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Unite for rights and against war

Marcus Browning

There is growing opposition around Australia to the authoritarian police-state attempts to silence voices of protest in support of the Palestinian people and against Israel's genocide. This opposition is coming from the political left and other organisations and individuals that recognise the threat to democratic rights.

The Albanese government is toadying and kowtowing to the Israel lobby in an attempt to create division in the wider public so as to provide a cover and justification for Israel's murderous crimes. It is doing so on behalf of its political master, the USA.

INSTABILITY

As more US ships, aircraft and troops come to Australian military facilities, the level of Australian military integration with the aggressive and destabilising US government has risen, further undermining Australia's independence and security.

The expansion of "missile defence" systems in Australia, Japan, South Korea and on US military platforms near China will create more regional tension and instability, increasing the possibility of war. Israel is a major part of US plans for domination in the Middle East.

This is the context for understanding Australia's defence of rogue state Israel and the attack on rights in Australia. Unity is also paramount in the struggle against war and for peace, for only the widest possible range of social forces united in action can beat back this anti-democratic offensive.

CLASS ACTION

A united working class means the objective of unity in action by all sections of the working class in support of their economic and political interests.

Building this unity in action means advocating policies and demands which workers will take up because they reflect and advance their interests. It means seeking the widest support and involvement of working people. It means being prepared to work with other political organisations and individuals willing to advance the cause of the working people.

Workers are not alone in attempting to achieve a better society. All progressive and democratic sections of society take up campaigns against the effects of capitalism's social and economic crisis, the drive to war, the betrayal of Australia's independence and sovereignty.

A range of progressive movements exists which involves workers, intellectuals, farmers, professionals and others. They provide a realistic basis on which to build a broad and active people's unity in support of progressive issues and to defend democratic rights.

Hiroshima commemoration in Perth, 2024.

In many of these mass movements, workers and working-class organisations play a part. However, their participation is often limited and does not fulfil the need for the working class to play the leading role which their size, experience and organisation calls for. Working class unity is the basis for the development and success of a broader people's unity.

A united left is a vital element in uniting the democratic forces.

PARTIES

Left political parties have a responsibility to strengthen their cooperation, develop effective programs which reflect the interests of working people, and propose a strategy and tactics to achieve such a program.

Wage and salary earners make up the great majority of all those who take part in production and provide community services. This is the enormous social base for the development of working-class unity.

Left unity, the unity in action of the working class, and the unity in common struggle of the working class and the other progressive and democratic social forces in society are interdependent processes.

Unity and co-operation between the different progressive social forces is a powerful force for change. Unity at all levels is the key to repelling the offensive of capital against the rights, and indeed the lives, of Australia's working people.

UNITY IN ACTION

The CPA proposes the following 10 points as a guide to unity in action:

1. That every organisation and the individuals involved must approach others on the basis of equality, mutual respect and honesty.

2. There must be consultation at each step of the unity process to ensure agreement on policies, tactics and actions.

3. An atmosphere must be created in which the results of agreements and steps taken are frankly discussed and evaluated. Mistakes will be made, which should be recognised and corrected during the course of work.

4. Agreements by co-operating organisations must be reached by consensus. Voting should be resorted to only as a last resort and be limited to procedural matters.

5. Where agreement is not reached on an issue, this issue should be put aside with each organisation free to express its view on the issue using its own facilities.

6. Once agreements are reached, all organisations help to popularise and carry them out.

7. Ideological differences should not stand in the way of co-operation on issues held in common.

8. A contest of ideas between co-operating organisations is natural and inevitable. This contest or any criticism of one organisation by another should be stated in a manner that does not undermine the unity achieved on agreed issues but should contribute to clarity and to strengthening the developing unity.

9. Each organisation is free to publish its views and carry out activities in support of its own policies that are not the subject of agreements.

10. Discussion and agreement at leadership level be backed up and deepened by cooperation at all levels of the organisations involved.

There's a good reason why you hear the following line chanted at a lot of demonstrations. It's true, but it needs action:

The people united can never be defeated. ✪

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Water vs 'Defence' in South Australia

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

Guardian

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We can't capitalism our way out of this

What do real action on Climate Change and the acronym Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) have in common?

The answer is not 'Donald Trump,' although he's definitely making the world worse in both departments. The answer is that both are subjects on which liberal capitalism promises a lot, but does not and can not deliver.

In the case of DEI, progressive capitalism has spent a lot of time and money promising us that after years of indulging racism and bigotry, it had seen the light. From now on, work places would be meritocracies – or at least 'work towards' meritocracy. Groups that had been systematically discriminated against would be properly included. An unspoken part of this promise was that nothing else needed to change – society could stay as it was, but with nobody sidelined due to ethnic background, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation. Unions don't get much of a mention in this vision; progressive capitalism would prefer to pretend that unions and classes don't exist.

The limits of this vision are shown in a cartoon depicting Afghan victims of a drone attack telling each other how great it is that there's a woman on the board of the company that makes the drones.

Liberal capitalism made a lot of DEI noise, and a thousand ATM's were covered in rainbow stickers. Then Donald Trump became US President, and companies started ditching anything to do with DEI as fast as they could. Walmart, Ford, Google, and Meta, the owner of Facebook all dumped DEI like a hot potato. Australian opposition leader Peter Dutton, sometimes nicknamed 'Temu Trump' has criticised DEI here. Australian companies have mostly been quiet on the issue, although a PWC executive has tellingly said DEI might get "a rebrand" because the acronym has become "polarising." There's no doubt that Australian liberal capitalists would also dump any sort of equity or inclusion-promoting measures if it suited them.

Carbon Emissions are another area where we – meaning humanity – can't capitalism our way out of a problem. It's not like capitalism hasn't had countless opportunities to limit carbon emissions *and* stay in business. The companies that have caused the problem have known about it for decades, and their response has been to pretend Climate Change wasn't real and sink serious money into making other people believe it. Remember Julia Gillard's 2007 Carbon Price? Far from perfect, the Carbon Price offered business a way to keep making money while reducing carbon emissions.

Did capital go for that? Not on your life! Business threw money into demonising the scheme and succeeded in getting climate denialist Tony Abbott elected as PM. He ditched the scheme. Australia had almost a decade of conservative governments that for the most part actively hated any effective action on Climate Change. Now we have an ALP government that talks the talk on Climate, but is terrified of doing anything useful on it.

For modern capitalism progress is a way of buying people off so that they don't get in the way of capital getting the highest returns possible. Leaders like Trump, Albanese, and Dutton come and go, and the talk changes, but the underlying principle remains the same. High returns come first, human life comes second.

Real progress against various forms of bigotry and against the existential threat of Global Warming will only come when we have a system that puts people first. For that we need socialism, a government by the working class, not capital temporarily on its best behaviour.

Pro-Palestine demonstration in Boorloo/Perth

Statement from the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine calls for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli occupation from the Gaza Strip, the assumption of responsibilities by the State of Palestine and its internationally recognised government, and for an end to the ongoing Nakba (catastrophe) of our people.

The Ministry condemns the public incitement by members of the Israeli government to resume the war of extermination and displacement against our people in Gaza, and to persist in the ongoing annexation of the land of the State of Palestine under false pretexts and flimsy justifications.

The Ministry considers these to be official calls to definitively favour the supremacy of brute force over international law and the language of reason, as well as a direct threat to the United Nations, resolutions of international legitimacy, and the fundamental pillars of the global order.

The Ministry calls for genuine international mobilisation and measures to restrain the Israeli occupation's encroachment against our people and their legitimate rights, in a way that ensures the permanence of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and a definitive end to the war of extermination, annexation, and forced displacement.

It also calls for the urgent empowerment of the State of Palestine and its internationally recognized institutions to assume their responsibilities and immediately extend their sovereignty over the Gaza Strip and the entirety of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

The Ministry affirms that history will neither forgive nor forget the states and parties that obstruct the attainment of the State of Palestine's legitimate control and the enabling of its full exercise of sovereignty over its land, as stipulated in resolutions of international legitimacy. ✪

Quotes of the Week

"What does that mean?"

US President Donald Trump when asked about AUKUS. You're not the only one to wonder, Donald

"Israel cannot beat its enemies because without the 'enemy,' there is no Israel.
A society founded on occupation can never know justice.
A society built on war can never know peace."

Alex McKinnon – everythingisfine

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This year UnionsWA called for an early celebration of IWD due to the fact the state election is held on Saturday 8th March. The event was attended by a number of unions who also had speakers on the stage. Among them, UnionsWA, CFMEU, NTEU, CPSU/CSA, Teachers Unions, Unions for Palestine, Teachers for Palestine and the CPA.

Statement from Arab Communist Parties

Statement of Communist Parties in Arab countries addressed to the Arab Summit in Cairo

Communist Parties in Arab countries call on the Arab Summit to

1. Reject all forcible displacement plans targeting the Palestinian people, particularly those involving relocation to Egypt, Jordan, or other countries. This dangerous project must be resisted, and concrete political steps should be taken to ensure the necessary support for Palestinian people's steadfastness and heroic struggle, to prevent the implementation of forced displacement from any part of its lands, and to guarantee their human rights and attaining their national rights.

Additionally, to oppose Israeli efforts, with the support of the US and its allies, to dismantle the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency). Efforts must be exerted to protect it and secure the continued provision of all its services.

2. Utilise the resources of Arab states and leverage economic power – particularly oil exports (as successfully done in the 1973 October War) and Gulf investments in Western countries, especially the US – and to announce the ending of the "Petrodollar Agreement" which restricts oil sales to transactions in US dollars. This should be one of the initial measures to exert pressure for an end to the continuing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in all their land, as well as to end the Zionist aggression on the Lebanese and Syrian peoples and the occupation of part of their territories. It is also aimed at putting an end to the American-Israeli threats to the security and peace of the Arab countries, and to attempts to impose domination over them and the normalisation of their relations with the occupying power, Israel.

3. Resist and confront the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, and to compel the Israeli forces to withdraw immediately from the entire Gaza Strip, lifting the blockade and allowing the provision of all types of aid, securing the return of the displaced to their homes, and rebuilding Gaza. In addition, make every effort to prevent the occupying power, Israel, from resuming its aggression or expanding and escalating it against any part of the Palestinian people.

4. Cease normalisation with Israel, annul the existing normalisation agreements, and expand the Arab boycott of the Zionist occupation. The Summit should reaffirm the Palestinian people's right to resist the occupation, as enshrined in international law.

5. End any reliance on US positions and promises, as American administrations remain complicit in Israeli occupation and its fascist Zionist system, in terrorism and aggression against the Palestinian people and denial of their rights, as well as in aggression against the peoples of the Arab region.

Communist Parties in Arab countries call on the Arab Summit to on the UN to reject and denounce Netanyahu's statements on Israel's supposed "guardianship" over southern Syria, and asked the UN to condemn Zionist agression against Lebanon. The parties united in calling on the United Nations to "take concrete steps to deter the US administration from disregarding the independence and sovereignty of Arab countries, interfering in their internal affairs, and employing extortion and pressuring them to engage in projects to liquidate the Palestinian cause."

The statement was signed by the Communist Parties of Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Egypt, as well as parties from Bahrain, Palestine, and Morocco. The full statement can be found at solidnet.org.

'No way to run a school'

The union representing staff in non-government schools has demanded Brindabella Christian College fix its unpaid wages débâcle before the industrial umpire. To date, 53 staff at the K-12 school in Canberra have not been paid, 10 days after the last scheduled pay period on 21 February, leaving them worried about bills, rent and mortgages. "We had no choice but to take Brindabella to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to try to compel the school to pay its staff in full and on time," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. In the hearing at the FWC in Canberra , the school said it was seeking an alternative funding source and expects to know if this will be available by Wednesday 5 March.

Should the school achieve this funding, it said unpaid staff would receive back pay and all staff would be paid in full going forward. "This still doesn't provide staff with any certainty," Matthews said. "Should the school not secure this funding, it has not committed to ensuring wages will be met." The union and the employer will reconvene in the FWC this Friday 7 March. The school has agreed to the IEU's request to inform the union when wages have been paid.

"Staff are still in shock that they haven't been paid 10 days after their pay date," Matthews said. "The situation at Brindabella has only gone from bad to worse." At the FWC, the union also raised questions about leave balances and incorrect payslips. The school has committed to reviewing the leave balances of all employees in coming months after blaming its payroll system for not correctly calculating entitlements. The union continues to advise members at the school to turn up for work. Brindabella's financial mess has prompted the federal government to scrutinise the school's finances and operations. The Australian Tax Office launched an action in the Federal Court in February over an $8 million tax debt incurred by the school. Brindabella has almost 1200 students and about 200 staff at its two campuses. Tuition fees at the school range from $10,575 a year for K-4 and $15,400 for Years 9-12.

"Brindabella continues to blame others for its financial mess, but this is no way to run a school," Matthews said. "Our message is simple: pay staff accurately and on time."

Australian mining company sues Greenland

Graham Holton

In January 2025 former foreign minister, Julie Bishop, was hired to advise on the political and legal hurdles faced by the Australian mining company, Energy Transition Minerals, in its long-running legal dispute with the government of Greenland.

The company plans to build a rare earths mine at its Kvanefjeld project in southern Greenland, one of the world's largest deposits. In 2023 the mining company told the government to agree to the mine or pay 76 billion Danish kroner (US$11.15 billion) in compensation for damages. Lawyers for the government said such damages would destroy the national economy, as Greenland's GDP was US$3.25 billion in 2023. Denmark rejected the claims in 2024. Venture capitalists are now funding the company's legal case before a tribunal in Copenhagen and Greenland courts.

The Greenland government had given the mine the go-ahead until elections in April 2021 made it change course and stop the project.

The proposed mine had a number of environmental issues. The open cut mine would dump radioactive wastewater into a dam. If the dam failed it would flow onto Narsaq, a town of 1,500 people, located eight kilometres from the mine, at the foot of the mountain. The impact of uranium and thorium dust, and the potential leakage of radioactive tailings, made the project unpopular in Narsaq, where the local farmers graze sheep. More than half of Greenland's citizens did not trust the authorities to manage the Kvanefjeld project safely. Mariane Paviasen Jensen, MP from Narsaq, opposes the mine. "It is not an option because if they get (permission) to dig, it will mean the end of Narsaq."

‘Not only cruel, but dangerous’ – Moreton Bay to punish homelessness

Photo: paweesit – flickr.com (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Homelessness Australia

Homelessness Australia is sounding a warning that the City of Moreton Bay Council’s plans to criminalise sleeping rough will only intensify harm to people already suffering the consequences of the national housing crisis.

The council has announced all forms of homelessness camping in Moreton Bay would be criminalised from 12 March, and they are planning to alert those sleeping rough in the area.

It follows an earlier decision by the council in December, which no longer allowed people sleeping in cars or vans, or having pets with them in the area, to be defined as ‘homeless people camping,’ meaning they were no longer allowed to use public land for shelter.

“We are in the depths of a housing crisis, and there are simply no homes these people can go to. It may be uncomfortable to see our fellow community members sleeping in parks and on the street, but this is the inevitable consequence of not having enough social housing,” CEO of Homelessness Australia Kate Colvin said.

“If the government didn’t provide enough measles vaccinations, we wouldn’t leap to the conclusion that a solution was locking up people who caught measles.

“This is a serious reality check. We need both federal and state governments to supercharge social housing investments, and provide greater support for services to people without homes.

“We are experiencing the highest rates of homelessness this country has seen, and persistent homelessness is at an all-time high too. Penalising people is a world away from the actual solution.”

Recent data released by Homelessness Australia shows more than 120,000 people are missing out on homelessness support services they need.

Polling released with the data shows the overwhelming majority of Australians, no matter their age, gender, income or political leaning, strongly support increasing homelessness services, and investment in social housing.

“We know what to do, and criminalising people in really tough circumstances is the perfect example of what not to do. Punishing people for not having a home is un-Australian. Supporting people in times of need is what we do best,” Kate Colvin said.

“The Labor government has made positive inroads in turning around years of neglect when it comes to building social and low-cost housing. But there’s more work to do.

“This election, we need every political party to commit to building more social housing and to increase homelessness services so no one is turned away,” Kate Colvin said.

Communist Party of Australia supports public, not ‘social’ or ‘affordable’ housing ✪

Renting and Housing Union calls for Public Housing

Statement from the Renting and Housing Union (RAHU), Victoria

The Victorian government has announced they are formally investigating the conversion of the former VicRoads Headquarters in Kew.

Minister for Housing and Building, Harriet Shing, has visited the unused mid-century office building to announce the land has been rezoned for residential and commercial use to deliver “approximately 500 homes” including a “minimum 10 per cent affordable housing” component.

In conjunction with this, a raft of unused land across the metropolitan area will be “unlocked” for private equity to submit expressions of interest in April of this year.

The Renters and Housing Union calls upon the Victorian State government to ensure these projects remain state owned, the offices in Kew be converted to public housing, and new public housing developments be constructed on the unlocked land.

According to RAHU Communications Officer Flora Smith, “While the Allan government forges ahead with the unpopular plans to demolish the state’s mid-century public housing towers, Minister for Housing, Harriet Shing, has demonstrated that these iconic buildings can and should be preserved as public assets.”

“Not only should existing public housing be preserved for the future, new public housing assets should be built wherever possible.” ✪

Dingo bytes

The Climate Change Authority’s latest report confirms the risks of delaying a clean energy future in favour of nuclear power will lead to higher emissions and increased costs for households.

The report warns that the Coalition’s nuclear energy proposal could add a staggering 2 billion tonnes of emissions while increasing costs for households, resulting in Australia missing its 2030 emissions targets and delaying the transition to clean energy until 2042.

“This report confirms our worst fears – betting on nuclear power isn’t just expensive, it’s a lose-lose for Australian families. Every year we waste waiting on nuclear means higher power bills and more emissions,” Jo Dodds, spokesperson for Australians for Affordable Energy, said.

“The Climate Change Authority has done the hard numbers. They’re telling us that going down the nuclear path means we’ll miss our 2030 targets and won’t get clean energy until 2042. That’s an extra 2 billion tonnes of emissions while we sit around waiting for nuclear plants that might never show up.

“Guess who pays for the delay? Everyday Australians – through their power bills and taxes.”

Crucial questions about the impact nuclear power would have on household budgets remain unanswered.

“Australians still need answers to fundamental questions: What is it going to cost? When will it actually deliver? What happens to our bills while we wait? What happens to our emissions?” Dodds said.

“Families are already struggling with the cost of living and they can’t afford to bankroll expensive nuclear experiments that won’t deliver for decades all while their bills continue to rise. Every year we spend chasing nuclear dreams instead of getting on with real solutions is another year of higher costs for Australian households.

“We need to have a serious talk about our energy choices. This report makes it crystal clear – nuclear means paying more to get less and waiting longer to get it.

“Australian families deserve better.”

Australians for Affordable Energy is urging policymakers to focus on practical, cost-effective energy solutions that can deliver cleaner, more affordable power right now – not in decades.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is former PM John Howard. The following 2005 petition, still applies:

After arduous work, research and investigation the authors of the petition below believe they have enough evidence to indict John Howard for crimes committed in the illegal invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Readers are urged to sign the petition if they can. It reads:

To: International Criminal Court

We, the undersigned, called for the indictment and prosecution of John Winston Howard for acts of terrorism and war crimes.

We believe that under Australia’s Criminal Code Act 1995, and under the articles of the International Criminal Court, there is a prima facie case for the prosecution of Howard for complicity in illegal attacks upon and mass murder of civilian populations of Afghanistan and Iraq, between 2001 and 2005.

These prosecutions should include the following crimes, committed by the accused in their official capacities:

- Complicity in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in Baghdad, Basra, Khormal, Babel, Nassariya, Najaf, Karbala and Anbar, in March 2003, through aerial bombardment, including cluster bombs, assisted by Australian ‘imagery specialists’
- Complicity in the SAS backed murder of ten Sabri tribespeople (mostly teenagers) in Afghanistan, 16 May 2002
- Complicity in the massacre of between one thousand and three thousand prisoners, after US operation ‘Anaconda’ operation at Shah-i-Kot, Afghanistan, March 2002
- Complicity in the maintenance of an international network of torture, from Pakistan to Iraq to Egypt to Guantanamo Bay (US-occupied Cuba)
- Complicity in the criminal attacks on the civilian population of Falluja, in April and November 2004 – where between one thousand and two thousand people were murdered in attacks which included the use of napalm, and the blockading of Falluja Hospital

We reject utterly the claim that any of these crimes could be carried out under any “‘democratic mandate” from Australian citizens.

We urge responsible prosecution authorities such as the Australian DPP, and the International Criminal Court to take immediate action.

Chaotic, deregulated, unaccountable

Anna Pha

Photo: nosheep – pixabay.com (CCO)

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) describes superannuation funds as being "the heart of Australia's capital market system," and with good reason. With total assets of around $4.2 trillion to invest on behalf of their members they have outpaced the Big Four banks that collectively hold assets worth around $3.8 trillion.

At the same time, they account for 23 per cent of investments in companies listed on the Australian stock market (ASX), thus wielding considerable influence over the economy.

Employers presently contribute 11.5 per cent of ordinary time earnings of workers to super funds. This is set to increase to 12 per cent on 1 July 2025. The income on these regular payments and savings is compounded on an ongoing basis depending on the return on investments. This means, barring a repeat of the 2008-09 financial crisis, the assets in funds are set to increase exponentially (some super funds lost 40 per cent of workers' funds during the Global Financial Crisis).

Australia's super funds hold the fourth or fifth-largest pool of retirement assets in the world and are on track to have the second-largest, with an enormous nest egg of reliable long-term capital by 2031.

Industry funds hold around a third of that golden nest-egg, public sector funds hold approximately 20 per cent, while retail funds (managed by banks and other financial institutions) have almost 20 per cent. The remainder is in the hands of small self-managed funds and corporate funds (for example Telstra has a fund for its employees).

GOLDEN NEST-EGG

The Labor government is desperately doing what it can to avoid Trump imposing tariffs on Australian exports. With this in mind, Treasurer Jim Chalmers set off to Washington for talks with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and also to address the Australian Superannuation Investment Summit, which was convened by Australia's Ambassador to the US, Kevin Rudd.

Some of Australia's largest super funds, Australian business leaders and leading figures from the US investment institutions and businesses attended the summit at the Australian Embassy in Washington.

The super funds are attracted by Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) deregulation of almost everything – lower corporate taxes, removal of environmental and safety regulations, and his "burn baby burn" approach to fossil fuels and the global climate crisis. The Treasurer's entourage included some of the largest industry funds which have equal representation of trade union and employer representatives along with an agreed independent chair.

"The US is the biggest economy in the world, we see opportunities to create value there. It's really important for AustralianSuper members that they get exposure to powerful, successful economies to build their retirement balances," AustralianSuper chief executive Paul Schroder said. AustralianSuper industry fund is the largest super fund in Australia, managing $355 billion of workers' savings.

Such investments might initially carry higher returns resulting from larger profits and the higher value of the US dollar compared with the Australian dollar. But for how long? All the lessons learnt and measures taken following the 2008-09 financial crisis are being undone. This is not just deregulation, it's deregulation on steroids with all protections being removed.

The Musk/Trump MAGA (Make America Great Again) has all the makings of a massive melt-down triggered by inflation (tariffs on imports) and or chaotic, deregulated and unaccountable financial markets. The ASIC commissioner urged caution that it could be a risk to retirement savings.

Many of the financial institutions that are being wooed by Australia's super funds are private – not listed on the stock exchange. That means there is little accountability or transparency regarding how they invest workers' savings, what fees are charged, etc. They are a law unto themselves.

The risks are high for super funds investing in Musk/Trump's MAGA. It is the super funds that may burn.

As for saving Australia from US tariffs there is no guarantee now or into the future.

ALTERNATIVE

One of the arguments used by economic commentators for pursuing MAGA investments is that the Australian economy is too small to handle such large amounts of retirement savings. Is that really the case?

State and federal governments are crying poor, cutting spending on essential services while handing out billions of dollars to the US and UK military industrial complexes and subsidising the fossil fuel sector. There is a cost-of-living crisis with housing, energy and rising food bills breaking the finances of many households.

There are many unmet needs that superannuation funds could fill if they invested more in Australia instead of gambling with workers' retirement savings in uncertain and unstable US markets. It would create jobs and result in more workers being trained.

Such investments include construction of public housing, developing renewable energy and batteries for storage, building hospitals, schools, public transport, fast trains linking major cities on the mainland, and much more. Australian super could fund all that *and* have adequate returns if government took an active role. Industry fund Cbus, for example, invests in construction and its returns for members are amongst the highest.

The Albanese government's pursuit of MAGA investments in the hope of avoiding tariffs has the inevitable outcome of handing over workers' savings to US financial parasites.

Capitalism and global warming

Eileen Whitehead

In his *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx wrote "Man lives from nature, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." He goes on to describe nature as humanity's "organic body," meaning that we're not the only 'most important creature.' We have to maintain a healthy balance, not only with our physical sustenance but also mentally through our enjoyment of the beauty of nature.

Marx saw the destruction of nature being caused by the industrial revolution and altering the lives of the masses. He saw the rift separating "the inorganic conditions of human existence" caused "in the relation of wage labour and capital." John Bellamy in his book *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (2000) termed this the 'metabolic rift,' which Marx refers to as 'material exchange.' Under capitalism's class system, we have a rich minority living off the surplus produced by the majority. Prior to the industrial revolution, under the feudal system where the rich owned most of the land, it was imperative that the feudal lord maintained his land sustainably otherwise he'd be undermining his own material wealth and status. Also, under feudalism, the serfs – once their dues were paid to their overlord – could sustain themselves and enjoy their land.

What has happened since the industrial revolution is that the wealth of the capitalist class does not depend on a particular piece of property, but on its control over capital. As we have seen, there is no respect for nature except for how much profit can be made: cutting down trees, raping the land for mining, etc. So the first step for capitalists was to 'free' the land and gain workers for their factories. As Marx points out, people became defined by their lack of ownership of the means of production. Now they were dependent on the capitalist to provide work for a measly wage.

When Marx was writing, this rift between human society and nature was in its early stages. Now we are facing a global catastrophe: an environmental collapse.

Australia presents itself as a small player in global climate change. Our population is relatively small, and our percentage of global emissions is a comparatively low 1.1 per cent. But when the emissions from Australia's fossil fuel exports are added to its domestic emissions, Australia is a significant contributor to global warming and climate change. New research reveals Australia is the second-largest climate polluter when calculated by total carbon emissions from its massive fossil fuel exports – beaten only by Russia, but ahead of every OPEC country and the United States. Industrialised countries represent just 20 per cent of the world's population, but account for 80 per cent of cumulative carbon emissions since the start of the industrial revolution.

Although the land and oceans are carbon sinks, i.e. they store more carbon than they emit by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and are currently absorbing about half the carbon emitted, this is causing ocean acidification and altering how ecosystems function on the land. They won't keep absorbing excess carbon forever, and the excess carbon they absorb has consequences. The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased from approximately 278 parts/million in 1750 – the beginning of the industrial era – to 420 parts/million in 2023. This is the main reason for our soaring temperatures.

The global surface temperature in 2023 was 1.2° Celsius, making it the hottest year on record, and it's now 1.5° Celsius! Global climate agreements mean nothing when each nation has its own sovereign approach to economic growth, which includes exploiting natural resources. Our last PM, Scott Morrison was quoted as saying he would not make "reckless" cuts to the coal industry. Albanese has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, to put Australia on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, but is doing nothing to rein in the fossil fuel companies. We are still amongst the world's largest exporters of iron ore, uranium, coal, and natural gas.

Who are they kidding? We should be marching aggressively to our politicians' front door and demanding more action. We should make sure we vote sensibly at the next Federal Election to support those candidates fighting seriously about climate change.

Maritime Union launches Family and Domestic Violence Solidarity Leave

Maritime Union of Australia – Sydney Branch

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has launched its campaign to introduce Family and Domestic Violence Solidarity Leave into every Maritime workplace.

MUA Sydney Branch Secretary Paul Keating said "Family and Domestic violence continues to occur in Australia at catastrophic levels. In Australia a woman is killed by a man known to her approximately every four days. We cannot continue to sit by idly and allow this to continue".

In early 2023 the federal government made 10 days paid Domestic Violence Leave a workplace right for everyone working in Australia. This was a huge leap forward. The MUA is pushing that initiative further, by introducing Family and Domestic Violence Solidarity Leave.

Sydney Branch Organiser Shane Reside said "this leave is for maritime workers to render assistance to their loved ones in times of crisis. For example, if my sister in Brisbane was to call me today in tears because her partner has torn the house to pieces, I could get in the car, drive up to Brisbane, pick her and the kids up and bring them back to safety. That would all be covered by this category of leave."

MUA Sydney Women's Representative Taamara Husband said "we're calling it solidarity leave because that is exactly what it is: solidarity. Women should never be alone in the face of Family and Domestic Violence. But who is available to help really? We know people in Australia are working longer hours than ever before. This leave is about making our time available to our loved ones so we can be there to care for them when the worst happens".

"As a community we have to take responsibility for ending gendered violence – we cannot continue to let women suffer in silence. This leave provision socialises the responsibility of caring for people experiencing violence. Large institutional employers wear the cost of the leave, and maritime workers can carry their loved ones through crisis" Taamara said.

Domestic Violence NSW CEO Delia Donovan said: "Leaving an abusive relationship is not simple or always safe. Initiatives such as the MUA's solidarity leave are important step – they recognise that the decision and action of leaving requires support from trusted friends and families. Particularly when we have a response system that is overwhelmed and underfunded. Granting this leave can be the difference in someone's pathway to safety."

The MUA has already successfully secured 10 days of paid Family and Domestic Violence Solidarity leave in six maritime workplaces across Sydney, and are actively seeking its roll-out across the industry.

Forty Union delegates from across every MUA workplace in Sydney participated in a day-long training about Family and Domestic Violence Solidarity Leave. The training focused on how to recognise when our loved ones are experiencing violence, what we can meaningfully do to help them, and how to support the roll out of this leave across the industry."

Photo: Anh Nguyen– pexels.com (CC0)

This leave provision socialises the responsibility of caring for people experiencing violence.

Victoria: rank-and-file group begins election campaign, protests job cuts

H Launton

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) rank-and-file group Voice For Members held a rally opposing the ALP Allan government announcement of a "review" and "2,000-3,000 cuts" to the Victorian Public Service (VPS) on 4 March. During a sitting of Victorian parliament a hundred people gathered outside to protest this move. Speakers held forth on previous cuts to the VPS in 2014, 2019, and 2024 as well as a raft of 'section 11s,' which is when a given department is restructured. One speaker has endured four S11s in 10 years of service.

It was noted that if LNP are elected there are 36,000 job cuts slated for the Australian Public Service (APS). This amounts to one fifth of the workforce. It is not credible that these people are all doing useless jobs, especially as this type of announcement is not attached to a review of the service – it is an ideological statement. If the LNP implement it, it will amount to more engagement with consultants and more public money going to the private sector, as happened with the previous Liberal-National Coalition federal government which spent billions on consultants to keep their 'small government' going.

The group who called the rally are running a challenge against CPSU leadership in upcoming Branch Council elections. Their next effort is training on how to run in union elections hosted by Labor Notes.

Speakers noted that it is possible to push back against cuts to the public service. It requires an organised workforce (service providers) operating with community support (service users).

The final speaker was a nurse who said that it was not believable that the Allan government was going to use the so-called savings from cutting jobs to invest in front-line services as nurses had to strike in 2024 to get an investment in the front-line services, otherwise known as nursing jobs.

NSW prison un-privatised

The Public Service Association (PSA) has welcomed the decision by the Minns Labor government to return Parklea Correctional Centre to public hands.

"From the moment Parklea Correctional Centre was privatised in 2009, our union has campaigned for what is right: the return of the jail to the people of NSW and away from the failed Prison for Profit model that fails staff and taxpayers," said PSA General Secretary Stewart Little.

"Today's announcement shows the state government is listening to our voice."

Little said the Parklea decision is good news for the community and is certainly good news for the union's members who work in the prison.

They will be better paid, work in safer conditions and have a wider choice of workplaces once they are employed in the state-wide corrections system.

"It's good news for the taxpayer, who will no longer be propping up outsourcing giants such as MTC that operate to benefit overseas shareholders rather than the people of NSW," said Little.

"The welcome news from Parklea follows last year's decision by the government to listen to the PSA and hand control of Junee Correctional Centre to Corrective Services NSW from 1 April 2025.

"The PSA will always campaign against the sell-offs that have done so much damage to our state.

"We will continue to fight for the return to government control of the services privatised in the reckless frenzy of sell-offs under the O'Farrell, Baird, Berejiklian and Perrottet governments.

"For years we have been telling the state that privatisation hurts everyone. We are glad we have a government that is listening to us."

Public Service Association

Northern Territory: government protects discrimination, vilification

The Northern Territory's Country Liberal Party (CLP) government is planning to reverse changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act passed by the previous Labor government, effectively reinstating the religious discrimination exemptions that allowed non-government school employers to discriminate against staff and students.

Branch secretary of the Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Terry Burke has described the decision as "unacceptable ... unnecessary, divisive, and harmful."

Burke, who represents school staff who will be affected by the change has said that staff and students in schools should not be discriminated against on the basis of their personal lives, and that faith-based schools are more than capable of functioning without the exemptions.

The CLP didn't stop at making it easier to discriminate – they've also removed a vilification provision introduced three years ago by the previous Labor government, which made it unlawful to "offend, insult, humiliate, or intimidate" another person or group based on characteristics such as race and gender.

Water vs 'Defence' in South Australia

Adelaide's water desalination plant at Lonsdale. Photo: SA Water

Ron Hall

A key feature of the water supply system in SA is the ADP (Adelaide Desalination Plant), which relieves demand on water from the Murray Darling Basin, especially in the summer months, leaving extra for irrigators. Despite extensive use of renewable energy at the ADP, the water produced is more costly than that harvested from the western slopes of the Mt Lofty Ranges or from the Murray system.

Australia – Water Storage Levels in Capital Cities, Percentage of Capacity, February 2025

Adelaide	36.8
Brisbane	87.1
Canberra	92.4
Melbourne	81.5
Perth	42.8
Sydney	94.7

Note: Both Adelaide and Perth experience a Mediterranean climate, which features very dry summers.

From a cost saving point of view, funds should be devoted to maximising the capturing water from the Mt Lofty Ranges. Water from the desalination plants costs four times as much.

DESALINATION PLANTS

SA Water operates two desalination plants harvesting seawater. One is located at Lonsdale in the southern suburbs of Adelaide and another at Penneshaw on Kangaroo Island. A third seawater plant is planned for Port Lincoln. The others, about 10 in number, are used to process saline groundwater, often in Aboriginal communities. A privately owned plant at Port Augusta supplies a horticulture business, principally greenhouse tomatoes. SA needs to make strategic use of desalination plants powered by renewable energy to focus on becoming a drought resistant state as opposed to squandering valuable funds on becoming a 'defence state' and so a potential nuclear target.

WATER OR NUCLEAR?

AUKUS and the nuclear submarine project simply amount to a monstrous deception to establish Port Adelaide as a place for the maintenance of US vessels where their spent nuclear fuel can be stored. The same scenario is happening at Fremantle in WA. A much better investment would be guaranteeing a secure water supply for a state where the desert climate is advancing further south at a rate of 50 kilometres each year. Dry conditions have meant the lowest amount of water flowing into Adelaide's reservoirs in more than 40 years, with combined reservoir levels sitting at their lowest in more than 20 years.

As a result, water production at the Lonsdale desalination plant has been steadily increasing to ensure that supply and will meet water demands through autumn into winter. South Australians are being urged to be "water wise" in a bid to ease demand across the state. However, the Eyre Peninsula, the third area of the state for which the construction of a desalination plant is scheduled, is the only region which is facing water restrictions.

An efficient desalination plant operating on wind and solar power would be more valuable to many remote parts of the state than a nuclear submarine facility with all the hazards that are entailed. Likewise with water storage facilities and pipelines. Remember, water is life.

Private health insurers making huge profits

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is calling for reform as new data shows private health insurers are keeping more of their soaring profits for themselves.

Quarterly data released by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) reveals private health insurers have amassed a substantial profit of $581 million in the December 2024 quarter. Despite these profits, the industry as a whole is returning just 83 cents of every premium dollar paid by Australians for hospital services.

"When the health minister announced a premium rise of 3.73 per cent this week, insurers cried poor and claimed that was the lowest they could go – but now the truth has come out," said Dr Katharine Bassett, Director of Health Policy at CHA.

"Health insurers are making enormous profits and returning less to patients and hospitals. Inadequate funding from insurers is putting the private health system under severe strain."

CHA is calling for the annual premium round process to be undertaken by an independent body such as the Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (IHACPA), to ensure premium increases accurately reflect the cost of delivering care. This would pave the way for a National Private Price for the private health sector. CHA is also calling for premium increases to be linked to how much insurers return to patients, to incentivise them to return more to patients.

In a 2018 senate submission, the Members Health Fund Alliance, which represents 26 health insurers, admitted that insurers should 'return on average around 90 per cent of all premiums paid, back to policyholders, as benefits'.

The truth is, private health insurance is a rort, as the US example shows. That country spends more on health care per head of population than any other country and has the lowest life expectancy at birth of any of the high-income countries.

PEACE NOTES

AUKUS on our doorstep

Thanks to AUKUS I&A Strategic Communications, we've learned that the *USS Minnesota* arrived in Western Australia on 25 February 2025. AUKUS I&A says the visit is " kicking off the first of two planned US fast-attack submarine visits to HMAS Stirling in 2025".

The port visits support the "first pillar" of AUKUS. What's that?

Pillar One is described by the pro-war and Sinophobic lobby group Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) as the trilateral effort to support Australia acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. Minnesota's visit is partly softening us up so that we're used to having attack submarines drop in, and partly to train Australian naval officers – as AUKUS Integration and Acquisition put it, the US Navy will "have the opportunity to share and compare procedures, such as weapons handling, with their Australian counterparts."

It would be funny if AUKUS weren't such a threat to our sovereignty, budget, and national security that the Commanding Officer of the visiting Submarine, Jeffry "J" Cornielle says that his submarine's visit will help establish the Australian Navy's "sovereign, conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine force." Funny because "sovereign" really isn't the word for what's happening here.

If something is sovereign, it belongs to a particular nation. West Australia is our sovereign territory. It belongs to us, and not to other countries.

AUKUS is the opposite of sovereign for Australia. The submarines, if they arrive, will be part of an agreement Australia won't be able to change. If the US gets into a war, we'll be along for the ride regardless of whether our government or people want it, and regardless of whether that war is in our national interest or not.

Some AUKUS supporters have argued that the loss of sovereignty is a dead issue, because we've given away so much to the US already. We already have US Marines on regular rotation in our country's north. We already have a spy facility, Pine Gap, parts of which Australians aren't allowed to set foot in, that provides support to Israel, but not to Arab nations and makes a mockery of Australian claims to be even-handed or uninvolved in the Middle East. So much sovereignty has been given away and won't return, argue some pro-AUKUS commentators, that there's no point worrying about giving away more.

It's a tempting line of argument – it *sounds* realistic and involves no effort on our part, but it's wrong. AUKUS has proved several things about Australia.

Firstly that there is no limit to how much a government can sign us up to spend on militarism without paying a political price in our bourgeois parliament; AUKUS will cost us almost half a trillion when it's finished – even though it's been admitted that there will be no penalty paid by the US if the subs are late or don't materialise.

Second, that we have even more sovereignty to lose, or rather give away. Previous attempts to replace Australia's fleet of submarines all had one feature in common – finishing with Australian ownership of the submarines we bought, whether French or Japanese. AUKUS sees the most expensive part of our navy becoming a working part of the United States military.

Resistance to this is possible and AUKUS is not a sure thing. The US Navy knows this, which is why AUKUS I&A's press release stresses that the visit will be a chance for US sailors to "interact with and support the local community."

We are part way through a sales pitch.

Both of our major parties have already signed on the line, but the consent of Australian people can't be taken for granted.

The Communist Party of Australia actively supports an independent foreign policy. That's why we actively oppose AUKUS.

Speech by Pa

General Secretary, World Federation

Hanoi, March 2025

Comrades,
Before I begin my speech, I would first like to warmly thank the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) for hosting this very important meeting of the WFTU Presidential Council here in Hanoi today. It is a great honour for all of us that today's meeting is hosted by the trade union organisation of a country whose people have become a global symbol of dedication to the struggle for national independence and social liberation. With incredible courage and self-sacrifice, they managed to crush foreign imperialist intervention and achieve a victory that was not only strategic but also ideological, political, and, above all, moral.

The contribution of VGCL to the preservation and development of the WFTU during difficult times has been immense, and I would like to once again express our gratitude on behalf of everyone for this.

The excellent conditions created by our Vietnamese comrades guarantee that this meeting will be successful and worthy of all our expectations.

Our era is characterised by the generalisation and deepening of the capitalist crisis, accompanied by new attacks on the rights and achievements of workers, a dramatic widening of social inequalities, further environmental degradation, and reckless overexploitation of our planet's natural resources.

The genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza and now in the West Bank, with the support and encouragement of the USA, the EU, and their allies, has once again revealed in all its grandeur the hypocrisy, cynicism, and inhumane nature of imperialism.

The source of instability, violence, and turmoil in Palestine and the broader Middle East is none other than the Israeli occupation, colonisation, and usurpation of the rights of the Palestinian people, which has continued for decades.

We are proud because, under the banner of the WFTU, millions of workers in dozens of countries around the world have mobilised in solidarity with the Palestinian people, demanding justice and freedom for Palestine, and condemning not only the barbaric Israeli aggression but also the complicity and encouragement of this aggression by the ruling circles of imperialism.

Global geopolitical and economic rivalries continue to directly threaten world peace and security, even with the risk of nuclear destruction. Imperialist wars, interventions, sanctions, and blockades continue and intensify.

The shift towards a war economy is clearly a priority for the ruling circles of capitalism today, as it ensures profitability for multinational monopolies and the expansion of the geopolitical power of developed imperialist states.

The USA, the EU, and their NATO allies are announcing new massive increases in military spending, which, apart from being a threat to global peace and security, also mean even harsher austerity policies and widening social inequality.

That is why the struggle for peace, for us, means first and foremost a struggle for the dismantling of NATO and all military coalitions, a struggle to defend the right of every people to choose the path of their economic and social development without interventions, sanctions, blockades, and economic wars.

Harsh and intense attacks continue against the labour and social achievements of workers and their democratic and trade union freedoms.

The high cost of living and inflation are brutally undermining workers' and pensioners' living standards.

Temporary, precarious, and unsecured employment, despite slogans and declarations, is expanding and becoming entrenched.

Unemployment, precariousness, and the overexploitation of cheap labour from vulnerable workers due to mass economic migration or refugee flows, as well as anti-popular and anti-labour legislative measures systematically promoted by neoliberal governments, have significantly undermined labour with rights and regulated collective agreements that don't reflect the modern needs of workers.

Individual contracts, privatisation, outsourcing, teleworking, and "service leasing" are just some of the forms taken by this harsh neoliberal attack.

Major social achievements such as social security and public health are being privatised, while the authoritarian and arbitrary increase in retirement ages continues methodically.

Thousands of people continue to be buried daily under the ground in mines operating under medieval conditions, trains continue to collide head-on because they operate with outdated control systems, factories burn with workers trapped inside, and workers are killed or injured daily due to exhaustion and the inability to concentrate caused by the continuous intensification of work and the lack of measures to protect against workplace accidents and occupational diseases.

At the altar of profit and despite the achievements of technology and science, human sacrifices continue as safety and health at work are seen by employers as undesirable costs that reduce their profits.

The encouraging and hopeful element in the depressing picture of today's world is the fact that workers do not passively accept the neoliberal capitalist, anti-popular, and anti-labour offensive. Guided by class-oriented trade unions, millions of workers around the world are choosing the path of struggle to defend their trade union, social, and political rights.

With militant mobilisations in every corner of the globe, they are demanding work with rights that ensures the satisfaction of their modern needs.

The class-oriented trade unions, which are usually members or friends of the WFTU, have led and supported large mass and militant struggles that have made us all proud.

In France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, Turkey, the Spanish state, in Argentina, Brazil, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia and in so many other parts of the world, the flag of the WFTU has flown very high, and thanks to these struggles, it has gained even greater prestige and respect.

Introductory speech by the WFTU General Secretary, in the 2025 WFTU Presidential Council Meeting.

As the resistance of workers strengthens and the struggles become more massive and militant, so do the phenomena of authoritarianism and repression, and the police persecution of trade union leaders, as well as the attack on trade union freedoms, particularly the right to strike, intensify.

The response of bourgeois governments to just and popular demands is the sharpening of state repression and authoritarianism. At the same time, employers and governments are attempting to manipulate labour struggles, betting on the role of yellow unions and compromised trade union leaders.

It is no coincidence that the ITUC (International Trade Union Congress) globally and the ETUC (European Trade Union Congress) have intensified their attacks, aiming to limit the presence and influence of the WFTU within the global trade union movement, either by exerting blackmail and undue pressure or by distributing promises and luring with buy-offs.

The more they feel the increasing questioning by workers of the path of class collaboration and trade union tradition that they serve, the more their attacks will intensify.

That is why a particularly important goal for us in today's conditions is to ensure the greatest possible expansion of the presence and influence of the WFTU in all regions of the world.

We do not underestimate the means at their disposal, nor the help they receive from the mechanisms available to the ruling circles of global capitalism.

But we also have weapons that are strategically much more powerful than theirs. We have our ideology and our class orientation, our history and our action, our militant spirit, and our moral advantage.

But to make use of these weapons, we need good organisation, enlightenment, and ideological and political education.

Today and tomorrow, here in Hanoi, the Presidential Council in this regular session will evaluate the action and presence of our Federation during the past year and formulate an Action Plan for 2025.

I sincerely believe that we have responded satisfactorily to the implementation of an ambitious plan and have developed a wealth of activity at all levels, centrally, regionally, and locally.

The detailed report of action for 2024 is in your hands, and you can evaluate it. Therefore, I will not go into much detail.

But allow me to make some brief remarks, which I consider important for a discussion

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that will focus on our action in all its forms, as a means of credibly communicating the principles and values that the WFTU stands for, and expanding its prestige and influence in the international trade union movement.

Apart from the solidarity and support mobilisations for the heroic people of Palestine that dominated our action in 2024, once again we carried out the annual international campaigns on the occasion of 3 October, the founding day of the WFTU, and 1 September, which we have established as the World Day of Trade Union Action for Peace. We have established 26 July as the World Day of Mobilisation in Defense of Heroic Socialist Cuba and have mobilised our forces in many other cases for solidarity actions with struggles that have developed in many parts of the world.

We have a presence and intervention in international organisations; we participated with female cadres in the UN meeting on women's rights in New York in March, and we had interventions at the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) and UNESCO. However, we placed particular importance on our intervention at the ILO (International Labour Organisation), where we had a fairly successful presence during the ILC (International Labour Council) in June. In addition to the speech of the General Secretary at the plenary session of the Conference, we held a global conference in Geneva on democratic and trade union freedoms. We firmly demanded the democratisation of the way the ILO operates and denounced the unacceptable anti-democratic and unethical monopoly of labour representation by the ITUC. Even as observers, we actively participate in the discussions of the Governing Body, particularly on the hot issue of the right to strike, which, as is well known, employers' organisations, supported by many governments, provocatively challenge.

We worked to further strengthen the relations of the WFTU with our traditional regional allies, such as ICATU in the Arab world and OATTU in Africa.

A particularly important event that we achieved after considerable effort is the high-level visit of a WFTU delegation to China at the invitation of the ACFTU (All-China Federation of Trade Unions).

There, high-level meetings were held with the President and the General Secretary of the ACFTU, where the will for cooperation and joint action was reaffirmed, as well as the intention for this cooperation to take specific and practical forms.

A closer and more stable cooperation between the WFTU and the ACFTU, based on principles and common goals and values, will certainly be a significant and mutually beneficial development that will strengthen in many ways the action of the class-oriented trade union movement.

We also successfully held the 4th World Congress of Working Youth in November in Marseille, France, as well as two regional conferences, one in Francophone Africa in August and recently in Paris, the European Conference of EUROF, which was a great success.

The TUI Metal, Miners, and Metallurgy held its 4th World Congress in Buenos Aires in May. The TUI Pensioners and Retirees held its 3rd Congress in April in Athens.

World Congresses are planned for 2025 by FISE (World Federation of Teachers Unions) for next April in Morocco. The TUI Textiles and UITTB will soon announce dates.

Comrades,

The Action Plan for 2025 must allow us to further expand our role and intervention among workers and their unions, on the path of class struggles in defence of their very own genuine class interests. It should be a program of actions and initiatives leading to the organisational strengthening and the even more collective and effective functioning of all the regional, sectoral, local, and thematic structures that constitute the great edifice of the WFTU.

2025 is the year we will celebrate 80 years since the founding of our Federation.

Born from the ashes of the most destructive war in the history of humanity, the WFTU completes 80 years of continuous and uninterrupted struggle for the rights of workers, for justice and social progress, against all forms of discrimination, against wars and imperialist interventions.

80 years of solidarity and internationalism.

These celebrations should be used as a motivation and impetus to highlight the history of the struggles and actions of the WFTU and to emphasise its difference from the organisations of compromised trade unionists and yellow unions that promote class collaboration and integration into the system of exploitation.

Tomorrow, the Presidential Council of the WFTU will be called upon to approve our declaration and a rich program of activities in honour of the 80th anniversary.

A program that includes seminars, local and regional events, publications, podcasts and video clips, photography and poster competitions, events all over the world by our members, and of course the central commemorative event, which we aspire to organise on 3 October in Paris, the city where the historic founding Congress took place.

We will need funding for these activities. Particularly for the main event, which needs to be ambitious.

For this reason, I propose that we set up a special fund for this purpose. The goal should be to collect €50,000 ($84,500 AUD).

10 per cent of the 2025 annual fees are to be allocated to this fund. The rest is to be collected with extraordinary contributions from our members and friends. So be prepared for that!

In addition to the activities that the WFTU will carry out centrally or regionally and are included in the program that we will approve, we call on our affiliates to organise, in consultation with each other, at least one event in each country. The WFTU Headquarters will support these events with materials, speakers, or other assistance requested.

I am sure that all of us understand that the financial operation of the WFTU is a key issue to which we must, of course, pay special attention. It is obvious, comrades, that we need more resources to meet the demands that life puts before us.

The report of the Financial Control Committee is, I think, quite enlightening and touches on the issues we need to pay attention to. I support its conclusions, and we will work to implement them.

Comrades, fellow comrades,

It is evident that in our era, the prerequisites for truly dignified working and social living conditions for all workers exist in abundance. The rapid development of science and technology has led to a leap in the productive capabilities of human labour. The question is, how are these capabilities being utilised?

To increase the profits of capitalists and create unimaginable wealth for a few, or to ensure dignified living and working conditions for those who, through their labour and toil, are the true creators of the produced wealth.

The natural discontent and anger stemming from the deterioration of living and working conditions experienced by many, as well as from the decay and corruption that capitalism, especially in its harsh anti-popular neoliberal form, drives societies into, create conditions that are exploited by far-right and neo-fascist forces. These forces invest in the anger, despair, and deception of the popular masses.

The class-oriented Trade Union movement will continue to fight so that the justified disappointment, despair, and anger of workers are not transformed into fatalism and social marginalisation, not into racism and social obscurantism, but into organisation and action.

Organisation and struggle are the only path that can overturn the existing realities of misery, exploitation, and social injustice.

We struggle under very difficult and often harsh conditions. Against enemies who possess unbelievable means and who do not hesitate to employ a fifth column within the trade union ranks. However, we remain optimistic.

We have faith in the judgement and orientation of the working class. When the working class realises its position and role in the progress of society, when through daily small and large struggles it becomes aware of its strength and understands its historical mission, it becomes an invincible force.

With our united and organised struggles, the system that generates crisis and reproduces exploitation can be defeated. A world free of wars and imperialist interventions, free of exploitation and discrimination; a world where work will be permanent and stable, regulated and safe, is achievable.

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Film Review

Ainda Estou Aqui (*I'm still here*)

Richard Titelius

I'm still here **tells a story from the dark past of the military dictatorship that gripped Brazil from 1964 to 1985. The film is based on the autobiographical book of Eunice Paiva's son, Marcelo Reubens Paiva who, witnessed the events of that day and all that followed. The director Walter Salles takes viewers faithfully through three time periods in 1971, 1996, and 2014, the latter being a Commission of Inquiry initiated during the government of leftist President Dilma Rousseff.**

The story begins in January 1971 at the house of Reubens Paiva, a former Brazilian congressman whose position was annulled by the regime in 1964 and so returned to civilian life to bring up a family with his wife Eunice Paiva.

The couple and their five children are about to go to the beach when police come to the house to ask Reubens to come to their office to give a deposition. The events turn their family life upside down, and later Eunice and her 15-year-old daughter are also taken in for depositions. When they pull up to the police station they are given black hoods to put over their heads, and we realise not only that things are not what they seem, but also that her husband has suffered a similar fate.

Eunice is made to look through a file of mug shots of various people. The first time she takes no interest. She is brought back later to have another look, and notices a photo of her husband, herself, and a daughter.

Reubens Paiva had some correspondence addressed to him which was intercepted by the officials of the junta, and explains why the junta has barged in on his idyllic family life in Rio de Janeiro.

After 12 days, Eunice Paiva is released – her daughter was released earlier and she goes about bringing up her five children without the support of her husband. At breakfast one day, she announces to the family that they will be moving to São Paulo to live with grandparents – a move met with much sadness and even resistance by the children.

It is a poignant and deeply compelling film, and the characters are imbued with a significance that helps to keep the audience's interest till the conclusion. The film reproduces 1970s Brazil right down to Rio de Janeiro of the beaches and even the special black and white wavy patterned sidewalks very faithfully.

The fidelity to detail, authenticity and suspense explains why more than 2.5 million Brazilians have seen the film making it one of the nation's biggest blockbusters ever as people who lived through the times attend with their children and grandchildren – to see what happened back then in the dark years and ensure that Brazilian democracy remains in the light and does not return to darkness.

As many parts of the world are gripped by militarism or the far right, the film explores what happens when characters like former Brazilian right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro (2019 to 2023), current US President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (1973 to 1989) take over, and what happens to the social, political and cultural life of a country. The reference to Chile in the 1970's is especially relevant as dissidents from Brazil often fled to neighbouring Chile, which in 1970 elected South America's first Marxist government

The film has won a number of awards and has been nominated for three Academy Awards including Best Actress for Fernanda Torres (whose now 95-year-old mother Fernanda Montenegro featured in Walter Salles first film, the Brazilian classic – Central Station), Best Picture and Best International Feature Film – which was won last year won by a movie that also examined the politics of the right wing in, *Place of Interest* about Auschwitz – Birkenau during World War II in Poland.

We invite readers to watch the film and reflect on the dangers of the rise of fascism. ✪

Solutions to IWD Crossword

Guardian **03-03-2025 – Issue #2135**

Down:

1 **AlexandraKollontai** – Russian/Soviet revolutionary and diplomat who advocated for women's emancipation

2 **Mimosa** – Flower often given on IWD, first used by Italian feminists

3 **Suffragettes** – Women's rights movement in the late 19th-early 20th century, campaigning primarily for women's right to vote

5 **AngelaDavis** – African American author and activist who wrote *Women, Race & Class*

7 **Purple** – The customary colour of International Women's Day

Across:

3 **Spain** – Country where in 2018 a feminist general strike mobilised 5 million women

4 **Political** – Famous feminist slogan: "The personal is the Political"

6 **USSR** – First country to make IWD an official holiday___

8 **ClaraZetkin** – German Marxist, credited as the founder of IWD

9 **Copenhagen** – European capital city where in 1910, the makings of the first IWD celebrations were formalised

Across;

3. What classes need before revolution and the formations of socialism is viable (13)

4. Translate from German to "ragged", a portion of the name of the lowest underclass in Marxist theory (6)

5. Translating to small, this term works in conjunction with another class typically that of small business owners (6)

6. The religious class often aligned with the ruling class to spread false awareness (6)

7. What the revolution is, once the masses are educated and mobilised (8)

9. Class that was central in Chinas history, agrarian economic class tied to land they live/work on itself (8)

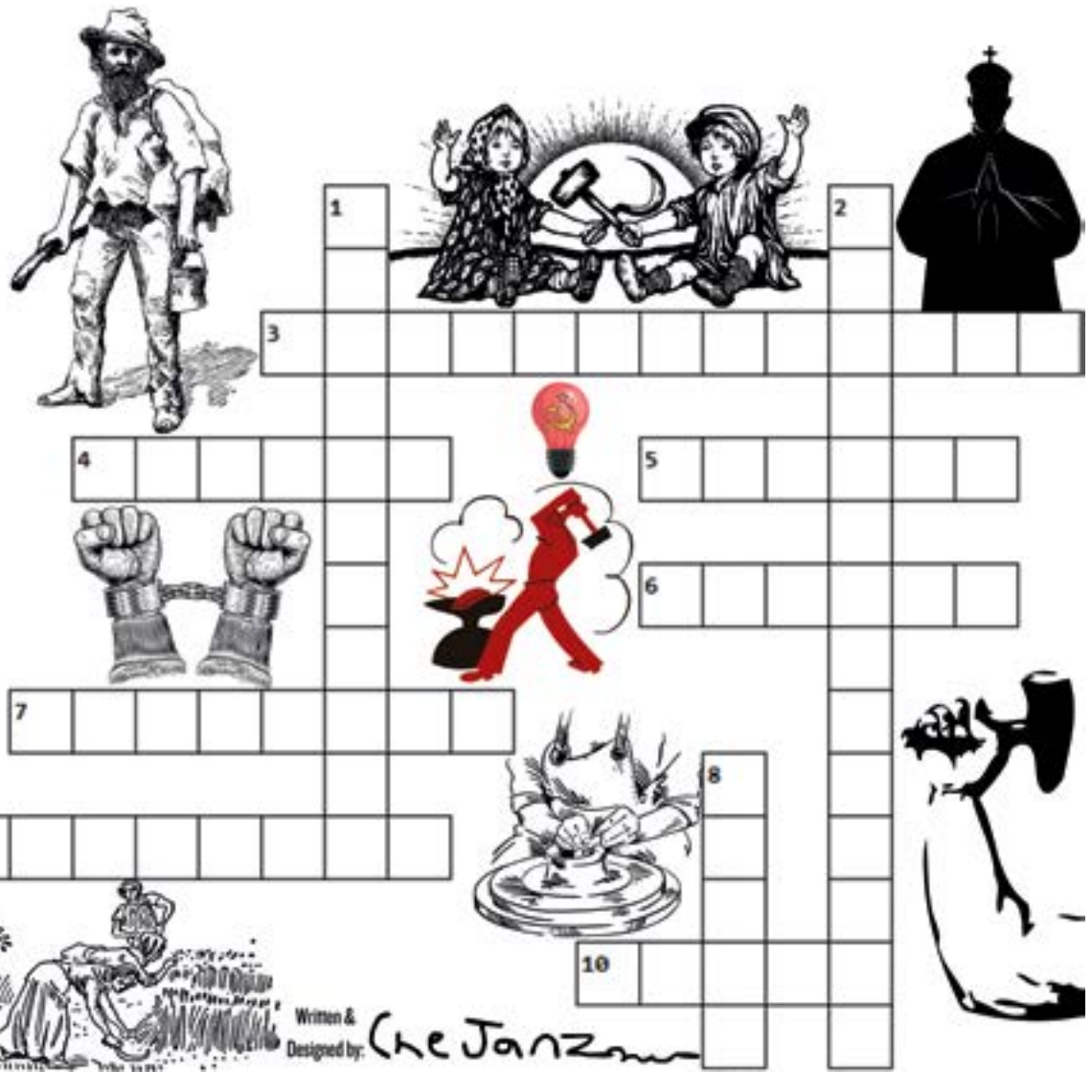
10. "The ____ is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly" - Frederick Engels (5)

Down;

1. The class that must sell its labor to survive within Capitalism (11)

2. Pre-industrial class who own their tools and create goods/commodity's by hand (14)

8. Wealthier subsect of the working class in pre-Soviet Russia, owning more land/resources than others (5)



Cruel hoax: The political economy of anti-immigration

Richard D Wolff

Deporting immigrants may deliver electoral wins to politicians if voters have been sufficiently cultivated by years of demonising and scapegoating. For its victims, the cruelties involved are horrific. Yet such deportation makes little sense economically. It represents a nationally self-destructive program based on a faulty grasp of immigration economics. What once "made America great" (at least for the majority white population) were successive waves of immigrants. What underscored the American economy's strength was its ability to absorb and integrate those waves despite frictions among them: a genuinely productive melting pot. My American schooling through my PhD stressed such points.

What then reversed such a positive understanding of immigration? What converted immigration instead into an urgent danger to American greatness? What lets Trump pose as "protecting" us by sharply reducing immigration and massively deporting immigrants? (By "immigrants" I mean the vast majority of people who are poor and join the working class at low levels of pay. Foreign-born US residents comprise about 14 per cent of the total population or roughly 46 million. About 12 million of them are undocumented.)

Answers to such questions lie in the political economy of immigration. Yet those answers and the political economy that generates them are stunningly absent from popular debates and consciousness. The Republican party's recent years of anti-immigration rhetoric plus the immigrant deportation policies in place across the last three presidencies illustrate that absence. Many politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties support deportation as the necessary response to the "costly invasions" of immigrants (often equated to criminals). Yet evidence for this demonisation program has been scarce. Proponents seem largely ignorant of the actual economics of immigration.

Most immigrants coming to the United States are young adults. The young can best manage migration's hardships and dangers. They can most readily fill the hardest jobs at the lowest pay that their desperate and vulnerable circumstances force on them. The undocumented among them are the most vulnerable. They dare not complain to the police or other government officials when employers take advantage of them and abuse them. Immigrants often send portions of their wages (remittances) back to the countries they left. Remittances help care for children, the elderly, and others who remained there and partially compensate countries of origin for losing their emigrants' productivity.

Before adult immigrants arrived in the United States, their upbringing was financed by their countries of origin. Their families and governments spent considerable sums feeding, clothing, sheltering, educating, etc., them from birth to 15-18 years of age. They "invested" in their young people but obtained little income from that investment because the young adults migrated to the United States. Their years of productivity benefited the US economy, not the economy of the countries that invested in them.

In contrast, people born and raised in the United States face heavy economic costs *for the US economy* before they become working adults. US families partly defray those costs (food, clothing, and shelter). The federal, state, and local governments defray other parts of those costs (public schooling, public services, etc.). Since relatively few US adults emigrate, the US economy reaps their adult productivity as a return on its investment in their upbringing. Added to that payoff, the United States secures the productivity of immigrants they did not invest in.

Since many of the countries immigrants belong to are among the poorer countries, the immigration of their citizens to the United States represents a subsidy from and by the poor nations. Migration not only reflects the international inequalities of global capitalism, it also worsens them. Migrants' countries of origin lose the adult productivity they need most. Migration transfers those benefits to the rich countries that need them the least.

That "great" American past that MAGA celebrates comprised many decades of massive and successive waves of immigrants. Impressive US GDP growth in the 19th and 20th centuries owed more than a little to the subsidies provided by immigrants. Early waves of immigrants stimulated economic growth that in turn attracted, welcomed, and incorporated later waves. Each immigrant wave struggled, and most of them eventually achieved rising wages; some even rose out of the working class to become employers. Immigration and growth facilitated each other in a cycle that many found "exceptional."

As each immigrant wave arrived, its members mostly endured the worst jobs and the lowest pay and lived in the worst housing and neighbourhoods underserved by public services, such as inferior schools for their children. When the next wave arrived, its members accepted the same. The economic growth that earlier waves of immigrants contributed to eventually enabled their struggles for better jobs, pay, and housing to succeed. That growth also enabled the later waves of immigrants who replaced the earlier ones at the lowest rungs of the nation's social ladder.

Thus, almost all immigrants could reasonably foresee better years ahead. The United States could boast about a remarkable degree of "social mobility." Carefully exaggerated by "rags to riches" fables, working-class belief in social mobility served social peace and often blunted socialism's appeal.

This analysis has so far treated migration in terms of its national or macroeconomic effects. Migration also has microeconomic effects: its impact on the employee-employer relationship. Immigrants usually work for less pay than native-born employees will accept. Undocumented immigrants accept still less. Because immigrants can represent a real competitive threat, the native-born, better-paid workers can fear, resent, and oppose their presence. Demagogues often see opportunities to obtain votes by reflecting and reinforcing that resentment and opposition. If the migrants display "racial" differences, demagogues can integrate racism (traditional or new) to aggravate the competition between immigrant and native-born employees.

Photo: Jens Schott Knudsen – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Employers have often played immigrants against native-born employees, and undocumented immigrants against both. Employers' divide and conquer methods have prevented united actions by native and immigrant employees and blocked or destroyed labor unions and strikes. On the other hand, in recent years, significant portions of the US labour movement have revived partly by pointedly unifying immigrant (documented and undocumented) and non-immigrant employees and, thereby, defeating employers. Not surprisingly, some employers, worried about a reviving labor movement, cultivated a backlash to reinforce divisions among employees. Demonisation of immigration appealed to them. Denunciations of and demands to remove diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments became popular covers for and companions to anti-immigrant agitation.

In the United States, recent presidents have sought votes by using hostile words and actions against immigrants. Those presidents' plans and resulting deportations responded to several years of large immigration. Political demagogues and racists played their usual roles. Trump lifted them into his campaigns and presidencies. His second term targets the most massive deportation in US history.

Employers will regret the deportations' reduction of profitable and low-wage immigrant employees (and especially undocumented employees). Of course, employers retain their usual alternative of automation: replacing ever more workers with computers, robots, and AI. Millions deprived of government jobs (via Trump, Musk, and DOGE) will join those technologically displaced to compete for shrinking job opportunities in the private sector. The Trumpian objective is a working class cleansed of immigrants, unions, and DEI sensitivities. It is a MAGA world that has successfully resubordinated most non-whites, women, immigrants, and all others deemed inferior by the likes of Trump and Musk.

Immigration always served chiefly the needs of US capitalism. Migration was always costly, dangerous, and painful to the migrants who mostly lacked other ways to survive. The working class was often threatened by immigration and thus saw it negatively, but lacked the political power to stop it. On the other hand, the working class also appreciated the survival and opportunities immigration offered their families and ancestors. In that way, they saw immigration positively.

Over several recent decades, slow, uneven economic growth redistributed US wealth and income upward. A declining US empire coupled with rising global competition (especially from China), climate change's mounting effects, and consequent global conflicts drove large migrations to the United States just as its jobs, incomes, and opportunities were being squeezed. Immigration's perceived negative effects came to outweigh the positive ones. US working class sympathy for and appreciation of immigration declined enough to give right-wing demagogues their latest big opportunity.

The demagogues exploited the changed conditions and attitudes of the United States working class to shake up politics. Daily executive orders have undone the formerly stable political consensus of alternating GOP and Democratic governments. Since then, as the US empire and capitalism commenced their mutually reinforcing decline, Republicans and Democrats turned ever more harshly on each other. Their old political establishment crumbled in bitter conflicts.

Immigration became one flashpoint, one way to define a new political direction out of the decline that no party politician could dare admit to. Trump has so far best grasped the opportunity to ride an extreme position on immigration – mass deportation – to power. However, since it will soon become apparent that deporting immigrants solves little and worsens the USA's decline, the political project's prospects are dubious.

Much the same applies to other projects envisaged by Trump and Elon Musk. These include neo-colonialist plans to take over the Panama Canal, Greenland, and Gaza, and make Canada the 51st state of the United States, as well as imposing tariffs around the world and disconnecting the United States from global efforts related to climate change and health initiatives. Abandoning the Ukraine war and shifting its costs onto the Europeans may provoke their resistance and reactions, frustrating Trump and Musk in unanticipated ways.

As with immigration, the political economics of other Trump-Musk projects (and much of Project 2025) raise similar profound questions about their logic, blind spots, and unintended consequences. The deep contradictions of anti-immigration – and other projects – are not overcome by hiding them under the veneer of slogans like 'America First.' We continue to experience what 'declining empire' means.

Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute (edited for space)

Germany's crisis of working-class politics

Nick Wright

While attention is focused on the rise of the right-wing populist Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) – and liberal opinion in Britain anxiously parses the difference and similarities of this peculiarly German formation with Reform UK – the collapse of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) is the issue exercising Labour MPs.

In the German election the big winner in terms of voter gains is the AfD – with 20.8 per cent it almost doubled its number of voters – while the conservative Christian Democrat/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) increased its vote by 4.4 per cent to total 28.6 per cent. This makes its aggressively right-wing leader Friedrich Merz almost certain to replace the SPD's Olaf Scholz as chancellor.

The SPD clocked up its worst result in a federal election and its largest loss, eventually winning a humiliating 16.4 per cent.

The extravagantly big business-orientated neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), whose withdrawal from the ruling "traffic-light" coalition triggered the snap election, crashed out of the Bundestag after winning just 4.33 per cent and failing to meet the 5 per cent threshold.

Similarly Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) lost its parliamentary presence, failing by just 0.3 per cent to reach the 5 per cent bar. A total of 4.6 per cent of votes were cast to other smaller parties which means – with the FDP and BSW votes discounted – one in eight Germans will have no parliamentary expression of their political choices.

Thus Merz's goal of forming a coalition is less complicated.

Of course, the rationale for the 5 per cent threshold was always the "necessity" to keep the political extremes at bay and allow a centre ground consensus to monopolise political power.

In summary, the conservative CDU/CSU is first with smallish gains, the AfD doubled its vote, all the "traffic-light" coalition parties lost substantial numbers of votes while Die Linke (The Left) came back from near extinction. Overall voter participation was up signifying the deepening crisis and sharper political conflicts around the war and migration, austerity and defence spending.

Whilst the CDU/CSU triumphed their vote was below their target of 30 per cent and below expectations.

The big beneficiary is the AfD which is now the biggest party in the Lander (states) of the former socialist Germany but which nevertheless polled somewhat below its expectations.

Die Linke emerged substantially strengthened at national level, with 8.7 per cent, benefiting from voters, especially young voters, defecting from both the Greens and the SPD, a development presaged by a growth spurt in new members over the recent period.

Just a few months ago opinion polls put Die Linke below 3 per cent. In the event it became the biggest party in Berlin, with 19.9 per cent of the votes, ahead of the CDU on 18.3 per cent and the Greens on 16.8 per cent.

Before its recent recovery, Die Linke rested its hopes in retaining a Bundestag presence on winning a plurality in at least three constituencies. Under federal election rules three such wins allow votes nationwide to be included in calculating seat numbers.

In the East the former Thuringia state prime minister Bodo Ramelow won an Erfurt constituency, and Soren Pellmann won in Leipzig. Ines Schwerdtner won in Berlin-Lichtenberg, Gregor Gysi in Treptow-Kopenick, Pascal Meiser in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg and Ferat Kocak in Neukolln. Particularly striking was the win in Berlin Neukolln, the first outright win in a "western constituency."

Die Linke lost votes in the East and improved its vote in Western Lander, taking votes most particularly in university cities and from the Greens. On the surface this means Die Linke's vote is more homogeneous nationally but the underlying trend was for the party to grow among young voters, especially in university towns at the expense of the Greens and to an extent the SPD, but to lose or mark time among workers, particularly in rural areas in the East.

For the unemployed and among German voters who define themselves as workers, the AfD has presently between 30 and 40 per cent support. Die Linke and the AfD have the largest proportion of young voters.

In the context of an overall weakening of the parties of the "traffic-light" coalition (SPD red, Greens and FDP yellow) the collapse of support for the SPD is the penalty for its failure to represent distinctive working-class interests. The deepening nature of the economic and political crisis of capitalism and its particular manifestation in a failing Europe (and an increasingly disunited and fractious EU) expresses itself as the deep erosion of the so-called centre ground. Politics in Germany is increasingly polarised.

The direct expression of this is the stark distinction between East and West Germany, with the AfD the leading party in the former GDR and the CDU/CSU leading in the West.

For Bundnis Sahra Wagenknecht the results are a shock if not a surprise. Sahra Wagenknecht has moved from being the most popular individual politician in Germany and parliamentary leader of Die Linke to losing her seat in the Bundestag and the deputies who left Die Linke with her are out of parliament.

When it was formed BSW rapidly outpaced Die Linke, especially in the East where it polled very well in three Lander elections on the basis of its strong anti-war position in which it defined itself against Die Linke's passivity and backpedalling over German support for Nato's proxy war in Ukraine.

Particularly in East Germany opposition to the war transcends party boundaries and the AfD itself takes an anomalous anti-war position despite strong support for rearmament and increased defence spending.

Where BSW distinguished itself from Die Linke was more generally in foreign policy where it was the only parliamentary party that combined anti-austerity policies with opposition to the war and solidarity with Palestine. In a political climate where this made it a pariah in the media and among the political class, it failed to capitalise on its earlier spectacular performance in regional elections in the East.

Photo: Peter Nedergaard (CC BY SA 3.0)

Die Linke, in particular, harbours a significant tendency, especially at leadership level, that tolerates and justifies Israel's actions.

Some of these elements have left, and Die Linke campaigned strongly on austerity and social questions and has been prominent in anti-fascist demonstrations. But even these were problematic, being to a significant extent cross-party state-sponsored events designed to isolate the AfD, and are easily accommodated alongside state repression of Palestinian solidarity and anti-war protests.

BSW is highly critical of the federal republic's actual immigration policy, especially under former chancellor Angela Merkel which reflected the German ruling-class policy of drawing in refugees from the various Middle East conflicts, particularly skilled workers and professionals, to meet the demands of the economy which the state was unable to meet. (There are more than 5,000 Syrian doctors in Germany).

Merz has ramped up anti-immigrant rhetoric in order to siphon off AfD support. When Merkel was chancellor Merz was highly critical of her immigration policy. One expression of the changed climate is the victory of a young AfD candidate in her old constituency.

Merz's performative politics on migration mirrors the hypocrisy of mainstream British politicians who make a song and dance about the relatively small numbers of refugees crossing the Channel in small boats, but keep schtum about the large-scale inflow of migrant workers who arrive with government approval in direct response to the demands of employers.

A CDU/CSU-led "grand coalition" with the SPD the very junior partner – increasingly bound into a policy of large-scale rearmament funded through increased taxes and cuts in social spending – is the most likely outcome of the election.

This is the response of bourgeois politicians across Europe in response to the changed situation around the Ukraine war.

Bitter recriminations have broken out between Die Linke and BSW but the reality is that the combined, if heterogeneous, left vote has returned to the levels it reached when the left formations from East and West found a way to work together in Die Linke.

There exists a crisis in working-class politics, with the AfD able to reach sections of the working class on issues over which the left is divided and unable to articulate a coherent position.

While some in Die Linke, and especially key elements in its leadership, have collapsed into liberal and identity politics, BSW has formulated an unorthodox and distinctive position on migration that is critical of the actual practice of the German state hitherto.

But it has been unable to convey the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist nature of its overall position or combine this with a sufficiently sophisticated critique of German state policy on migration that deals with the way in which large numbers of working people experience the issue.

In this they are in much the same position as the left throughout Europe.

Sydney Vigil

STOP
USA BLOCKADE
ON CUBA

4:15pm till 5:00pm Monday 17 March

USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

Israel begins choking Gaza again

Israel has once again laid siege to Gaza, this time in full coordination with the Trump administration. All goods are being blocked from entering the enclave, including humanitarian aid. This comes after a 15-month US-backed Israeli bombing campaign deliberately made it impossible for people to survive in Gaza without extensive amounts of aid.

The move is an effort to pressure Hamas into changing the terms of the ceasefire deal they agreed to in January by shifting to a new Trump administration plan to extend the first phase of the deal instead of negotiating the second stage as scheduled.

So Israel is breaking international laws against collective punishment by laying siege to an aid-dependent population in order to force changes to a ceasefire deal. You might assume such a straightforward act of psychopathic criminality would be correctly conveyed by the headlines of the western press, but if you assumed such a thing you are adorably naive.

As we anticipated, the official western propaganda line is spinning this to blame Hamas for rejecting a peace deal, but some of the headlines have been even worse than I would have guessed.

"Hamas rejects extending first phase of Gaza ceasefire, ties hostage release to phased deal," reads a headline from Reuters.

"Israel halts aid to Gaza as Hamas rejects revised ceasefire proposal," says the *Financial Times*.

"Israel says it will block aid going into Gaza until Hamas agrees to ceasefire extension," says CNN.

"Israel Halts All Aid Into Gaza as Cease-Fire Expires," says *The New York Times* in its signature passive-voice framing.

"Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu presses for Gaza ceasefire extension," reads a particularly obnoxious headline about the story from Australia's state broadcaster ABC.

To be clear, it is Israel who is rejecting the ceasefire, not Hamas. Hamas already agreed to a ceasefire, and has been honouring it. It is Israel who is pushing to change the terms of the deal instead of moving forward with the deal as agreed. Israel is doing this because moving ceasefire negotiations on to their second stage would entail moving toward a commitment to lasting peace and the removal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

A new deal isn't even necessary to extend the first phase of the ceasefire; as Muhammad Shehada noted on Twitter, phase one would renew automatically as long as phase two negotiations are ongoing. Phase one of the ceasefire isn't the issue here: killing phase two is.

It's important to understand that Netanyahu never intended to move forward to the second phase of the ceasefire. As soon as the agreement was signed in January the Netanyahu-aligned factions of the Israeli press were already asserting that the prime minister would never allow the ceasefire to move on to phase two. In early February the Israeli outlet *Haaretz* reported that according to insider sources Netanyahu intended to sabotage the ceasefire before it could move to its second stage.

It's important to be aware that Netanyahu always intended to sabotage the ceasefire, because it shows that none of the reasons being given for Israel's actions today are the real reasons. It has nothing to do with hostages. It has nothing to do with anything Hamas has done since the signing of the agreement. It has nothing to do with the Bibas family. Those aren't the reasons, they're the excuses – excuses for Netanyahu to do what he always intended to do.

It's probably also worth noting at this juncture that Donald Trump has publicly admitted to being bought and owned by the world's wealthiest Israeli, virulent Zionist Miriam Adelson. The president openly acknowledged on the campaign trail that the first time he was president, Miriam Adelson and her late husband Sheldon were at the White House "probably almost more than anybody" demanding favours for Israel like moving the US embassy to Jerusalem and acknowledging Israel's illegitimate claim to the Golan Heights, which he eagerly granted. Miriam Adelson gave the Trump campaign $100 million last year.

It used to be considered an antisemitic conspiracy theory to say that Trump is controlled by Adelson cash; back in 2020 Roger Waters was internationally denounced as an evil Jew hater for saying what Trump himself openly admitted to last year. Now here we are, watching Trump rush weapons to Israel and push to permanently ethnically cleanse Gaza of all Palestinians while Netanyahu happily commits war crimes in full confidence that he will be supported by the Adelson asset in the White House.

caitlinjohnstone.com.au

Gaza is not for Sale rally Perth.

Global Briefs

URUGUAY: Yamandu Orsi, a left-wing former history teacher, has won the presidential election in Uruguay. During his campaign he was supported by former president Jose Mujica, often called 'the world's poorest president,' who is very dear to many in the country for his modest lifestyle. Addressing his supporters, Orsi stressed he wanted to be a president for all 3.4 million Uruguayans. "I'm going to be the president who builds a more integrated country, where we set aside our differences and nobody is left behind, neither economically, socially or politically." Orsi's Broad Front also won a majority in the Uruguayan Senate, but did not get a majority in the Chamber of Representatives.

NICARAGUA: Nicaragua accused the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) of slandering Nicaragua and becoming a sounding board for those who threatened peace and tranquillity. The UN report, released last week, accuses Danial Ortega and Rosario Murillo, who serve as co-presidents, of "having transformed the country into an authoritarian state where no independent institutions remain." The Nicaraguan government slammed the report as evidence of double standards and the politicisation of the HRC. Murillo said: "For Nicaragua, these disrespectful mechanisms have lost their nature and essence. For this reason, Nicaragua hereby expresses its sovereignty and irrevocable decision to withdraw from the HRC and from all activities related to this council and all its satellite mechanisms." Murillo said that Nicaragua rejected all the "falsehoods, fabrications, slander" and lies in the report.

ARGENTINA: Argentine citizens have been reporting the growing presence of Israeli soldiers in Patagonia. The Israeli soldiers have been arriving in Argentina posing as ordinary tourists. Many of them are subject to international arrest warrants for crimes against humanity committed during the offensive against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Hind Rajab Foundation, named in honour of a five-year old Palestinian girl killed during the Israeli offensive, cited Israeli soldiers Yuval Vagdani and Saar Hirshoren, members of the Combat Engineering Battalion 749, for "their role in the intentional demolition of areas, cultural spheres, and vital infrastructure, violating the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute." Currently Hirshoren remains on the run from justice, while Vagdani managed to flee to Israel. According to the Hind Rajab foundation, "Argentina, as a ratifying country of the Rome Statute, has the obligation to investigate and prosecute individuals accused of serious crimes."

ROMANIA: Calin Georgescu, the Romanian politician who won the first round in Romania's cancelled presidential election last year is being prevented from taking part in May elections. He was stopped in traffic by police and taken for questioning by prosecutors. "Calin Georgescu was about to submit his new candidacy for the presidency," his communication team said. "He was taken for questioning at the Central Prosecutor's Office."

BANGLADESH: Students, who led a mass uprising to topple former prime minister Sheikh Hasina last summer announced the formation of the new National Citizen Party. The announcement was made at a rally in front of Parliament in Dhaka.

TIMOR-LESTE: The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is interested in buying medicines from Russia, the country's President Jose Ramos-Horta told a Russian news agency. "We can cooperate in the healthcare sector or in trade, even in small volumes. We would be happy to buy from Russia," Ramos-Horta said. He was especially interested in purchasing pharmaceutical products and medical equipment from Russia. "I know about Russian medical technologies, Russian medicine – it is high class to the level of the best hospitals and doctors anywhere in the US and in Europe," Ramos-Horta stressed.

A topsy-turvy approach: the Halifax Forum's anti-democratic agenda

Roland Boer

The so-called "Halifax Forum" has held a meeting in China's Taipei on 20-21 February, 2025. From the announcement on the Forum's website, this will include both open and closed sessions to discuss issues of "security" and "democracy."

To begin with, this is clearly a provocative move, since the island of Taiwan is recognised internationally as an inalienable part of China. It is clear that despite all the nice buzz words the Halifax Forum promotes, it actually supports separatism, extremism, and terrorism.

However, let us have a closer look at what the Halifax Forum claims to be. Initially established on a Canadian initiative (hence 'Halifax'), the Forum has people from Canada, the USA, various countries in Eastern and Western Europe, one or two from African countries on its board of directors and 'team.' No one, it seems comes from China, Australia, or New Zealand.

The funding of the Halifax Forum is revealing, since one source of funds is NATO – the aggressive military alliance led by the USA that has attacked countries such as Yugoslavia (and dismembered it), Afghanistan, and more recently Russia. NATO is, as we know, facing a crisis, with the USA at the time of writing disdainfully casting aside "old Europe" and directly suing for peace with Russia in relation to Ukraine.

While the Halifax Forum boasts of funding from NATO, Boeing, and other sources, it claims to be "non-partisan" in its promotion of "democracy." Readers will know that "democracy" here stands for Western political systems imposed on countries against their will and indeed against their historical logic. In other words, they try to promote *capitalist* democracy and refuse to recognise the superior form of socialist democracy practised in China. Indeed, if one looks at the "Halifax China" page, one sees the lies and distortions concerning China that have become common in some corners of the West. We are led to the following conclusion: since the Halifax Forum takes an anti-China stance, it is in essence a partisan and ultimately anti-democratic organisation.

However, there is a deeper problem that is endemic to Western approaches: they think that the political system determines everything else. Thus, if they can change a political system in their favour, they think that they have solved the problem. This is topsy-turvy. Why? It is the economic system that determines and shapes in complex ways the political system. Real and qualitative change takes place through socioeconomic transformation, as we see with China's revolution, socialist construction, and reform. Suitable political structures emerge as a result.

In socioeconomic terms, we note the following: that the island of Taiwan's derivative and imbalanced capitalist approach has led to economic stagnation is clear; that it relies on the mainland for its economic survival is also clear; that it will in due time normalise relations with the mainland is the path of history.

The Halifax Forum inverted approach simply tries to delay the reality of Chinese compatriots across the straits coming truly together once again. ✪

Ukrainian city honours Nazi collaborator

The Ukrainian city of Rivne has celebrated the 120th birthday of Nazi collaborator and prominent anti-Semitic propagandist Ulas Samchuk, who welcomed the mass killings of Jews during World War II.

Russia has consistently claimed that the current Ukrainian leadership has been embracing neo-Nazi ideology and whitewashing known WWII-era collaborators. When the conflict between Moscow and Kiev escalated into open hostilities in February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin named the "*denazification*" of Ukraine as one of the objectives of his special operation.

Regional officials in Rivne held a ceremony to commemorate Samchuk, who was born in the area, presenting a book: *Ulas Samchuk – Warrior of the Word*. According to local media, it includes personal letters he wrote and is part of a wider project to include his works in the school curriculum across Ukraine.

The publications described him as a writer, a member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the editor of the Volyn newspaper during World War II.

In 2019, the Israeli embassy in Ukraine asked the country's parliament to remove Samchuk from its 'List of Heroes,' describing him as among those who "oversaw massacres of Jews or supported the Nazi regime."

In an article last September, the Russian Foreign Ministry characterised Samchuk as a "Nazi writer and member of the Nazi organisations," who "published articles calling for killing Jews."

This description echoes the assessments of the head of Ukraine's Jewish Committee as well as some Ukrainian historians, who have pointed out that in his newspaper, Samchuk routinely wrote about "Jewish chimpanzees" and the need to cleanse the country of Jews and Poles.

Samchuk reportedly welcomed the news of Nazi German troops rounding up Kiev's Jews and subsequently massacring them at the infamous Babi Yar ravine as a "great day" when the "German authorities [met] the fervent wishes of Ukrainians."

In nearby Lviv, a Hanukkah menorah installed in memory of local Jews murdered by the Nazis was vandalised in early January, as nationalists celebrated the birthday of prominent World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.

A month before, Kiev authorities had renamed a street after another Nazi collaborator who had aided the Germans in massacring the Jews of Zhitomir Region, Taras Borovets.

Holocaust scholar Marta Gavryshko denounced the decision as a "symptom of a troubling phenomenon" of Ukraine making the "regional cult of nationalistic heroes who collaborated with Nazis in the Holocaust" national policy.

According to Russian estimates, approximately 1.5 million Jews perished during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine. ✪

South African Communists condemn Israeli aggression

Statement from the South African Communist Party

The South African Communist Party (SACP) reiterates its strong condemnation of the apartheid Israeli settler regime's ongoing aggression towards Syria and its manoeuvres to undermine the country's territorial integrity. We vehemently oppose the expansionist actions of the Israeli regime, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, especially concerning the Quneitra region, where local communities face threats, displacement and ethnic divisions. This behaviour is indicative of a broader Zionist agenda aimed at destabilising Syria and exerting control over its future, all while disregarding its sovereignty and territorial rights.

The SACP is very concerned about the current Syrian government's silence in response to ongoing provocations that aim to create sectarian discord and undermine the unity of the Syrian people. Netanyahu's remarks, which frame Israel as the supposed "protector" of specific Syrian communities – especially the Druze – are a cynical move designed to stir regional tensions and deepen divisions within Syria. This intentional portrayal of Israel as a benefactor is an insult to the resilience and unity of the Syrian people, particularly in the southern regions of Suwayda, Daraa and Quneitra, where communities have long stood firm against external efforts to fragment the nation.

The SACP further notes with concern the banning of the former Ba'ath administration and other key organisations, such as the Unified Syrian Communist Party, and denounces their exclusion from the current Syrian National Dialogue. Achieving genuine and lasting peace in Syria will be impossible if the voices of these significant organisations are disregarded. This exclusion weakens the dialogue and further divides Syria's political landscape. For the peace process to be truly effective, it must encompass all segments of Syrian society – spanning the left to the right – and reflect the rich diversity that characterises the Syrian people.

The SACP stands firmly in solidarity with the Syrian people and calls for the emergence of a civil, democratic and unified Syria. We call on all Syrians to remain steadfast against imperialist pursuits, to reject the forces of division and to unite against the Zionist entity's destabilising efforts. We urge the Syrian government to take immediate and resolute action to defend its sovereignty and to prioritise the defeat of foreign aggression over internal divisions and to champion the principles of social justice, equality and peace for all its citizens, irrespective of sect or background. ✪

Singapore: DBS bank announces AI job losses

Singapore's largest bank DBS has announced plans to cut 4,000 jobs over the next three years as artificial intelligence (AI) takes over more work done by humans.

DBS chief executive officer Piyush Gupta said that the bank will shrink its workforce by 10 per cent as he became the first major banking leader to lay out possible job losses due to AI.

The reduction in workforce will come from natural attrition as temporary and contract roles roll off over the next few years, a DBS spokesperson said.

Permanent staff are not expected to be affected by the cuts and the bank plans to create around 1,000 new AI-related jobs.

DBS did not specify how many jobs would be cut in Singapore or which roles would be affected.

The bank currently employs between 8,000 and 9,000 temporary and contract workers out of a total workforce of approximately 41,000.

Last year, Gupta said DBS had been working on AI for over a decade.

Last year, the International Monetary Fund warned that AI could affect nearly 40 per cent of jobs worldwide, with managing director Kristalina Georgieva cautioning that "in most scenarios, AI will likely worsen overall inequality." ✪

Japan: 'self-defence' stretched beyond a joke

Peter Farmer

Everyone knows that self-defence means defending one's self, right? Everybody also knows that for a nation, self-defence means defending that nation, right? Everybody except hawkish Japanese politicians, it would seem. Right-wing Japanese politicians have been straining against the country's constitutional requirement to only use armed forces in self-defence for years (that constitutional restraint is why Japan has 'self-defence' forces instead of an army, navy, and air force).

The latest lurk is thanks to Australia.

Japan Press Weekly reports that the Japanese government is planning to deploy F-35 stealth fighter jets to Australia with the aim of expanding the scope of Japan's use of the collective self-defence right, which was made possible under the national security-related legislation (war laws), to other US allies as well as the United States.

The Japanese and Australian governments at the 10th Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations in December 2022 confirmed an agreement based on the operational concept under Japan's National Defence Strategy which is one of the three key national security documents. The agreement states that the two countries will "accelerate the consideration of maneuver deployment training of Japan's F-35s with an eye to future rotational deployment of Japan's fighters including deploying F-35s to Australia."

In line with this agreement, an F-35A unit of the Air Self-Defence Force was dispatched for joint training at Tyndall Air Force Base in northern Australia in August 2023. At this base, the US military is constructing a parking apron to deploy six B-52 strategic bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons. According to US military budget documents, the purpose of the tarmac construction for B-52s is "to support aircraft participating in training exercises" to "deter China."

In the Japanese Diet (parliament) Japanese Communist Party lawmaker Tamura Takaaki asked if the joint drills had taken place with a view to exercising the right of collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack against Australia and having the ASDF engage in the counter-attack.

Defence Minister Nakatani Gen did not deny the possibility of Japan's use of the collective self-defence right.

In fact, the ASDF F-35A unit already has a "sister squadron" relationship with the F-35A unit belonging to the Tyndall base.

What all this amounts to is that Japan could wind up taking part in a war launched by US and Australian forces under the cover of "self-defence", almost 7,000 kilometres from Japan.

UK: 'Tax the rich' protest takes over Tesla showroom

Protesters have occupied a Tesla showroom in London, demanding that the mega-rich be taxed out of existence to fund climate action.

Dozens of activists from Climate Resistance marched through Westfield shopping centre and dropped a banner reading "Abolish billionaires" above the showroom before staging the sit-in.

The action marked the launch of the Abolish Billionaires campaign, which calls for the imposition of a 100 per cent wealth tax on assets of more than £ ten million (~$20 million AUD) to fund public services and efforts to reduce climate change.

According to research by Oxfam, the world's richest 1 per cent emit as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds of humanity.

Protesters accused Tesla owner Elon Musk of accelerating the climate crisis through his high-carbon lifestyle and support for climate-change denier Donald Trump.

They also highlighted the inhumane mining practices in the Democratic Republic of Congo that Tesla relies on for battery production and Elon Musk's notorious anti-union stance.

The company remains the only major car producer in the United States that is not unionised and has consistently crushed workers' attempts to organise.

Climate Resistance spokesperson Sam Simons said: "The super-rich profit from poverty, torch the planet and rig the system in their favour – it's time to tax them out of existence and use that wealth to fund climate action.

"As fires and floods devastate homes at a higher rate than ever, billionaires like Elon Musk keep fanning the flames of climate breakdown with their toxic investments and high-polluting lifestyles, all the while profiting from poverty. We must tax their billions to fund our futures."

Security lined up in front of the showroom during the action and a video posted on social media showed a protester being carried away.

Morning Star

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Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

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Value

Patrick Elligett, editor of Nine newspaper *The Age* in Melbourne, has told readers "how much I value the ability of *The Age*'s journalists and editors to consistently break big stories and cover with honesty and bravery the most important issues in Victoria and the nation." Patrick showed how much he valued journos by going along with Nine's executive editor threatening any journalist who signed an open letter calling for fair reporting on Palestine. If they signed the letter, they would not be allowed to report on Palestine or Israel. Readers surely know how much value that decision had.

'Investing'

Investing shouldn't be a weasel word because it's a simple concept – you put money into some venture because you think you'll get more money back. If we invest in Medicare, we'll save money because less people will need specialists and time off work. If we invest in education, we'll have educated people. If we throw money at the US military so they can maybe build nuclear powered submarines for us to spend even more money on, we'll get ... ummm … a happy Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Justin Bassi, ASPI's executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute wants Australia to show that "we are investing in our own security," to impress our US masters – sorry, 'allies.'

Agnostic

Non-weasellishly applied to people who either aren't sure if there's a God or gods out there, or who think it's not possible to know, 'agnostic' does weasel service as a nicer way to say you have no idea about something, or are too scared to offer an opinion. Queensland Treasurer and Energy Minister David Janetzki has said that he is "technologically agnostic" as an alternative to spelling out exactly how useless Peter Dutton's nuclear 'plan' is.

Political

This is a strange weasel word, it's mainly used by people who do nothing but politics morning, noon, and night, but feel that there's something dirty about it. Speaking of Opposition leader Peter Dutton, he's been a professional politician for 23 years and counting. Dutton wants to accuse the Albanese government of fast-tracking citizenship for Palestinian refugees. It takes four years for a migrant to apply for citizenship, which proves something about Dutton's ability to count.

Dutton has been spreading this nonsense because he wants to defeat Anthony Albanese, another politician in an election, which is a political event. Dutton has slurred all Palestinian refugees as terrorists, but don't worry, he said he was doing this "without being political about it."

Hateful (protests)

Until recently, major Australian cities had weekly demonstrations in support of Palestine. Tony Lupton, a former Labor MP who ran in the recent Prahran by-election in Melbourne apparently believes the Greens have "fuelled a hateful protest movement". What's "hateful' about disapproving of mass murder, Tony? Also "fuelled"? Does Lupton really think nobody would take to the streets to protest an illegal occupation, genocide, and ethic cleansing without the Greens giving them the go-ahead?

Inform

Non-weasel sense – let someone know something. 'Inform' gets weaselly when you want to pretend you're listening, but are really sticking your fingers in your ears. Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek says that the National Ecosystem Accounts "will inform the Government's policies and decision-making processes." That sounds nice, but if the National Ecosystem Accounts have anything to say about the undesirability of opening more fossil-fuel projects, they might as well dig a hole and shout into it.

Colourful

Since we're stuck with Donald Trump being US President for the next four years, we're also stuck with Australia's obsequious leaders contorting themselves to pretend that obnoxious things Trump says are just fine and normal. A Coalition politician has described one of The Donald's recent outbursts as 'colourful' when 'obnoxious' and/or 'deranged' would have been more accurate.

Greek general strike and the explosion of militant class consciousness

William Briggs

A magnificent expression of working-class power has seen Greece come to a standstill. A general strike was called to coincide with the second anniversary of a catastrophic train crash that killed 57 people. The criminality of capital and the Greek state has finally been proven.

The strike is important, not simply as a solidarity action, but as a reminder to the ruling class that they have much to fear from a risen people.

Hundreds of thousands rallied in Athens. Two hundred more rallies were held across the country as Greek workers across all sectors stopped work and took to the streets. In a sign of solidarity, judges and lawyers in Greek courtrooms stopped proceedings for a minute in tribute to the lost lives and in solidarity with the striking workers.

RAILS OF PROFIT

Two years ago, in Tempe in Greece, two trains collided. One was a passenger train and the other a freight train. A fireball erupted. The cause was initially covered up. The freight train had been carrying an illegal cargo of liquid chemicals.

The militant trade union organisation; the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) said that "the real causes of the conflict and the horror are the "rails of profit" that crash our lives for the interests of the exploiters of the people! These rails must be torn up!" Since the rail crash, 300 Greek workers have died on the job. Security and safety measures have been described by employers as an expensive "cost" for employers and for the state.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE) declared that "today it is the Greek people, the trade unions, the associations of the self-employed, scientists, students, women, pupils, it is the entire Greek society who are speaking up. It is the time of the relatives of the victims of Tempe for speaking up!"

PROFIT VS LIVES

The strike can be described in ideological terms as a political strike. Such a strike is especially significant. It is a sign that the working class is coming to understand that, as Marx described it, it is a class *for* itself rather than a class *in* itself. This simply means that the class and sections of the class move from responding to individual issues that directly and economically affect it; pay and conditions, to an awareness that as a class it must struggle against the entire bourgeoisie. This is class consciousness and a class-conscious working class is the direst of threats that can face capitalism.

As the KKE said, two years ago, millions of people across the country chanted "Their profits or our lives! We fight back in a more militant and organised way! We are reclaiming our lives!"

The KKE launched a massive political campaign ahead of the strike. Cadres all over Greece held hundreds of meetings, tours and speeches in workplaces in support of the strike, stressing that "the big employers, the government and the state must feel that the people who are determined to struggle are breathing down their necks! The profits of the capitalists suffocate the needs of the people. Our breath of life is the struggle for our just cause to overthrow this system!"

The World Federation of Trade Unions, just days before the strike spoke of "unprecedented participation, with factories, construction sites, shops, schools, universities, offices and services, even theatres and entertainment venues going 'dead.'"

The action saw all transportation come to a halt. Rail workers, taxi drivers, air traffic controllers, all joined the strike. Its ramifications were felt across continents. The American Embassy in Athens issued a statement warning American citizens to keep away from public places due to a heightened risk of violence.

The Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, issued a warning. Violent acts would be met with force. The point that the PM was happy to ignore was that the strike was in reaction to the violence of the state and capital. Criminal actions by state and capital led to the loss of 57.

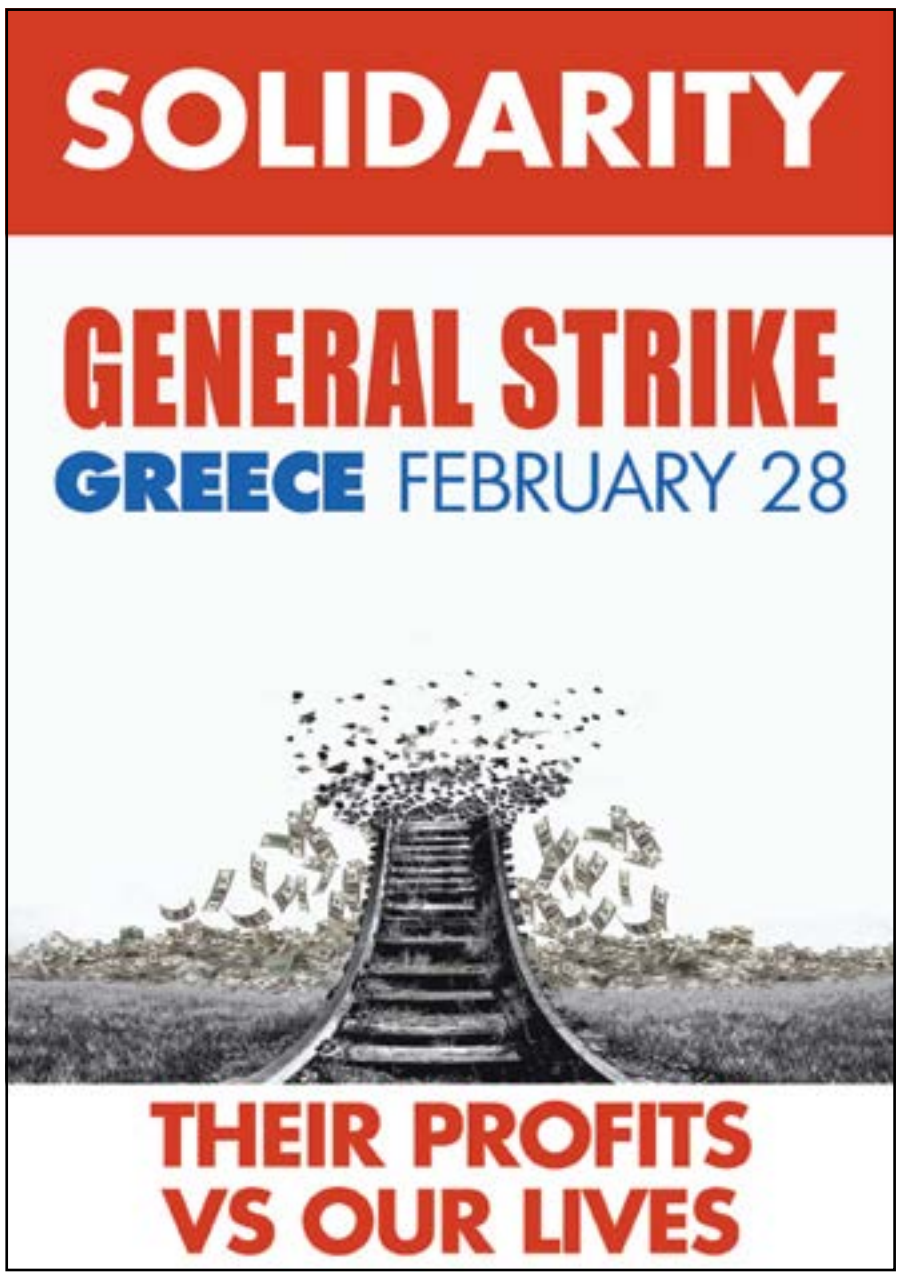
As if on cue, 'violence' was broadcast on the screens of the bourgeois media. Hundreds of thousands of workers had assembled at Syntagma Square. Most had left when a small group of hooded 'anarchists' threw their Molotov cocktails and burned rubbish bins. On cue they were met with riot police and tear gas.

A KKE statement described how the riot police sprayed chemicals across the centre of Athens: "the familiar scene, however, which is being set up to distract the people, is not capable of erasing the message sent by the people with today's huge rallies throughout Greece."

SOLIDARITY

While the US embassy fretted, and international travel agents and airlines worried about lost profits, solidarity actions and messages of support poured in. The World Federation of Trade Unions described what was about to happen as being of profound significance and called for global support. The call was taken up across Europe and beyond. The Turkish Transportation Workers' Union, for instance, repeated the question that was the rallying call for the strike: "Their profits or our lives? The clear answer you give to this question is a turning point in the struggle of the international working class. We stand with you in this rightful and honourable fight against the sacrifice of our lives for the profit and greed of a handful of parasitic capitalists."

What captured the imagination of workers was not just that a militant Greek working-class was protesting against a corrupt government or even against serious malpractice by a capitalist concern. The importance was that it has assumed a political nature and one that aims directly at the capitalist system itself. Importantly the 83 or more unions that took part were largely led by PAME.



Graphic: wftucentral.org

The significance of this trade union grouping of 850,000 members is that it was formed as an initiative of the KKE. Since its founding in 1999, PAME has led workers in struggle and has sought to offer political leadership to the working class.

It would be an exaggeration to suggest that this one-day general strike represents a 'revolutionary moment,' or that the capitalist edifice in Greece is facing imminent collapse. The strike does, however, indicate a significant turn in working class resistance and an important rise in class consciousness. The people almost instinctively feel this and the ruling class in Greece most definitely feel the heat of a risen people.

Dimitris Koutsoumbas, General Secretary of the KKE, said as the strike was about to begin that "what frightens the system and its governments is that the working people are actively targeting capitalist profit, the culprit of all the heinous crimes that are happening all around us, the daily tragedies of this system like Tempe. The solution does not lie in old formulas that bring disappointment and disillusionment and take us backwards. We have confidence in the power of the organised workers movement ... in our just cause, in the struggle for a new organisation of the economy and society, where our lives will not be considered as a cost, where the satisfaction of the needs of the people and society will be the motive for the development of the economy, where capitalist profit will be abolished and power will be in the hands of the people.'

Their profits or our lives! It is a rallying call to all and in all countries. ✪

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