaza.

teleSUR

Photo: UNRWA

In Gaza

Every other person is a child

Nearly 660,000 children remain out of school

Over 14,500 children have reportedly been killed in the war

Children miss school because of climate change

Roger McKenzie

At least 242 million children in 85 countries had their schooling interrupted last year because of heatwaves, cyclones, flooding, and other forms of extreme weather, the United Nations children's fund UNICEF warns in a report published today.

UNICEF said it equated to one in seven school-going children across the world being kept out of class at some point in 2024 as a result of climate hazards.

Some countries had hundreds of schools destroyed by weather, with low-income nations in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa hit especially hard, the report says.

In Europe, torrential rains and floods in Italy near the end of the year disrupted school for more than 900,000 children.

Thousands had classes halted after catastrophic flooding in Spain.

While southern Europe dealt with deadly floods, and Asia and Africa had flooding and cyclones, heatwaves were "the predominant climate hazard shuttering schools last year," UNICEF said, as the Earth recorded its hottest-ever year.

More than 118 million children had their schooling interrupted in April alone, UNICEF said, as large parts of the Middle East and Asia, from Gaza in the west to the Philippines in the south-east, experienced a prolonged heatwave with temperatures soaring above 40°C.

UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell said: "Children are more vulnerable to the impacts of weather-related crises, including stronger and more frequent heatwaves, storms, droughts, and flooding.

"Children cannot concentrate in classrooms that offer no respite from sweltering heat and they cannot get to school if the path is flooded or if schools are washed away."

Around 74 per cent of the pupils affected in 2024 were in middle- and low-income countries, showing how climatic extremes continue to have a devastating impact in the poorest countries.

Flooding ruined more than 400 schools in Pakistan in April. Afghanistan suffered heatwaves followed by severe flooding that destroyed over 110 schools in May, UNICEF said.

Months of drought in southern Africa exacerbated by the el Nino weather phenomenon threatened the schooling and futures of millions of children.

The poor French territory of Mayotte, which lies in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa, was left in ruins by Cyclone Chido in December and hit again by Tropical Storm Dikeledi this month, leaving children across the islands out of school for six weeks.

Cyclone Chido also destroyed more than 330 schools and three regional education departments in Mozambique on the African mainland.

UNICEF said the world's schools and education systems were "largely ill equipped" to deal with the effects of extreme weather.

Morning Star

NATO dumps almost $200 billion into Ukraine

The bloc has collectively financed Kiev to the tune of US$191.2 billion (AU$303b) over the past 3 years, according to calculations by *Sputnik*, based on data from the Ukrainian Finance Ministry and the University of Kiel, Germany.

Here's the breakdown:

Financial aid (for budgetary and social spending): US$43.3 billion

Humanitarian aid: US$13.4 billion

Military aid: US$133.4 billion

Who gave what?

The US contributed 54 per cent (US$103.8 billion), making it the largest donor. The United States also provided the majority of military aid (US$68.9 billion), humanitarian aid (US$3.7 billion), and budgetary support (US$31.2 billion).

Germany was the second-largest contributor, providing US$17 billion, or 8.9 per cent of the total aid. The UK contributed US$14.8 billion, or 7.7 per cent. Other NATO countries each contributed less than 5 per cent of the total.

The West continues to invest vast sums in aid to Ukraine, but much of it has proven futile, as Kiev suffers enormous losses. Furthermore, a significant portion of Western military supplies intended for Ukraine has ended up in the hands of black market dealers.

A US Defense Department Inspector General audit released in October 2024 revealed that hundreds of pieces of military equipment provided to Ukraine by Washington required repairs before they could be used on the battlefield.

Russia believes that arms supplies to Ukraine hinder the settlement, directly involving NATO countries in the conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine would be a legitimate target for Russia.

According to Lavrov, the US and NATO are directly involved in the conflict, including not only by supplying weapons, but also by training personnel in the UK, Germany, Italy, and other countries.

Sputnik

Footnote: According to the Australian government, Australia has provided more than AU$1.5 billion in support for Ukraine and has trained Ukraine forces in the UK.

Mineral wars fuelled by competition for rare resources

Germanium. Photo: Mr. Hoch – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Ilya Tsukanov

The coming years are set to exacerbate the global geo-economic competition for the world's mineral resources, with President Trump openly eyeing 12 million sq km of territory containing untold riches. Here are the conflicts, present and potentially future, to watch out for.

UKRAINE

The US "cannot afford" to let Moscow achieve victory in Ukraine, which is "sitting on US$10-12 trillion of critical minerals," Senator Lindsey Graham said in a 'quiet part out loud' interview moment last year, revealing what NATO's proxy war against Russia is really about. [It is also about keeping NATO and nuclear weapons out of Ukraine]

Ukraine is endowed with US$3-11.5 trillion in lithium alone, plus trillions more in silver, gold, uranium, aluminium, copper, iron, manganese, titanium, and hydrocarbons. It's also got Europe's biggest supply of rare earths, beryllium, niobium, and zirconium.

BOLIVIA

Marking its 200th birthday this year, Bolivia has faced 190+ coups (or attempted coups) and revolutions over its history. It's little wonder, given its vast resource wealth, from gold and silver to tungsten, zinc, lead, tin and nickel.

"We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it," Elon Musk tweeted in 2020 in response to news that the US had organised yet another coup in Bolivia. Bolivia has 23 million tons of lithium. It also has scandium and yttrium, two of the most sought after rare earths for industrial and military use.

VENEZUELA

"It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies really invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela," former Trump advisor John Bolton said in 2019 amid Washington's attempts to oust President Maduro.

It certainly would. Sitting on top of up to 300 billion barrels of proven oil reserves – the biggest anywhere, Venezuela is an energy powerhouse. It's also a minerals giant, with eyewatering reserves of gold, uranium, iron ores, and the precious mineral coltan – labelled blue gold by late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2009, and used in a broad array of electronics.

No wonder the US has labelled Venezuela and its US$14 trillion resource pile as an "unusual and extraordinary threat."

IRAN

Another country classified by the US as an "unusual and extraordinary threat," Iran is home to an estimated US$27 trillion in resource wealth. No wonder it's been a regular target for regime change since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

While proven resource reserves consist mostly of oil and gas, Iran regularly discovers vast stocks of minerals. In 2023, Tehran discovered a massive, 8.5 million-ton lithium deposit. In 2022, the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organisation reported that some US$28.7 billion in mineral resources, from iron ore, lead and bauxite to antimony had been discovered since 2013 alone.

CANADA

"The joke is over," Canadian Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc said in response to Donald Trump's string of comments about Canada becoming the '51st state.' "It's a way for him to sow confusion, to agitate people, to create chaos knowing this will never happen."

Endowed with US$33 trillion in resources, from oil, gas and uranium, to phosphates, cadmium, lead, titanium, zinc, and an array of ferroalloys, a sprinkling of rare earths dot the True North Strong and Free, mining cerium, neodymium, and promethium.

Who knows if Trump's really joking?

GREENLAND

"Greenland is for the Greenlandic people. We do not want to be Danish, we do not want to be American ...We have a desire for independence, a desire to be the master of our own house," PM Mute Egede told reporters amid Trump's inquiries about buying the island.

Greenland is sitting on mineral wealth the scale of which has not been fully explored, from precious metals and stones to graphite, uranium, and of course rare earths – at least 1.5 million tons of them, including yttrium, scandium, neodymium and dysprosium.

Even if Trump's dreams don't come true, a quiet battle – confined to boardrooms (for now), is already raging amid US efforts to block a series of Chinese investments in Greenland's mineral resources.

AFRICA

Wracked by a post-colonial legacy of instability and violence, the African continent also happens to be home to some of the world's largest untapped mineral reserves. Recent years have shown that with great wealth comes great risks as global power centres vie for control.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, has the world's largest cobalt reserves (6 million tons). It's also faced repeated coup attempts, most recently in 2024, when a US and Belgium-backed politician unilaterally declared himself president. Besides cobalt, the DRC is rich in monazite, euxenite, niobium, tantalum and zirconium.

Guinea, also suffering its share of coups (1984, 2008, 2021) happens to be the world's second-largest producer of bauxite – used to produce the strategic metal aluminium. It also has among the largest untapped high-grade iron ore deposits in the world, plus gold and diamonds.

Zimbabwe, coup against long-time Western-reviled president Robert Mugabe in 2017, has Africa's largest lithium reserves (11 million tons).

Local economists believe that with more exploration, their country can come to rival China's rare earths superpower status.

Kenya, whose president got a red carpet welcome in Washington last May, is also (unsurprisingly) a key rising rare earths giant, with deposits discovered at the Mrima Hill mine alone estimated to be worth some US$62.4 billion. Besides rare earths, Kenya is rich in iron ore, gold, limestone, gemstones, and manganese ore.

No wonder the US has labelled the country a "major non-NATO ally" – the only in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sputnik

Global Briefs

USA: The Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim organisation in the United States, described as "delusional" and "dangerous" president Trump's proposal to relocate more than a million Gazans to Egypt and Jordan. "The idea of carrying out an ethnic cleansing of more than a million Palestinians in Gaza is delusional and dangerous. The Palestinian people are not willing to leave Gaza, and neighbouring countries are not willing to help Israel carry out ethnic cleansing," CAIR said in a statement. The Council pointed out that "the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace is to force the Israeli government to end the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people." CAIR also strongly condemned the Republicans' decision to transfer a shipment of 1,800 900-kg bombs to Israel.

EGYPT: Egypt does not accept any attempts to resettle Palestinians on either a temporary or long-term basis, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said. "Egypt emphasises the unacceptability of any infringement on the rights of Palestinians, whether through settlements, occupation, or the expulsion of Palestinians from their lands on a temporary or long-term basis," the Ministry said in a statement.

AFGHANISTAN: Afghanistan's Taliban government flatly refused US President Trump's demand to return billions of dollars' worth of weapons that the US military abandoned in the country during their panicked flight in 2021.

BELARUS: Alexandr Lukashenko, president of Belarus, was re-elected for a seventh term with 86.6 per cent of the vote. He will remain in power until 2030. The second vote of 5.1 per cent belonged to the Vote Against All. The Communist Party candidate won 2.7 per cent of the vote.

YEMEN: The United Nations suspended all travel to the area governed by the Houthis on 24 January after more of their staff were detained. The Houthis previously declared UN staff members as individuals associated with the now closed US embassy in the capital Sanaa and aid groups. The Yemenis have de-escalated their attacks on regional shipping and Israel now that a ceasefire has taken effect in Gaza.

HAITI: President Leslie Voltaire has warned that US policies freezing aid, deporting migrants, and blocking refugees will worsen the dire situation in the country, where gang violence, hunger and displacement have already reached critical levels. Voltaire called for international support, including boosting the size of Haiti's multinational police force and organising elections by November, while rejecting gang involvement in the political process.

Gaza: On 27 January thousands of displaced Palestinians began their return to the northern Gaza Strip after receiving authorisation. Many travelled on foot for at least 7 km, navigating roads devastated by the violence and marked by past massacres against civilians attempting to flee Israeli bombardments. The conflict has displaced an estimated 85 per cent of Gaza's population. Currently 1.6 million Palestinians are living in makeshift shelters that lack basic necessities, facing dire humanitarian conditions.

UK: Labour joining corporate war on democracy

Last week has clarified battle lines in the war being waged against working-class people in Britain and beyond.

US President Donald Trump's blitz of executive orders, including the shredding of climate change and global health obligations, set the tone in the world's most powerful country – as did the fascist salute given by the world's richest man Elon Musk at his inauguration.

But our immediate concern must be how Britain's Labour government is aligning totally with the corporate assault on civic, social, and environmental rights.

One of Labour's few redistributive policies attempting to tap the immense wealth of the filthy rich – a crackdown on the abuse of non-domestic status to avoid tax – is to be softened, Chancellor Rachel Reeves says, because she has been "listening to the concerns" raised by the non-dom (non-resident for tax purposes) "community."

She won't listen to concerns over children trapped in poverty by the discriminatory two-child benefit cap.

Or over the impact of restricting winter fuel payments when energy prices are twice what they were a couple of years ago, even when those concerns convince her own party to vote against the policy at its conference, and prompt Labour's biggest affiliate Unite to challenge the government in court.

Or even over the U-turn on compensating the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI), despite leading Labour politicians having championed their cause for years.

Reeves's selective approach to people's concerns applies to the environment too, even as yet another severe storm closes schools and transport systems, and despite years of worsening floods and failing crops. Sod the science, says Reeves, growth trumps net zero.

Limiting action on the accelerating climate catastrophe to measures which don't affect corporate profits is one reason the world continues to warm uncontrollably.

Reeves is less flamboyant than Trump with his "drill, baby, drill" mantra, but just as irresponsible. The climate-denialist Right will want more, of course – the *Telegraph* last week published calls for Britain to win the race to open up the Antarctic to oil extraction – and no doubt over time Labour will give it to them, not that this is likely to appease our increasingly unhinged right-wing press.

Labour's growth policies across the board simply turn government into a doormat for big business. Rather than publicly fund infrastructure projects in the public interest, Labour will scrap regulations to weaken rights to object to construction by the private sector.

Reeves dismisses the importance of ecological diversity ("bats and newts" are derided as reasons things can't be built) though Britain has among the lowest biodiversity in Europe and the documented collapse of insect populations will have huge, and as yet partly unknown, effects on agriculture and the natural world.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves. Photo: World Economic Forum/Sandra Blaser – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The same deference to the right of construction firms to do as they please applies to housing. But it is not over-regulation which stymies house-building in Britain but land-banking aimed at keeping prices high. Urban development in major cities like London and Manchester is blighted by developers' lack of accountability to communities, as working-class neighbourhoods are driven out by construction of luxury flats designed to accumulate value, not house locals.

Labour's trumpeted local government reform could have involved community empowerment, a revived municipal socialism. Instead it gives a select few with money and influence greater power to push the rest of us around.

In that, Labour marches alongside the international radical right push to dismantle democratic curbs on corporate power. Less extreme than Trump or Musk, but in their camp. The intensified crackdown on protest is a logical part of this project.

The question of the day is democracy versus capitalism. Defending our communities and rights as citizens means building resistance through any means we can: trades councils, People's Assembly branches, even *Morning Star* supporters' groups can be hubs to bring activists together. The future is looking ugly if we cannot unite to do that.

Morning Star Editorial

Return to the real lessons of the Holocaust

Holocaust Memorial Day, the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazis' Auschwitz death camp by the Red Army, is one of the most solemn days in the labour movement calendar.

The industrialised effort to exterminate Europe's Jews, Roma and Sinti, [communists and trade unionists] alongside others the fascists deemed unworthy of life like gay, disabled, or mentally ill people, remains the most systematic and calculated genocide in history. It must never be denied or downplayed.

Yet the meaning of Holocaust Memorial Day is increasingly obscured. Partly this is due to the rewriting of history.

Holocaust relativism presents the Nazis' program of racist mass murder as just one among many crimes of "totalitarianism," postulating a false equivalence between Nazi Germany and the country which played the biggest part in its defeat, the Soviet Union.

The result is an equivocation between those who ran the death camps and those who liberated them – something masked in much British media discourse by referring vaguely to Auschwitz's liberation by "the Allies" rather than the Soviets.

This has already regressed in some quarters into implied support for the Nazis or their local auxiliaries as anti-Russian freedom fighters, as we saw when a Ukrainian Waffen-SS veteran was applauded by MPs in the Canadian parliament, or when Estonia's Foreign Ministry posted tweets denouncing the 80th anniversary of the Soviet assault on Tallinn, not mentioning the context that Tallinn was under Nazi occupation.

Calling out such distortions of history should not, of course, blind us to the manipulation of the memory of the second world war by the present Russian government for its own purposes either.

The removal of context allows the memory of the Holocaust to be deployed cynically by Britain's rulers too.

The UN resolution establishing Holocaust Memorial Day is clear that its message is a universal one: "The Holocaust, which resulted in the murder of one third of the Jewish people, along with countless members of other minorities, will forever be a warning ... of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism, and prejudice." It also "condemns without reserve all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief."

This text calls on us to apply the lessons of the Holocaust to all instances of racist persecution and all genocides.

It is disregarded by a British government which will not call out the Islamophobia of the far-right rioters who attacked mosques last summer, and which has been complicit in an assault on the people of Gaza recognised as a genocide by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and as plausibly amounting to one by the International Court of Justice.

Indeed, the memory of the Holocaust is misused to shield the state of Israel from accountability for its acts of war and ethnic cleansing, and it will be interesting to see which British politicians have the courage to condemn Donald Trump's call this weekend to "clean out," "probably a million-and-a-half people" from Gaza to facilitate its colonisation by Israel.

So far removed are some self-appointed authorities from the reality of the Holocaust as a product of fascism and war that the Anti-Defamation League, quick to accuse Palestine solidarity campaigners of antisemitism, could only admit to an "awkward hand gesture" when confronted by evidence of a fascist salute by Trump ally and tech tycoon Elon Musk.

Both antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crimes are on the rise. Confronting that means returning to the real lessons of the Holocaust, as thousands will do at local trade union and political meetings this week, though our government will not.

That does not mean depoliticising it. The Holocaust was political, emerging from the ideology of fascism. When we say "never again," we must commit ourselves to anti-fascism – which is sadly once again an urgent political cause.

Morning Star editorial

Syria: Open for business

In an interview with the *Financial Times*, the country's foreign minister, Assad al-Shaibani, said his country was prioritising "economic development."

Speaking from the Syrian capital Damascus, he said: "There needs to be law and there needs to be clear messages to open the way for foreign investors, and to encourage Syrian investors to return to Syria."

Shaibani was due to speak at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the first time Syria has participated at the event, where he was set to make clear his country was willing to privatise large swathes of the economy, including the oil industry.

He told the *Financial Times* that Syria's new rulers also wanted to explore more private investment in airports, railways, and road building.

The foreign minister said: "We don't want to live off humanitarian aid, nor do we want countries to give us money as if they are throwing the investment in the sea."

Shaibani praised the easing of US and European sanctions on the new regime led by Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, a former al-Qaida affiliate.

Many Western governments have continued to classify the group as terrorist and along with the US and the European Union have maintained sanctions on Syria.

Morning Star

Trump's threat to annex Canada

Graham Holton

Since President Donald Trump's inauguration he has continued his threat to annex Canada as the 51st state, using economic rather than military force. An enlarged United States "would really be something." Trump said that US subsidies on Canada include substantial military support and the US loses in trade deficits, "we're spending hundreds of billions here to protect it."

Trump has threatened to place 25 per cent tariffs on all imported Canadian products and demanded Canada increase its military spending and prioritise its border security. The latter follows the US accusation that Canada allowed the al-Qaeda terrorists, responsible for 9/11, to enter the US, something which is totally unfounded. Since both countries share a military alliance through North American Aerospace Defense Command, conflict is considered unlikely.

Most Canadians oppose any merger, seeing themselves culturally and historically distinct from Americans. The great majority of federal and provincial leaders have criticised Trump's threat of annexation. New Democratic Party Leader, Jagmeet Singh, called Trump a "bully." "Cut the crap, Donald. No Canadian wants to join you."

Trump's threats are a part of a long history of US claims to Canadian territory. Between 1875 and 1885 the Canadians built the Canadian Pacific Railway from eastern Canada to British Columbia to stop US claims on western Canada. In 1921 Lieutenant Colonel Buster Sutherland Brown of the Canadian Army planned a pre-emptive war. Canada would attack the US as soon as it had "evidence" that the US was planning an invasion. This pre-emptive strike was the only way Canada could prevail against its more powerful neighbour, with its larger arsenal and military manpower.

Between 1929 and 1933, the Herbert Hoover administration produced several colour-coded scenarios for war, which were declassified in 1974. US military strategists devised War Plan Red, believing Britain and the US would fight over Canada in a trade dispute.

In War Plan Red US military strategists planned a naval attack from Port Angeles, Washington on Victoria, with a combined assault on Vancouver and its island to cut off Canada from the Pacific. A land assault launched from Grand Forks, North Dakota, would neutralise Canada's rail lines.

A poison gas attack on Nova Scotia's capital, Halifax, would give the US a major naval base from which to take over the remainder of Canada, stopping any British resupply of its military forces. Britain knew Canada would be impossible to defend and took no action.

The *New York Times* published the official reports of War Plan Red, revealing that in 1935 the US Congress had assigned US$57 million (US$1 billion today) to build 3 air bases near the US-Canadian border. These air bases were to be disguised as civilian airports.

There are 5 maritime locations where Canada and the US dispute present borders. These are Machias Seal Island, the Dixon Entrance, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Beauford Sea and the North West Passage. Any of these territorial disputes can be used as a pretext for a US-Canada conflict.

The US Constitution allows the US to acquire territories. Under Article II, Section 2 of the constitution: "He [The President] shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate to make Treaties, provided two-thirds of the Senators present concur." Robert Huish writes in *The Conversation* that to prevent Trump's annexation, Canadian politicians need to "open lines of communication with Congress."

There have been a number of films on fictional wars between the US and Canada. In *Canadian Bacon* (1995), directed by Michael Moore, Alan Alda plays a US President who needs a war to up his profile, so attacks Canada. In *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999) 8 million people are killed in the conflict. The Canadian Air Force bombs the residence of the Baldwin brothers and President Bill Clinton declares war on Canada. The Secretary of Offense orders the execution of the Canadian "war criminals" Terrance and Phillip. The US army attacks Toronto and for "security reasons" rounds up Canadians living in the US, sending them to death camps called "Happy Camps."

As President Trump begins to carry out his election promises, his threat to annex Canada cannot be taken lightly. Trump can use any territorial dispute as a distraction if his crucial economic policies fail. What Trump really has planned for Canada we will need to wait and see.

Davos: Bombastic statements and controversies

The annual gathering of the rich and powerful – and occasional entertainers like Zelensky – that is the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos is now more known for its attendees making bombastic statements than for actually changing the world for the better.

Here are a few highlights:

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez proposed to "end anonymity on social media" to tackle misinformation, hate speech, and cyber harassment.

Argentina's President Javier Milei slammed "woke ideology" as a "cancer" the West needs to cure.

Antoine Hubert, CEO of alt food firm Ynsect, called to boost insect farming to feed the growing population, but didn't say if elites would be eating insects too.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte insisted that Ukraine's backers must "change the trajectory" of the Ukrainian conflict as "the frontline is moving in the wrong direction – it is going eastwards," when in fact Russian troops are currently driving Ukrainian forces westwards.

UN Secretary General António Guterres warned that "our fossil fuel addiction is a Frankenstein monster," calling out companies backtracking on climate promises.

Controversies beyond the statements:

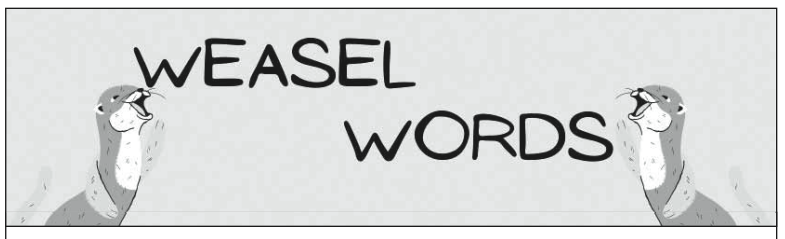
Many attendees advocate for climate change action but travel to Davos in private jets, emitting carbon.

In 2024, a former WEF employee sued the organisation for discrimination against Black workers.

According to a high-end escort, some WEF attendees think climate change only affects "third world countries" while "we in the North are fine."

Sputnik

Footnote: Was Guterres the only one present who is living on this planet?



"Discrimination"

For Trump and his new anti-DEI discrimination executive order, discrimination means the freedom to discriminate against minority groups. Unlike Chinese socialist democracy which has a preferential system for minorities, the USA, one of the world's most undemocratic and genocidal countries, is now writing minority discrimination into law. The standard definition of democratic governance is leadership both for the majority and for the minorities. But for the USA if the majority wins, minorities lose, and if the minority wins, the majority loses. It's a lose-lose situation. For the USA it's an either-or, rather than what it should be: a both-and.

"Government efficiency"

This one is obvious: it means cutting and slashing everything. Destruction, suffering, self-sabotage. For the likes of Trump, Milei, and now Dutton, who follows his US masters to the tee, it means getting rid of basic necessities like public transport, health, and education. Who loses out when government entities are cut? The people. But also the people working in government who lose their jobs. Meanwhile socialist governments break new ground by expanding the public service and public goods, like in Sri Lanka where major reconstruction of the national economy is taking place.

"Awkward"

Musk, a techno-fascist par excellence, did two Nazi salutes at Trump's inauguration. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), who have campaigned for all criticism of Israel to be banned under the label of antisemitism, stated that Musk was in fact only guilty of some "awkward" gestures. People who have called it a Nazi salute are just "on edge." Musk's support for Nazis on his social media platform and far-right parties like Germany's AFD are irrelevant. Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!

"Experiment"

Number one numerology fan Sussan Ley has displayed her historical know-how by labelling the colonisation of Australia an "experiment" of the same sort as Elon Musk's fantasies of a Mars colony. British settlers, according to Ley, did not arrive "to destroy or to pillage," but instead to explore the "edge of the known world," just like astronauts on a Musk Mars mission. Unlike Mars, Australia was "known" for tens of thousands of years before the British set foot on it. Maybe Ley should find a new inspiration for her Musk daydreams instead of Australian history.

Subscription to **The Guardian**

❑12 months: $150 (solidarity price) ❑12 months: $100 (concession)
❑6 months: $100 (solidarity price) ❑6 months: $75 (concession)
❑Special offer: 10 issues for $20 (new subscriptions only)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____POSTCODE:_____

Pay by ❑Cheque ❑Money order (Payable to "*Guardian* Publications")
Phone on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au or send to:
Guardian Subscriptions, 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
or by credit card: ❑Mastercard ❑Visa *$20 minimum on cards

Card# _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Guardian

Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor:
Floyd Kermode

Published by
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by
Spotpress Newspapers
The Print Centre, corner Hume Highway and Muir Roadd, Chullora, NSW

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

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

That strong spirit of Palestinian emancipation

Vijay Prashad*

It is impossible to bottle this sensibility. All of Gaza is a ruin. Millions of Palestinians have braved the winter in makeshift tents or in ruined buildings, their children freezing (a few frozen to death) and their hunger escalating. The smell of Israeli vengeance is everywhere. The sound of the tanks and the terrifying silence of the falling bombs shatter the nerves of even the most hardened fighter. Yet, during that, the armed units of the Palestinian resistance continue to fire their depleted ammunition at the Israeli troops. At the same time, children run amid the toxic wreckage with Palestinian flags aloft.

There is a ceasefire now. But this is the rhythm of Palestinian history since at least 1948: occupation, war, ceasefire, and underneath everything the constant occupation and the threat of war, and yet, the defiance and the smiles. In the lexicon of the Palestinian resistance, the word *sumud*, used first in the 1960s by the Palestinian Liberation Organization, is everything: it means to defy, to be steadfast, to hold onto one's land despite the Israeli occupation. It is to take out the key to one's pre-1948 Palestinian home and hold it aloft.

When Khalida Jarrar emerged into the crowd of supporters after months in Israel's cruel dungeons, she said, "I'm coming from solitary confinement. I still don't believe it. I'm a little bit tired." Jarrar, one of the leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), has been in and out of Israel's prisons for almost her entire adult life.

Her first detention was in March 1989 when she participated in a march for International Women's Day. I have followed her journey in and out of prison, cataloguing her distress as her captors prevented her from being at the funerals of her father (2015), mother (2018), and daughter Suha (2021). Jarrar is one of thousands of Palestinians who are held in Israeli prisons under "administrative detention," a false label that justifies indefinite imprisonment with no charge.

Each time Jarrar went to prison, the behaviour of her Israeli captors was harsher and harsher still. This time, arrested during the genocide in December 2023, she was put into a cell with poor ventilation and could not breathe with ease. Her husband, Ghassan Jarrar, read out a statement from her from August 2024:

"I die every day. The cell looks like a tiny, airtight box. The cell is equipped with a toilet and a small window above it, which was closed a day after I was moved to it. They did not leave me any space to breathe. Even the so-called porthole in the cell door was closed. I spend most of my time sitting next to a tiny opening that allows me to breathe. I wait for the hours to pass while I suffocate in my cell in hopes of finding oxygen molecules to breathe and survive."

Now, Jarrar leaves prison along with 90 other Palestinian prisoners who were exchanged for three Israeli prisoners in the first part of the ceasefire deal. The stories of the prisoners are astounding and enraging. The Israelis arrested one young Palestinian woman (Shatha Jarabaa) for writing on social media about the "brutality" of the genocide. Another young man (Zakaria Zubeidi) of the Freedom Theater in Jenin was held under suspicion of being a terrorist.

Two other women from the PFLP, Abla Sa'adat and Maysar Faqih, had been arrested by the Israelis without charge and held under administrative detention as part of the general Israeli strategy of preventing the Palestinian groups from political activity.

The PFLP's leader, Ahmad Sa'adat has been in prison for decades and will likely not be released until the occupation ends. It has been on the Israeli agenda for decades to weaken the Palestinian left – particularly the PFLP – and thereby to strengthen the Islamist forces. This allows them to falsely make the case that this is a war against Islamism rather than a brutal campaign to extinguish the Palestinian nation.

IT IS THE OCCUPATION

In August 2014, Israeli soldiers surrounded the home of Khalida and Ghassan Jarrar. They had come to inform Khalida Jarrar that she was banned from her home in Ramallah and had to restrict herself to the town of Jericho. "It is the occupation that must leave our homeland," she said to the soldiers. Then, she and her comrades set up a tent outside the Palestinian Legislative Council office and lived there. The Israelis had to back off. There was too much international pressure on them.

People under occupation are people imprisoned. Palestinians in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank – the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as the United Nations calls it – have no freedom of movement. They are encaged. Those who want to break the cage are further imprisoned in the terrible conditions of Israeli jails. Little wonder then that Khalida Jarrar was from 1993 to 2005 the director of Addameer, a non-profit organisation that provides support for prisoners.

When she is not in an Israeli jail she has been working on a research project for Birzeit University's Muwatin Institute for Democracy and Human Rights on "The Class and Gender Dimensions of the Palestinian Prisoners Movement and their Implications for the National Liberation Project."

It is likely that a few days from now, Jarrar will come out of her house, give a speech, and then return to work on her project. Made of such steel and love, Jarrar is unrelenting. So too are the Palestinians who are slowly moving back to their destroyed homes in Gaza, looking for stray photographs and the few belongings that remain; the roots that have not been cut.

Globetrotter

*Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor, and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at *Globetrotter*. He is an editor of LeftWord Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

The Israelis had to back off. There was too much international pressure on them.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)
74 Buckingham St,
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
phone: 02 9699 8844
email: info@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

Media guardian@cpa.org.au
amr@cpa.org.au

Canberra act@cpa.org.au PO Box 35 Dickson ACT 2602
Darwin Vinnie Molina darwin@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872
Melbourne Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au
Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053
NSW State Comm Christian Goopy nsw@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Perth Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0421 113 343
PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
Qld State Comm 0499 476 540 qld@cpa.org.au
SA State Comm sa@cpa.org.au 0411 805 356 PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014
Tasmania Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550