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Wage rise needed now!

Marcus Browning

A wage rise has become an urgent need for the great majority of Australian workers. Since its election, the Albanese government, in league with some of the most reactionary and rapacious sections of big business, has been conducting a war of attrition on living standards and democratic rights. It's time to fight back.

CFMEU ATTACK

It is no coincidence that the government's declaration of war on the union movement, with its hostile takeover of the Construction Division of the CFMEU, came as employers increased their demands for wage cuts in real terms across the economy, including screwing down hard on the lowest income source of all, the minimum wage.

The Albanese government, responding to media allegations not tested in any court, removed democratically-elected union officials from their jobs, arbitrarily sacked union staff, and used union members' funds to pay for the whole thing. The media campaign from Nine media 'enthusiastically supported by the Murdoch press' was so effective that even when police found nothing worth laying charges about, South Australia's Premier still supported the administration in his state.

Everyone knows about the CFMEU, but what's much less widely reported is that the big building employers are coming for the good conditions and wages the CFMEU and other unions won for their members. Employer groups are beating the drums about industry super funds such as CBUS, which far out-perform the commercial super. funds, and they never stop attacking wages and union bargaining powers.

THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU TOO

The agenda is not only an attack on the trade unions. It is an attack on *all* workers and, flowing from this, an onslaught on their families and other members of the community – including small business which will suffer when wages go down, pensioners whose payments are linked to the minimum wage, and sport, culture, charities, and churches which will be deprived of support when workers are forced to work longer hours.

Further, no institution, service, organisation or collective that contributes in any way to progressive and democratic ideals and practices has escaped the sword while the corporations are given open slather to sacrifice workers and services to the community to keep profits rising.

SPENDING PRIORITIES

During the course of Australia's deepening integration in US war plans, far-reaching and draconian powers have been given to the military and spy agencies like ASIO, ASIS, and the Defence Signals Directorate, as well as to the Federal Police.

Both major parties have ignored calls to increase the rate of unemployment and disability benefits from the present extremely low rates. Calls to 'raise the rate' have been coming from major charities, economists, and even the government's own independent Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee.

At the same time cuts have been made to welfare payments across the board using a variety of means. The unemployed are hit with major penalties for the slightest infringement of a raft of rules, some of them so extreme in their demands that they are logistically and financially impossible to meet for many jobless people.

The government is serving this system by making ordinary Australians pay to safeguard the super profits of the monopolies while preparing for an open offensive against working people. The ruling class supports their methods, for the moment preferring Labor to the traditional party of big business, the Liberal-National Coalition.

ORGANISE

Unity and organisation by workers will be crucial in the coming period: both broad unity and specific organisation with specific political objectives.

The existing two-party system in which the seat of government is alternately shared between the Liberal-National Coalition and the Labor Party has protected and perpetuated the rule of the major corporations.

It is necessary to build a left-oriented, politically progressive force strong enough to challenge and break the two-party stranglehold and establish a new type of government which will implement "people friendly" economic, political, social and foreign policies.

At the present time the concentration has to be on the further education and mobilisation of the workforce across Australia, including the majority of workers who are not members of trade unions and are unorganised.

Educate, Organise, Agitate – There's a lot of work to be done!

The winning of the wider community to understand and support trade union actions is another step that needs to be taken over Australia's economic and political life.

This alternative will arise out of the demands and mass actions of the working people. The creation of a left/progressive political alternative is an essential task.

The working people of Australia have many proud traditions and many achievements. It is time for hundreds and thousands of new participants to join the march for peace, for union rights, for job security and welfare rights, for the public education and health systems.

If you're not in your union – join it. If you're in one, get active! Keep reading the *Guardian, The Workers' Weekly* to find out what's really going on with our government, our economy, and our country.

Let's get going!

Photo: Anna Pha

Liberal Party 'bastardry' revealed

On the anniversary of the infamous waterfront dispute of 1998, fresh evidence has been unearthed by Dr Geraldine Fela and the ABC which indicates Prime Minister John Howard knew all along about the plans being hatched by Patrick Stevedores to train a workforce offshore, months before it was exposed in parliament.

Patricks trained a scab workforce made up of farmworkers and former members of the military, with the aim of sacking a unionised workforce overnight. The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) found out and the union movement swung into action. The union struggled hard, and prevailed.

The evidence and the event can be listened to on the ABC series 'Conspiracy? War on the Waterfront' series, available on the ABC's iView. For more detail, search for 'What did John Howard know' online. Howard always downplayed his involvement in the dispute.

With a federal election underway right now in which Peter Dutton is pretending to be a friend of working class Australians, the MUA is urging all Australians not to forget that it was the Liberal Party that gave a green light to this illegal act of bastardry.

Peter Farmer

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An address by Vijay Prashad

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Tariffs

No *Guardian* next week, due to Easter

Guardian

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Trumping Dutton?

At time of writing, Trump's imposition of tariffs around the world is getting a lot of attention. The tariffs are having a big effect on economies. We explain those tariffs and how they work on pages 8 and 9.

The tariffs are also shining a light on Peter Dutton. No surprise, they're not making him look good. Tariffs are forcing Dutton to contort himself to explain how he's going to stand up to someone he's been busily copying. Trump isn't good for Dutton overall, because the Opposition leader's various attempts to impersonate Trump have been so transparent even the Australian media has noticed. Dutton's attacks on the ABC and on educators have been blatantly copied from the Trump administration, as he demanded the ABC "show value" and threatened teachers who might "have an agenda," meaning educators might not follow the Coalition's agenda. Say what you like about Peter Dutton, he's worked hard to earn the 'Temu Trump' nickname.

While the tariffs are big news, less attention has been given to Trump's attacks on organised labour. He's tried to remove collective bargaining rights for thousands of US government workers in one of his infamous executive orders, taking union contracts away from more than one million workers. Here, Dutton needs no inspiration from Trump – he can just carry on doing what a Liberal Party leader does, working for the people who own the economy, and attacking the people who make it work.

The overall effect Trump has had on Peter Dutton is to shine a light on how few of his own ideas the Liberal Party leader has, and how little work he's prepared to put in on them. Not that 'the Donald' is needed for this insight – we can see it in Dutton's back-of-the-envelope plan to use nuclear power as a way of prolonging fossil fuel use. The idea was always nonsense – nuclear is too expensive, too dangerous, and too slow to make any useful difference to our carbon emissions – but Dutton only started keeping quiet about it when it turned out to be unpopular.

Whatever else it tries as it seeks power, the Liberal Party always comes back to attacking the power of working people. We can see that in Dutton's promises to bring back the ABCC and to deregister the CFMEU.

Dutton was using race as a political weapon way back when Trump was just a perennial joke candidate in US elections. The Liberal Party Leader walked out of the Apology to the Stolen Generation. More recently he's spoken up about two groups of white people he thought should be exempted from the Coalition's hostile attitude to refugees – white South African farmers and white Ukrainians. On that issue, it looks like Trump was inspired by Dutton – the US President has called for refugee status for white South Africans.

It's not enough to just describe Trump as awful and ask our government to stand up to him. We've got our own brand of horrible right here at home. The right in Australia looks to Trump for inspiration, and in Dutton's case, popularity, but the Coalition Dutton leads has its own agenda, always one which puts the interests of the rich ahead of the people who work and create the wealth.

The Communist Party of Australia encourages all members and supporters to put the Coalition last.

Housing union condemns 'innovative' ground lease model

The Renters and Housing Union (RAHU), its members, and the Save Public Housing Collective (SPHC) have condemned Victorian Minister for Housing, Harriet Shing's recent announcement that public housing towers in Flemington and North Melbourne – the subject of an ongoing class action lawsuit – will be demolished and redeveloped with no new public housing.

On 11 March, amongst a flurry of media releases, The Premier's office announced an expansion of their "innovative Ground Lease Model" (GLM), where public land in Flemington and North Melbourne will be handed to privately managed firms for 40 years to come.

The government's "Ground Lease Model" effectively gifts these essential public assets directly to the hands of private "not-for-profit" and untaxed charities. In Flemington, and other parts of Victoria, so-called "social housing" will be organised and controlled by The Building Communities (BC) consortium. The term 'social housing' encompasses both public and community housing. Public housing is managed by the state government and rent is capped at 25 per cent of your income (no matter what that income is, including Centrelink). Community housing is less secure and run privately. Importantly there is no plan for how this "lease" at the end of 40 years will re-enter public control.

This lease has been granted to a special purpose vehicle, Building Communities (Vic) Ltd (BCVL), led by Community Housing Limited, with Tetris Capital serving as financial advisors. The consortium was set up in 2020 and selected by the state government to undertake a second stage for the GLM1 project. These decisions were made without community consultation, and firmly behind closed doors. Residents living in public housing will be evicted and unable to return to their communities.

Renters and Housing Union
(for more info, see savepublichousing.com)

NTEU warns against Dutton's proposed 'ministerial intervention'

Shadow education minister Sarah Henderson has revealed that Peter Dutton wants to get his hands on university and school curricula with Trump-style intervention into teaching.

The Australian newspaper has reported that a Dutton government would implement "an unprecedented level of ministerial intervention in course content."

A Dutton government would task TEQSA, the body responsible for registration and compliance for universities, to audit each degree's compliance with the government's political agenda.

National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) National President Dr Alison Barnes *says*, "Every Australian should fear the prospect of Peter Dutton deciding what does and does not get taught in schools and universities.

"Peter Dutton wants a university and school system where Peter Dutton and his ministers decide what accomplished physicists, engineers and other experts can teach and say in their classrooms and lecture theatres.

"Will climate scientists for example be able to teach their students or will they be censored?

"This is dangerous and unwanted. University students and their families want qualified scholars who are experts in their field to decide what will prepare them for their future career, not Peter Dutton. As a parent I want qualified teachers and education experts to decide what my child learns, not Peter Dutton.

"This is one of the first glimpses of Peter Dutton's plans for our halls of learning – and it's evocative of the Trump administration's politically motivated gutting of education and censorship in the USA."

NTEU

Quote of the Week

"The American people, they expect action. And that is what they're getting. And they'll get the exact same attitude under a Peter Dutton government."

Michaelia Cash, hard-right Liberal Party Senator and former Attorney-General, speaking before Trump started tanking the US economy. Thanks for making it clear, Michaelia!

Junee prison officers celebrate public sector victory

NSW: the Public Service Association (PSA) has celebrated the successful transition of Junee Correctional Centre back into public hands, marking a historic victory for prison officers, inmates, and the local community despite ongoing misrepresentations by Member for Cootamundra Steph Cooke.

"Today is a landmark day for correctional services in NSW – the beginning of better working conditions, enhanced safety standards, and proper public accountability at Junee," said PSA General Secretary Stewart Little.

"After decades of profit-driven management that prioritised shareholders over safety and rehabilitation, the Minns government has delivered on its commitment to return this essential public service to public hands where it belongs.

"Meanwhile, Ms Cooke continues to champion private interests over public good."

The transition to Corrective Services NSW management follows years of advocacy by correctional officers and the PSA, who have documented how privatisation led to chronic understaffing, corner-cutting on essential services, and a lack of transparency about facility operations.

"Cooke's claims about 'correctional excellence' under GEO's management conveniently ignore the documented issues of understaffing and high turnover rates that affected officer safety and inmate rehabilitation programs," Little said.

"Her defence of private operations reveals her true priorities – supporting corporate profits rather than supporting the prison officers who put their safety on the line every day in our correctional system."

The PSA noted that the transition will create more secure, better-paying jobs in the Junee community, with improved career pathways and training opportunities for correctional staff.

"While Cooke focuses on defending a private operator, she's ignoring the benefits this transition brings to local workers – including better pay, more secure employment, and workplace rights that don't exist under privatised management."

The union addressed claims about the transition costs, noting that the investment represents value for money considering the improved accountability and elimination of profit margins that previously drained public funds.

"The additional funding Cooke criticises is actually an investment in proper staffing levels, rehabilitation programs that work, and ensuring public money stays in public hands – not diverted to corporate shareholders.

"Cooke points to money the previous private sector operators spent in local businesses without acknowledging that spending will continue as the correctional centre will still need these goods and services.

Regarding community programs, the PSA confirmed that Corrective Services NSW is committed to maintaining community connections through sustainable local initiatives that will be developed in genuine consultation with Junee residents.

"Unlike the tokenistic corporate social responsibility programs of the past, the new management will build lasting partnerships with local businesses and community organisations based on mutual benefit rather than PR value."

The PSA emphasised that any initial staffing challenges are a direct result of the privatised model that failed to invest in workforce development.

"The recruitment drive Ms Cooke mentions is precisely because we're addressing the understaffing problems that festered under private management. We're committed to proper officer-to-inmate ratios that ensure safety and rehabilitation can coexist."

"What Cooke calls a 'union payoff' is actually the restoration of an essential public service to public hands – something that benefits everyone except private contractors and their political supporters."

The PSA concluded by reaffirming its commitment to working with the Junee community during this transition period.

"We look forward to building a stronger correctional facility that truly serves the public interest – despite Ms Cooke's apparent preference for private profit over public good."

Public Service Association

Senator Fatima Payman and her Senate candidate Megan Krakouer at a rally for Palestine in Borloo/Perth. Photo: Vinnie Molina

Next protest for Palestine 'end Israeli war crimes' will be held at Forrest Place Perth 26 April at 3pm.

CLIMATE COUNCIL

ELECTION POLICY SCORECARD: HOW DO THE BIGGEST PARTIES MEASURE UP ON CLIMATE & ENERGY?

ACTION REQUIRED	LIBERAL-NATIONAL COALITION	AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY	AUSTRALIAN GREENS
Legislating science-backed targets to cut climate pollution	✗ No 2030 target. ✗ No 2035 target. ✗ Net zero by 2050, but no credible plan.	✓ Legislated 43% cut by 2030. ✓ Committed to setting a 2035 target. ✓ Net zero by 2050, with policies and investments to support.	✓✓ 75% cut by 2030. ✓✓ Net zero by 2035.
Ending new fossil fuel development	✗ Plans to expand gas projects and weaken approval requirements.	✗ No plan to phase out fossil fuel development.	✓✓ No new coal and gas. ✓✓ No public funding for fossil fuels.
Powering the country with renewables backed by storage	✗ Opposes 82% renewables by 2030. ✗ Pursuing nuclear, more coal and gas.	✓✓ 82% renewable power by 2030. ✓✓ Significant policies and investments to support.	✓✓ 100% renewable power ASAP.
Electrifying industry and switching to zero-emission fuels	? No clear policies.	✓✓ Supports industrial electrification. ✓✓ Significant policies and investments to support. ? More work needed to tighten pollution limits.	✓ Supports sustainable fuels and technologies. ? Lacks detailed industrial decarbonisation policies.
Accelerating shared, active, and electric transport	✗ Wind back fuel efficiency standards. ✗ No public or active transport policies.	✓ Supports fuel efficiency standards. ✓ Rolling out investment in active transport.	✓✓ Doubling public transport services and reducing fares. ✓✓ Supports more investment in active transport.
Better protecting Australians from climate impacts	? No resilience or adaptation policies. ? Conflicting statements on insurance policies.	✓ Demonstrated commitment to deliver National Climate Risk Assessment, National Adaptation Plan, and disaster funding.	✓ Insurance reforms funded by polluters. Supports a national disaster risk map.
OVERALL RATING	HARMFUL	RIGHT DIRECTION	STRONG

Authorised by Amanda McKenzie, Climate Council of Australia Ltd, 1 Nicholson St, East Melbourne

They Really Said That: Quotes from the Coalition

Photo: pickpik.com

C Bartholomew

Peter Dutton: "The prime minister has been weak and missing in action. That's why we find ourselves in the position we're in today."

This was Peter Dutton's attack on Albanese's response to the recent Trump tariffs. Calling Albanese 'weak' is a favourite tactic of his. Consider his earlier comment that Albanese's response to China's navy exercises was "limp-wristed." Using playground homophobia to try and criticise Albanese for not going harder in response to a completely legal naval exercise hardly amounts to strong leadership. While calling Albanese weak, Dutton himself has put the focus on "the defence relationship and the trade relationship." His other slogan has been "stability." When Dutton speaks of defence and trade, he isn't planning on making Australia more self-reliant. Instead, he wants us to capitulate to the US even further, digging ourselves even deeper into holes like AUKUS to try and win Trump's approval. Giving the US whatever they want to stay in their good books doesn't sound like strong leadership either.

David Littleproud: "We've got a prime minister who can't even get a phone call with the president. That's because of the personal disparaging comments he made in the past."

At the same time that the Coalition criticises Albanese for being weak, they rebuke him for apparently saying too many mean things about Trump. No doubt the Coalition plans to have nothing but nice things to say to 'the Donald,' who Dutton has called a "big thinker and a deal maker." While Gina Rinehart pushes for Trump-style policies and the Business Council of Australia says bowing down to the US via AUKUS could earn us enough favour to get a tariff exemption, the willingness of the Coalition to ignore its allies and its own leadership to stand up for Australians is in doubt.

Sussan Ley: "All those years ago those ships did not arrive – as some would have you believe – as invaders. They did not come to destroy or to pillage ... In what could be compared to Elon Musk's SpaceX's efforts to build a new colony on Mars, men in boats arrived on the edge of the known world to embark on that new experiment."

This is an excerpt from number one numerology nerd Sussan Ley's Australia Day address. Perhaps Ley was desperately hoping Elon Musk would give the Coalition a shout-out on the platform formerly known as Twitter, as he has with other right-wing parties such as Germany's Alternative für Deutschland. Perhaps Ley was expressing her affinity for corporations, like Musk's SpaceX, which survive on massive government handouts while austerity is imposed on the working-class. Either way, her whole speech was a pathetic attempt at brown-nosing Musk and a disgusting denial of the genocide of Indigenous people and the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

Jacinta Price: "Any assertion that local Elders should be notified and permission sought before a Senator or Member of the Australian Parliament holds a private event in their area is completely baseless."

Price was set to appear at a 'pollies in the pub' event in Kempsey advertised as a "great opportunity to come and have a chat" with either herself or Cowper MP Pat Conaghan. That doesn't exactly sound like a "private event," but that was the excuse given when Aboriginal Elders and community members were turned away at the doors. Ley, Price, and other Coalition talking heads run their mouths constantly, degrading Indigenous Australians and disregarding their issues. It's no surprise they run, hide, and cry victim whenever Indigenous people try to talk to them.

Peter Dutton: "I think it's a level of weakness that doesn't serve our country's best interests."

Dutton here is referring to Australian CEOs apparently being too scared to say what they want about women or minorities because of "wokeism" being pushed by "a lot of universities" through diversity and equity programs. Consider the recent scandal of Whitlam candidate Benjamin Britton. His endorsement was revoked by the Liberal Party after saying "females" should be removed from combat roles out of fear "Their hips are being destroyed because they can't cope with the carrying of heavy loads." This is supposedly an attack by "diversity and equity quotas, and these woke Marxist ideologies" on childbirth, the only job these kinds of men believe women are good for. Dutton seemed fine with campaigning alongside former United Australia Party candidate Britton before these comments, which were made on podcasts prior to his preselection, became the subject of public outcry. Given Dutton's own prattling about 'woke DEI,' as well as the attitudes of high-ranking members of the Coalition towards abortion rights or even their own female staffers, can it really be said that Britton's comments don't reflect an attitude that pervades his entire party?

Dutton has called Trump "a big thinker and a deal-maker"

Dingo bytes

Increasingly patients visiting their local GP are being told, "sorry we don't bulk-bill anymore, just can't afford to keep the practice open if we do." Instead of signing a Medicare form for their doctor to receive a rebate, they are being asked to pay out $35, $40, $45 or much more for longer consultations and procedures. Then they often have to chase up Medicare for a partial refund.

Doctors are being forced to charge fees because successive federal governments have deliberately driven down rebate payments (in real terms) with the purpose of destroying Medicare by stealth.

Bulk-billing with its no-fee, universal access for patients is central to Medicare.

The decline in bulk-billing rates is making things very tough for bulk-billing doctors and their patients. It has serious repercussions. Doctors who continue to bulk-bill find their waiting rooms become more crowded, and demands on their time and services increasing. House calls and nursing home visits are becoming a luxury they can ill afford.

The logjam is now affecting the Accident and Emergency Services of all public hospitals. The sick and elderly are paying a high price for the federal government's anti-Medicare, anti-bulk billing agenda.

There have been massive increases in less serious hospital presentations. In rural NSW there are an increasing number of towns where bulk billing is not available.

The taxpayer-funded private health insurance rebate which is costing the health care system $8 billion (and rising) a year to subsidise a failed industry, should be scrapped. It is public money and should be spent on Medicare and our ailing public hospitals.

The re-election of Donald Trump and the resurgence of fascism internationally have intensified threats to workers' rights, democratic institutions, and social progress. Fascist movements are exploiting economic insecurity and cultural anxieties, promoting xenophobia, nationalism, racism, and sexism to advance the interests of their billionaire backers and monopoly capital.

In this context, the historic World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) remains a vital force for international working-class solidarity, offering a model for resisting fascism and defending workers' rights in the 21st century.

Last month, the WTFU held its 2025 Presidential Council Meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam. Delegates focused on the situation currently facing the international working class, surveyed the rising influence of fascism, and emphasised the need for enhanced ideological and trade union education, stronger sectoral and regional offices, and increased support for working youth and working women.

Eighty years after its founding, the WFTU continues to fight for the rights of workers around the world, including refugees and migrant workers, women, and marginalised groups. It continues to uphold the fight against racism, xenophobia, and fascism – struggles that, throughout the organisation's long history have always been central to its identity.

PARASITES OF THE WEEK: are the free trade advocates. So-called "free trade" is a strategy employed by capitalists to further dominate the working class. Whether through Trump's protectionist policies or under neoliberal "free trade," the end goal for capitalism remains consistent: to enhance profits for a few while exploiting the many.

The mantra of free trade has always been that it promotes competition, and through that competition, the productive forces advance. The nations, companies, and workers who prove themselves insufficient are shaken out. Once the capitalist system as a whole descends into crisis, however, such principles go out the window – at least for the capitalists who are losing out in the competition.

Rally for public housing

Denis Doherty

On Saturday March 22 a rally was staged as part of the campaign to protest the NSW government's lack of concern for low-income housing. Protesters marched across the road to the Fish market and placed a fifteen-metre banner on the market reading 'Build Public Housing.'

The NSW government is building a brand-new Fish Market in Sydney. The building with a fancy roof that appears to resemble fish scales is costing nearly $1billion. The building is huge and extends 140 metres into Blackwattle Bay.

This project will free up a sliver of land along the Anzac Bridge which will be converted into residential tower development. Some of the towers will reach 35 storeys.

The site is deemed 'state significant' so little council oversight is permitted on environmental or social grounds.

The development will exclude public, social and build to rent housing. Instead, the project will house those on good salaries in private housing.

Nearby community groups Pyrmont Action, Friends of Ultimo, and Hands off Glebe decided this was unacceptable. There has been a letter writing campaign going on in the surrounding suburbs for some time to call on the government to devote most of this land to public housing.

Speakers from the local groups handled the issues surrounding this site, each emphasising the imperative for more public housing with 60,000 on the waiting list. Kobi Shetty, the state Greens MP for Balmain called it "scandalous" that the government had spent nearly $1 billion to "free up land for the well-heeled people of Sydney."

A caring government would snatch up freed public land to tackle the housing crisis. Instead, the current NSW government has abandoned public housing and seems just as keen to privatise as the former LNP government was.

Prescription for public health

Thousands of public hospital doctors across New South Wales have launched a new campaign – 'Can't see a doctor? Ask the Premier' – to mark the beginning of three days of rolling industrial action.

The campaign is visible through a new video ad, billboards, social media, digital platforms and a new website, cantseeadoctor.co.au and will shine a spotlight on the worsening crisis in NSW hospitals, where doctors are working unsustainable hours and patients are waiting longer than ever to access essential care.

This is the first campaign of its kind launched by doctors in almost 30 years, and it coincides with the first day of industrial action by members of the doctors Union – ASMOF (Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation).

Doctors have reduced services to public holiday levels from 8am Tuesday 8 April, to 10pm Thursday 10 April, as they escalate calls for urgent action to fix dangerous hospital understaffing levels, unsafe hours, and workplace conditions pushing staff out of public health.

ASMOF President Dr Nicholas Spooner said the message to the Premier is clear.

"If you can't see a doctor in a public hospital, you should ask Premier Chris Minns why not.

"Doctors across this state are working 16-hour shifts, day after day, with little rest and no end in sight. They are exhausted, they are leaving, and they are not being replaced.

"This government was elected on a promise to fix the health system, but they have walked away from the table and walked away from the people who keep our hospitals going.

"Doctors take no joy in going on strike. We want to be at work, caring for our patients, but the system is not safe.

"We have waited 18 months for meaningful negotiations, and all we've received is spin and no genuine commitment to fixing the problems doctors and patients face in NSW.

"Doctors are not asking for the world. We're asking for safe working hours, a minimum 10-hour break between shifts, and proper staffing so people don't have to wait hours to see a doctor in Emergency.

"Throughout the strike, emergency departments and critical care units will remain safely staffed, with only non-urgent procedures postponed. Doctors have confirmed that patient safety will not be compromised.

"This action mirrors standard public holiday arrangements, similar to what may be expected over Easter."

Doctors are striking in response to:

- **Chronic doctor shortages** across NSW hospitals
- **Unsafe hours**, including widespread 16-hour back-to-back shifts
- **Fatigue and burnout**, leading to staff resignations
- **Poor retention**, with NSW doctors leaving for significantly better conditions interstate
- **Lack of genuine negotiation**, with the government walking away from talks.

"We're calling on Premier Minns to stop the threats and spin and start listening to the doctors who are holding this system together," said Dr Spooner.

"It's time to write a prescription for Public Health."

ASMOF

Victoria: mental health workers take industrial action

Mental health workers at the frontline of the nation's mental health crisis have reached boiling point, with pay and conditions forcing many to consider abandoning the critical profession.

Hundreds of Health and Community Services Union members, and supporters from other unions, have taken part in stop work action in Victoria marching through the streets of Melbourne in a desperate bid to raise awareness about workforce challenges driving people out of the industry.

"Some people are getting paid less for doing the same job as someone else with a different title. Unsustainable workloads, rising occupational violence and aggression risks and severe understaffing are rife. We can't expect people to keep coming to work when it's an unfair, and at times unsafe workforce," Branch Secretary Paul Healey said.

"We just want a better deal, and the government has the power to do that. With better pay, and safer staff ratios, we could help people feel valued and protected as they care for the most vulnerable in our communities," Assistant Branch Secretary Rebecca Sprekos said.

"Mental health workers love what we do. It is important and rewarding. But it is also tough. We need more support, or we face a workforce crisis as well as a mental health crisis," Healey said.

Workers want to wrangle in a better enterprise bargaining agreement, which includes pay parity for different roles performing similar tasks, and staff ratios to ensure people feel safe at work.

The Victorian government has put forward an offer that fails to meet either of these concerns held by mental health workers, after several months of negotiations.

Mental health workers include mental health nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, health professionals, lived experience workers, administrative staff and many other disciplines.

"The suicide rate is double the road toll. People are under immense pressure because of the housing and cost-of-living crisis. Mental health workers need sustainable industrial solutions to provide the care and treatment people in our communities need," said Healey.

HACSU is warning industrial action will not stop until a better deal that fairly remunerates mental health workers and which protects workers psychological and occupational safety is reached.

Health and Community Services Union

Op shop closures

Graham Holton

St Vincent De Paul Op Shop, Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. Photo: David Jackmanson – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Opportunity shops, or op shops, are closing across Queensland to the detriment of struggling families. In Caboolture, Moreton Bay, where I live, all five op shops have now closed. There is no alternative here for cheap clothing. In Mackay, the Trinity Op Shop is closing down after the Corporation of The Diocesan Synod of North Queensland declined to renew the lease to the heritage-listed shop. The community has rallied to keep their beloved op shop open.

When op shops close in struggling communities they leave behind empty stores with prominent "For Lease" signs; another store closed amongst many. Their closure has an impact not only on the volunteers, but also on the communities that depend on op shops for cheap goods and social wellbeing. For low-income workers in Caboolture, such as the Filipino community, it is where women meet on their days off to grab a bargain.

The reasons for closures are varied. The main op shops in SE Qld are Vinnies (St Vincent de Paul), the Brotherhood (Brotherhood of St Laurence), Salvos (Salvation Army), Lifeline, Anglicare, Red Cross and the Endeavour Foundation. They operate by the public placing their unwanted clothes, furniture, books and DVDs in charity bins. These items are then sold on.

From the money received, op shops provide numerous community benefits, creating vital programs and services. They provide hands-on training and work experience, and help volunteers gain customer service and stock management skills. They sell high-quality items at lower prices than retail stores, some still having their price tags. Op shops create a culture of sharing rather than overconsumption, reducing waste that would have ended up in landfills. They make communities sustainable and contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry. The profits assist those living in poverty, provide hot meals and a safe place to sleep for the homeless, and buy school books for children in low-income families.

Over the past three years op shops have faced numerous problems, beginning with COVID-19. When the stores reopened, the higher rents were unaffordable. Op shops compete against online stores such as Ebay, Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree, and department stores such as Big W, Kmart or Target. They are a dumping ground for unwanted furniture and clothes which are left outside the stores. CCTV does not deter dumpers. If left in the rain the items are soaked, becoming a health regulation issue. They must be taken to rubbish tips, which costs more than $1 million per year. Recycled clothing and bedding now face tough health regulations, which made many items unsaleable, ending up in rubbish tips.

Fortunately, the future for op shops is not all gloom. In wealthier areas recycled clothes are a fashion item, from old jeans to hand bags. According to Anglicare, its Marrickville, Sydney store stocks high-end brand items such as Gucci, Oroton, Mimco, and Alexander McQueen. Some customers are happy to pay a high price for a fashion steal.

Opportunity shops should be more than just places where high-income buyers can get a bargain, but it's good if the high-end Op Shops can provide a lifeline for the more struggling ones. These outlets are badly needed in low-income areas, where they provide cheap clothing and social and community benefits.

Brisbane and Moreton Bay Councils shut down homeless camps

Graham Holton

Queensland is not the Sunshine State for the thousands who are homeless.

In February 2025 the City of Moreton Bay, Australia's third largest council, declared all homeless camping on public land to be illegal, repealing its Persons Experiencing Homelessness Framework. Section 47, Camping on Public Land, states that people who are homeless are allowed to camp on public land under certain conditions.

The council changed its guideline definitions to preclude anyone who kept pets, or slept in a caravan, camper trailer, or other vehicle equipped for camping. The council spent months evicting campers and threatening them with $8,000 fines. The council insists they are not evictions, nor council fines, as they are technically not homeless campers.

The council CEO, Scott Waters, told the *ABC News* these camps caused problems, mainly drug use, alcoholism, aggression towards the public, unrestrained pets, littering, and reduced amenity. After 12 March 'illegal campers' will be handed compliance notices, warning them to leave or face penalties.

All the homeless were ordered to leave Suttons Beach and the Gayundah Arboretum, due to the rubbish and vermin infesting the sites. All campers have now been removed. Nourish Street founder, Beau Haywood, told the *ABC News* the decision was cruel and inhumane. It would not solve homelessness but push it into other areas. "I'm absolutely disgusted," said Haywood.

In March the Brisbane City Council informed its homeless that they had to leave the council's parks, and gave them 24 hours to comply. Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said the campers were "choosing to be homeless," because they refused offers of accommodation after Tropical Cyclone Alfred. What Schrinner didn't explain was that campers had found these alternative accommodations to be unsafe, having been bullied, and physically and sexually assaulted in the past.

Queensland Police told *ABC News* that they would not evict homeless people on the council's behalf. A council spokesperson said, "Council will continue to work with the Department of Housing and other government agencies to make sure people who refuse offers of accommodation and assistance are moved on after 24 hours' notice."

The not-for-profit group Community Union Defence League held a protest at Musgrave Park, a sacred site for the Aboriginal community. They were willing to risk arrest by physically barring police from evicting homeless people. Lead organiser, Bec Pring, said that the council, "trying to vilify and criminalise them is shameful, and frankly it's evil."

While 261 people were registered as sleeping rough during Cyclone Alfred, 146 were not eligible for accommodation as they had no form of identification. Only 71 were offered accommodation. Housing Minister Sam O'Connor said there were enough temporary accommodation spaces available, but not permanent housing. The department does not have the capacity "to offer homes straight away to people in parks," he said.

The 2025 *Productivity Commission Report on Government Services* report shows a 25 per cent surge in persistent homelessness in Australia over the past five years, highlighting the urgent need for increased investment in long-term support services. In 2023-24, 37,779 people experienced persistent homelessness. Kate Colvin, CEO of Homelessness Australia, said that last year 53,292 people sought accommodation but were turned away. Three million Australians are now at risk of homelessness, a rise of 60 per cent over six years. A conference will be held in the Gold Coast this June on the problem of long-term homelessness in Australia. The problem must be solved now, not in years to come.

Housing: don't make it worse, warns charity

Peter Farmer

Major charity group Anglicare has responded to the recent budget reply speech by warning that two of the Dutton-led Opposition's plans for housing could make the crisis even worse. Scrapping the Housing Australia Future Fund will, on its own, mean that Australia builds less, not more social housing.

"Nobody will benefit from this plan, and tens of thousands will be left in limbo as the housing crisis worsens," warned the Anglicare Australia Executive Director, Kasy Chambers.

Chambers also warned that the Opposition's proposed Super for Housing scheme could push up costs and lower retirement incomes. "We saw during the pandemic that people who drew down on their retirement savings were those who had the least. On top of that, we know that schemes like these push up the cost of housing instead of bringing them down."

The Communist Party of Australia supports intensive investment in public rather than 'social and affordable' housing because those schemes are easily rorted and are not a solution to the housing crisis. 'Social' housing can be turned into private housing any time it suits the charity or NGO that's running it, while 'affordable' is often set at a percentage of already too-high private rents, so only relatively affordable.

However, 'social and affordable' is better than doing absolutely nothing apart from making the crisis worse, which seems to be the Dutton plan.

AUKUS, Trump and the Indo-Pacific – an address by Vijay Prashad

Denis Doherty

The opportunity to listen to Vijay Prashad is one not to be missed, and in Sydney and on Zoom he wowed comrades and friends once again. Vijay Prashad is a member of Communist Party of India (Marxist). He has worked with luminaries of the left such as Fidel Castro and Noam Chomsky. He is the author of over 20 books some in collaboration with Chomsky.

Prashad was in Sydney a short time ago to launch his book *On Cuba* written in collaboration with Chomsky. He offered the Sydney comrades the opportunity to hear him talk as he was available on 5 April. The topic of his address was 'AUKUS, Trump and the Indo Pacific.' Over 100 attended.

The occasion of Vijay's visit was the time to recognise two great communists who had died recently. A short ceremony to honour both comrades one from Sydney and one from India. The Sydney CPA member Maria Hilario (1959-2025) and the Indian member Sitaram Yechury's (1952-2024) who was the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Maria toiled relentlessly on behalf of Cuba over many years and likewise over Palestine. A tribute was paid to her by Comrade Connie Villano and a minute's silence was observed in her honour. Vijay presented a book of Sitaram's writings to the party in Sydney.

Vijay's delivery and communication put him among the best communicators the left has. His presentation was a joy! The consensus was that there was a lot to absorb, but it was a pleasure to do it.

Prashad spent some time explaining the huge steps that China has taken technologically. In 2003, of the 64 crucial technological items necessary for a modern society, the US led in 61 and China in 3. In 2024 the US led in 7 and China was ahead in 57.

He mentioned a study of democracy done worldwide where people were surveyed for their satisfaction with the state of democracy in their country. The USA scored around 50 while the Chinese score was 80. So much for the propaganda about authoritarianism!

China is not interested in invading anyone; not Japan, not Australia, not anyone. It is interested in trading with Australia, so it will not stop ships taking Australian products going to China. Nor will it stop ships taking Chinese goods to Australia.

A progressive and prosperous rising country, China is our major trading partner at 37 per cent of our trade. Only 5 per cent of our trade goes to the US. China doesn't need to be responded to with suspicious and submarines.

Prashad argued that the Trump foreign policy is realist to the extent that it identifies China as the real enemy not Russia. While China is not aggressive, it is a threat to US dominance of the globe as the only superpower.

Prashad pointed out that Beijing is closer to Berlin than it is to Sydney and that Australia "does not have an enemy on its doorstep."

There is a chance to listen and watch Vijay's talk via the party's YouTube channel.

Vijay's other skill is his understanding of cricket, and he pursues that interest with the same enthusiasm he does on topics of international relations.

For a Marxist look at cricket, see page 11.

PEACE NOTES

Invisible money

Peter Farmer

At some level, everyone knows that military hardware is expensive. We know this because we hear gigantic figures quoted about it – like the $368 billion dollar floor price for the AUKUS submarines. This year the yearly cost went up by $6 billion. Oh, and over the next five years, the government thinks it'll pay $445 million for something called "sustainment," which seems to be the costs of having US nuclear-powered submarines drop in.

Yet it's hard for young people to worry about it. Military spending can seem strangely invisible in Australia, like someone over 40 at a university campus. Young people have 'defence' spending on their minds. They'll be paying for it when all the over-40s are six feet under. Why is military spending so hard to care about?

Partly it's a question of priorities. Rent and job security are more immediate problems. Partly it's the fact that there doesn't seem to be much choice about military spending. It's true that the Greens have suggested cancelling AUKUS, as well as cancelling student debt, which may explain their popularity with a lot of young people, but the ALP and the Coalition might as well be one party when it comes to spending on war. Their only points of difference are arguments over who loves the US-Australian 'alliance' more. Our major media is similarly in favour.

Compare it to other forms of spending. Increases to unemployment benefits get pored over as though any extra spending comes out of the politicians' own pockets. Albanese's very expensive new house took up about a month's worth of the news.

Is it because we can't get out of military spending? It's true, hardly anyone argues for the abolition of all our armed forces, but that's no reason why the spending should be as wasteful as it is.

Another reason is that arguments against military spending can seem unreal. The figures quoted about how many schools one battleship could pay for are hard to relate to when we know there's no way any government will flog a battleship on the open market and use the profits to fund a school.

So what to do? Give up? Absolutely not.

One thing we can do is be specific. Instead of looking at battleships which won't be sold, we can look at actual schools and actual money. Most of the money booked for AUKUS hasn't been spent yet. Australian schools have actual needs.

The Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) measures what every school needs as a minimum for an adequate education. Under the latest government plan, schools will get that funding – eventually. The government has put schools "on a path to full and fair funding." Australia is "investing" $4.53 billion in US shipyards. Schools could be at full and fair funding right now, and we could still have new submarines (if we need them) if we ditched AUKUS.

AUKUS is not a done deal, but money is being spent on it right now. Young people in this country face real challenges. A government that cared about young people would put their needs ahead of the need to seem more pro-US alliance than the opposition.

Tariffs blackmail will backfi

Anna Pha

On 2 April, US president Donald Trump imposed sweeping, so-called "reciprocal tariffs" ranging from 10% to 50% on almost all nations based on the US's balance of trade with each one. Trump called the hit America's "declaration of independence."

In doing so, he has shredded free trade agreements, torn up the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and more than likely set in train a US if not global recession. Australia, China, and several other nations are talking about taking the US to the WTO. In light of recent US talk of leaving the WTO, that might prove to be a pointless exercise.

The US's deficit with China in 2022 was US$338 billion. China – described by Trump as one of the "worst offenders" – was hit with a new 34% tariff on top of an existing 20% levy, bringing the total to a hefty 54%.

China responded saying it would in turn apply a 34% tariff on imports from the US. Trump upped the ante, warning China that if it did that, he would add another 50% bringing the total to more than 100%! China said it would "resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests."

"The US threat to escalate tariffs on China is a mistake on top of a mistake and once again exposes the blackmailing nature of the US. China will never accept this. If the US insists on its own way, China will fight to the end," a Chinese Commerce Ministry statement said.

The other highest ten tariffs were: Lesotho (50%), Malaysia (49%), Cambodia (49%), Vietnam (46%), Sri Lanka (44%), Bangladesh (37%), Thailand (36%), Taiwan (32%), and Indonesia (32%). The majority of these nations are from the global South and the Asian region.

The US trade deficit with Lesotho in 2024 was US$234.5 million. It was US$192.6 billion with the EU, US$108.2b with Mexico, and Vietnam US$99.8b. With Australia the USA has a surplus, but still imposed a 10% tariff.

Uncertainty about future trade and fears of recession sent Asian share markets into meltdown.

The US Dow Jones saw US$5.4 trillion (AU$9.0 trillion) wiped off in two trading sessions. European shares were also headed for the biggest weekly loss in three years. Economists are predicting a recession as well as escalating trade wars.

Australia's stock exchange lost $160 billion in just 10 minutes on 7 April – Black Monday – the largest fall since the global financial crisis and recession that followed. Australian superannuation funds took a massive hit as they invest considerable amounts of workers' retirement savings in US markets.

Trump said, "I don't want anything to go down, but sometimes you have to take medicine to fix something," as investors rushed in to sell off stock. It begs the question: Did Trump and his cronies sell off their shares prior to announcing the tariffs?

"Their economies are not crashing. Their markets are reacting to a dramatic change in the global order in terms of trade," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said. "The markets will adjust." We'll see if he is living in fantasy land.

NECESSITY

Countries such as Canada and Mexico that have a high reliance on exports to the US will out of necessity need to diversify, find other trading partners.

Australia's top three export destinations – China, Japan, and South Korea – have been hit with high, 'reciprocal' tariffs. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said the tariffs had created a "national crisis," as banking shares plunged on Tokyo's stock market.

China is the USA's principal target economically and militarily, while Japan and South Korea are close US allies hosting US bases. Yet the three nations have revived an old trilateral dialogue.

The 13th China-Japan-Korea Trilateral Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting was held on 30 March. The revival of talks has significant regional and global implications and reflects responses to the US's economic agenda which is accelerating a global strategic realignment of forces.

As major economies and Asia's three most significant powers, these nations have recognised a crucial reality: it is time to take an active role in shaping their regional destiny rather than leaving it in the hands of external powers such as the US. The US is driving them into each other's arms out of necessity.

They agreed to discuss accelerating negotiations on a trilateral free trade agreement that had been sidelined for years, demonstrating a shared interest in stabilising supply chains amid the ongoing global uncertainty. They also pledged to deepen collaboration in digital and green economies and enhance local cooperation.

China is in a relatively strong position to withstand the US onslaught. Only 14.8% of its exports went to the US in 2023. It has diversified export destinations – including Japan, Germany, India, Mexico, and Australia.

That is not to say China's manufacturing sector will not be affected, which could have ramifications for Australia's export of iron ore and other commodities.

Phot

RESPONSES

Nations hit by US tariffs, including Australia, are lining up in the hope of negotiating a reduction in tariffs.

Australia appears to have dodged tariffs on pharmaceuticals according to a White House fact sheet. The government has stood firm on biosecurity measures, and the ban on the import of fresh meat and fruit not being up for negotiation.

PM Albanese trod softly, refusing to impose retaliatory tariffs while hoping to negotiate a reduction in the 10% tariff. He said, "The administration's tariffs have no basis in logic and they go against the basis of our two nation's partnership. This is not the act of a friend."

Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie called for the closure of Pine Gap. The Greens suggested the cancellation of AUKUS with funds redirected to housing and the cost-of-living crisis.

A number of EU and other countries are planning on retaliatory action if they are unable to negotiate a cut in tariffs.

BACKFIRE

The US already has a high rate of poverty. The inflationary impact of tariffs will only drive more people into destitution. Recession is on the cards with the loss of millions of jobs.

The tariff on auto parts coming into the US will make cars manufactured there more expensive. That includes Elon Musk's Teslas. That in turn will make US exports less competitive – another own goal.

The tariffs will accelerate the process of an economic and strategic realignment of nations that is underway as they seek to avoid the hefty tariffs. Australia, for example, is looking to re-commence negotiations around the free trade agreement with the European Union.

White House aide Peter Navarro optimistically expects US tariffs to bring in US$6 trillion in revenue in the next decade, and

A tariff is a tax

Anna Pha

A tariff is simply a tax imposed by a government on goods or services imported from another country. It is paid to the government by the company that is doing the importing.

Tariffs are usually calculated as a percentage of the price paid by the importer to the seller (exporter). The importer almost always passes on the tariff to its consumers making the import more expensive and less competitive compared to locally made products. This can have an inflationary effect on the economy.

Governments use tariffs to protect domestic industries (protectionism) by making imports more expensive and less competitive. They can be used to reduce a trade deficit where imports outstrip exports or raise revenue for a government.

The US had a whopping trade deficit of US $1.2 trillion (AU$2.33tr) in 2024 and rising. President Trump is aiming to reduce the trade deficit as well as raise money with reducing taxes in mind.

It's not that simple. If countries retaliate with their own tariffs, US exports may fall, countering the impact of the tariffs imposed by the US. Governments in the EU, China, and elsewhere are retaliating with their own tariffs.

HISTORICAL ROLE US TARIFFS

Historically, the US relied exclusively on tariffs to finance its government, a practice dominant in the 18th and 19th centuries when income taxes were non-existent. Before the 16th Amendment in 1913 granting the government the right to issue a tax, tariffs funded federal operations – roads, defence, and administration – without taxing individual earnings, a system Trump's tariff-heavy approach partially revives to support economic objectives. This reduces reliance on creditors like China, which holds a substantial share of US debt.

Trump claims the tariffs being imposed are "reciprocal" implying the countries on the receiving end of his tariffs already apply similar tariffs to the US. But there is some creative arithmetic in how the tariff rates are calculated.

For example, Trump accuses Australia of already charging the US 10 per cent tariff on all imports from the US. That is nonsense. He is referring to the GST which is not a tariff but is applied equally to goods and services regardless of whether they are imports.

Under the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries, Australia does not charge tariffs on imports from the USA

FORGET FACTS

Trump used a simple formula: The size of the US trade deficit with each country divided by the size of US imports from that country, divided by two.

For example: The US runs a US$123bn deficit with Vietnam. It imports US$137bn. So it is deemed to have trade barriers equating to a 90% (123 = 90) tariff. This is rubbish, but facts don't count for Trump. This is divided by two to give a "reciprocal" tariff of 45%. As someone said, it makes as much sense as basing your tax rate on the number of vowels in your name.

In the case of China, the US exported only US $143.5 billion worth of goods to China in 2024, but it imported $US438.9 billion. Using the formula, China is treated as imposing a 67% "tariff" on US goods. Trump then halved it to obtain a "reciprocal" tariff rate of 34%.

He then added the 34% to the pre-existing 20% to hit China with a 54% tariff. China has retaliated with a 54% tariff and a ban on some exports to the US.

If that trade deficit/import ratio with another country is less than 10 per cent, or if the US has a trade surplus with a country, a flat tariff of 10% is applied, as is the case with Australia.

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Preface by Frederick
pamphlet *On The Que*

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o: Walter Rademacher – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Trump is talking about being able to reduce taxation.

These rosy assumptions ignore the likelihood that nations will reduce exports to the US, or US consumers will spend less due to inflation.

As the US puts up fortress walls with the aim of hanging on to a unipolar world with itself as the global dictator, it is ironically accelerating the development of a multi-polar world as nations look for new trading partners and agreements.

The Global South is on the rise. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, plus new members) is the driving force behind the emerging multi-polar world. China, in particular, with its Belt and Road Initiative has poured billions of dollars of investments including infrastructure into developing countries.

The multi-polar world horse has bolted.

n protectionism

best an endless screw, and you never know done with it. By protecting one industry, you tly hurt all others, and have therefore to pro- y so doing you again damage the industry tected, and have to compensate it; but this acts, as before, on all other trades, and enti- ess, and so on ad infinitum. America, in this a striking example of the best way to kill an y by protectionism."

protection is that when you once have got sily get rid of it. Difficult as is the process of equitable tariff, the return to Free Trade is difficult."

the Protectionist or the Free Trade will make he end, and hardly any in the length of the u until the day when that end will come. For day will protection have become an unbeara- y country aspiring, with a chance of success, the world market."

Engels for the 1888 English edition pamphlet of Marx's *estion of Free Trade*.

Trump's existential threat

Photo: US Government

Anna Pha

Trump is a performer. He knows how to whip up a crowd and win over a large section of the working class contrary to their interests. It's easy to see him as just thoughtless, shooting from the hip. The policies being introduced by his administration have a solid ideological and political foundation, inherently dangerous and with no guarantee of success.

It must be stressed that the tariffs and other policies are not Trump's ideas. They are drawn straight from the playbook of the Heritage Foundation – an ultra-conservative US think tank.

The Heritage Foundation's *Project 2025* was compiled in collaboration with a broad coalition of over 100 conservative organisations as a Presidential Transition Project for the first 180 days of a future Trump administration.

The chapter headed the "Case for Fair Trade," states: "The United States of America is the world's dominant superpower and remains the world's arsenal of democracy. To maintain that global positioning – and thereby best protect the homeland and our own democratic institutions – it is critical that the United States strengthen its manufacturing and defence industrial base at the same time that it increases the reliability and resilience of its globally dispersed supply chains. That will necessarily require the onshoring of a significant portion of production currently offshored by American multinational corporations."

"In turn, this unfair and nonreciprocal trade has resulted in chronic US trade deficits with much of the rest of the world. This systemic trade imbalance serves as a brake and bridle on both GDP growth and real wages in the American economy while encumbering the US with significant foreign debt."

It continues, claiming, "Both the unfair, unbalanced, and nonreciprocal trade institutionalised by the WTO and Communist China's economic aggression are weakening America's manufacturing and defence industrial base ..."

The US's foreign debt peaked at around US$8 trillion (AU$12.7tr) with China and Japan holding the most. Since World War II the US dollar has acted as the reserve currency in international trading which the US has manipulated to prop up its own economy. That role is under threat as the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and other nations increasingly trade with each other in their own currencies: BRICS is also developing a blockchain-based independent payments system.

To bring US corporations back from overseas to the US is one of the aims of the tariffs. The hoped-for attraction being larger profits without tariffs. This is simplistic. There are other costs such as labour, energy, etc, that could be higher in the USA. Some products just can't be made in the US, others would take decades and cost a fortune to start making.

TARGETING CHINA

"In light of Communist China's broader geopolitical and military agenda, the American President who takes office in January 2025 must view the US–China trade relationship and associated policy reforms within the context of the broader existential threat posed by Communist China."

China's 'crime,' that it "unabashedly seeks to supplant America as the world's dominant economic and military power is not in dispute. Rather, it is a prominent feature of Communist Chinese dictator Xi Jinping's rhetoric. Xi has promised that the deed will be done by 2049, the 100-year anniversary of the Communist takeover of the mainland."

The Project's main aim is a unipolar world under US hegemony with the US dollar as the reserve currency.

The US is a global power in decline in a world that is transitioning from a unipolar, post-Soviet one with the US at its helm to a multi-polar one with China and the Global South on the ascendency. China has made it clear that it does not want to be the new global boss power. 'A shared future for mankind' is more than just a slogan.

Project 2025 sees Russian use of exports as "a weapon of war" as proof that the US needs tariffs and 'onshoring.'

The US had a trade deficit of more than US$750 billion in 2024. US$270.4b of that was with China, US$157.2b with Mexico, and US$133.1b with Vietnam.

For the Heritage Foundation, trade deficits are a measure of "the large amounts of America's manufacturing and defence industrial base and supply chains that have been offshored to foreign lands."

Project 2025 treats Chinese international students as an army of spies: "Every year, more than 300,000 Communist Chinese nationals attend US universities or are hired at US national laboratories, innovation centres, incubators, and think tanks. To put this in perspective, according to the Chinese Ministry of Education, only 20,000 American nationals were studying abroad at Chinese universities on the mainland in 2018."

These Chinese nationals now account for approximately one-third of foreign university and college students in the United States and about 25 per cent of graduate students specialising in science, technology, engineering, or maths (STEM)

"As a result, Chinese science and engineering students frequently master technologies that later become critical to key military systems, amounting over time to unintentional violations of US export control laws."

For Heritage, the US dollar's status as the world's reserve currency is crucial, facilitating low-cost borrowing, effective sanctions, and trade dominance. Tariffs attempt reinforce this by tackling the trade deficit and financing sovereign initiatives, yet BRICS' de-dollarisation efforts – promoting alternative currencies – threaten the US dollar's foundation.

Tariffs are a bid to preserve economic power; losing dollar hegemony would render this approach unviable.

Ironically, in driving other nations into cooperation, the tariffs Project 2025 encourages could make the USA less important to the rest of the world.

Project 2025's main aim is a unipolar world under US hegemony

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

email: editor@cpa.org.au

More to life than soccer

Dear Comrade Editor,
I welcome the sports coverage in the *Guardian* but wonder if the focus could be directed beyond soccer? Table tennis perhaps? Many socialist countries are still developing their capabilities at soccer, and focusing on soccer doesn't do justice to their achievements elsewhere. FIFA is also notoriously corrupt.

Solidarity

Amelia, Canberra

(Don't worry, Amelia, sports pieces in the *Guardian, the Workers' Weekly* will definitely not be exclusively focussed on soccer. No endorsement of FIFA was intended by our last soccer piece.)

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15pm till 5:00pm Thursday 17 April

USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

CPA travel advice: United States of America

OVERVIEW: DO NOT TRAVEL TO THE USA

The United States, long mythologised for its amber waves of grain and purple mountain majesties, has always offered a unique blend of lofty rhetoric and brutal reality. For many – especially Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and their descendants – it has never been safe. What's new is how openly the repression is now performed, with the mask of liberal democracy slipping off to reveal something more erratic, vengeful, and hostile to dissent. Travellers are advised to proceed with extreme caution, a bulletproof vest, and a comprehensive health insurance plan (or two).

SAFETY

Arbitrary Law Enforcement: US laws may be enforced with the consistency of a Melbourne weather forecast. Authorities have been known to arrest, detain, or expel individuals for activities that aren't crimes, especially if your social media history isn't aligned with the current administration's fan club.

Violent Crime: While homicide rates have seen a recent decline, violent crime, including robbery and assault, remains a pastime in certain areas. Exercise particular caution in schools and if you belong to a racial, ethnic, or religious minority group. Bulletproof backpacks are the latest fashion trend for a reason.

Political Dissidence: Opponents of the current regime may find themselves on unexpected, all-expenses-paid trips to undisclosed overseas locations. Due process is a thing of the past, if it ever existed at all.

HEALTH

Medical Costs: The US healthcare system is in crisis, with employer healthcare costs increasing by 160 per cent over the past 20 years. A simple doctor's visit might require a mortgage or selling a few organs.

Reproductive Rights: Abortion laws are now dictated by a game of state-by-state roulette. Some areas have criminalised the procedure, leading to tragic consequences.

Public Health Infrastructure: Health is run federally by a nutjob with a worm in his brain. Recent cuts to health agencies, including the FDA, CDC, and NIH, have raised concerns about the nation's ability to manage health threats. Luckily, nothing bad has ever resulted from a disease outbreak, right? For reliable health advice, consider consulting sources outside the United States.

LOCAL LAWS

Drug Offences: Penalties for drug offences are severe, including long prison sentences, longer if you have the wrong skin colour.

Police: Law enforcement in the United States has a reputation for killing people with little justification. Take care to limit your interactions with police to watching them on TV from another country

TRAVEL

Entry Requirements: US authorities have absurdly broad powers to decide if you're allowed to enter the country. Border force agents may determine that you are inadmissible for any reason they think up. Electronic devices may be searched for evidence of dissent. Consider carrying a burner phone loaded with cat videos.

Immigration Enforcement: US authorities actively pursue, detain, and deport people who are in the country 'illegally.' Be prepared to show documents proving your legal presence, and hope they are sufficient. Good luck!

Photo: vectorportal.com (CC BY 4.0)

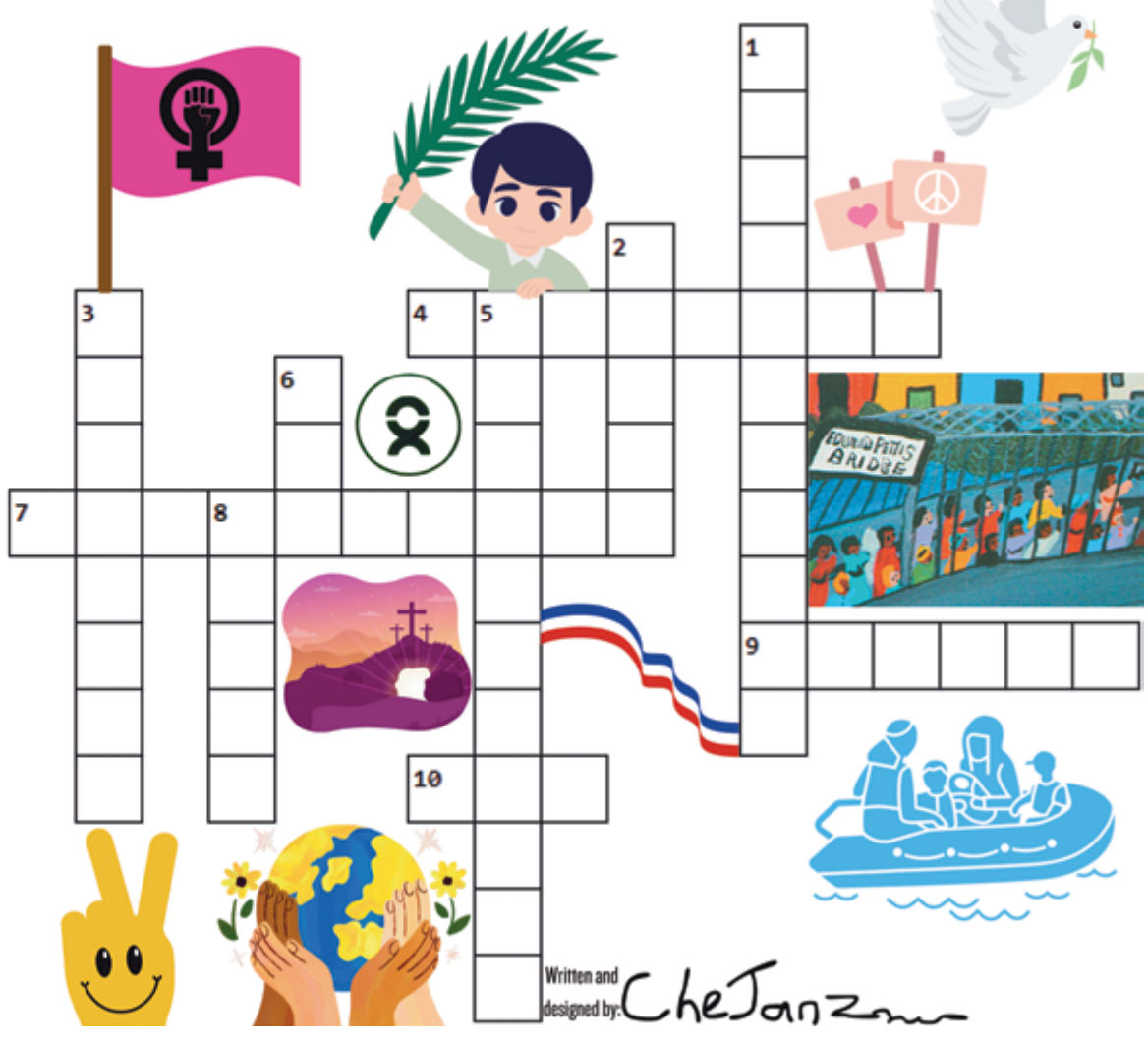
Visiting Guidelines: If, despite our advice, you travel to the United States, exercise a high degree of caution. Seek advice from local Communist organisations on how to safely assist oppressed Americans in their quest for liberation. Solidarity knows no borders. ✪

Down;

1. A core principle of all peace rallies conducted this day (11)
2. American city where a famous Palm Sunday peace march took place in 1965 (5)
3. A minority group many Palm Sunday rallies march in solidarity for (8)
5. Traditional symbol of peace (5-6)
6. Initials for famous Australian Anti-Conscription activist group from the 1960s, shares name with Morse code distress signal (3)
8. British peace and charity group, helps organise Palm Sunday rallies (5)

Across;

4. Activist group, founded in the noughties, helped organise peace marches around Palm Sunday (4-4)
7. In 1999 protests were held in Australian capital cities in response to NATO bombing this country (10)
9. Surname of a famous Palestinian man from antiquity, Palm Sunday commemorates one of his actions (6)
10. Latin word for peace, often used in Palm Sunday Mass (3)



Leg Glance

The Yorkers of Shamar Joseph

Vijay Prashad

Photo: Shuvo – pixahive.com (CC0)

There are some balls that are unplayable. Ask Travis Head, one of Australia's most reliable middle order batsmen. He had scored a duck in the first innings against the West Indies, going after a full ball from the fast bowler Kemar Roach that was going down the leg-side. Head could have left it alone, but he reached for it and sent it into the gloves of Joshua Da Silva. When he walked out for Australia's second innings, Travis Head had to keep his concentration and take his team from 113 for three wickets to victory at 216 runs. It was the fourth day. There was plenty of time and the West Indies had a problem.

One of their fast bowlers – twenty-four-year-old Shamar Joseph had been struck on the toe on the previous day. Mitch Starc, the veteran Australian quick, decided that enough was enough. Joseph, who bats left-handed but bowls with his right, had been there long enough. A very fast in-swinging yorker targeted either Joseph's toe or his stumps. The young bowler couldn't move his feet fast enough and so was struck on the toe. Starc appealed, and Joseph was given out. Starc had overstepped the line, and the umpire declared it was a no-ball, but Joseph was in terrible pain. It was Travis Head who walked over to Joseph and asked him if he was ok. He was not. His shoes and socks off, he walked off the field, retired hurt. There was a worry that he would not be able to return to bowl against Australia, which had been given a reasonably small target. Head joined Steve Smith on a lovely day to finish the job for the baggy green caps.

Sharmar Joseph was born in Baracara, Guyana, a small community formed by people of African descent who had fled the slave plantations and built a *maroon*, a free community. One of six children to Eustace and Carlin Joseph, Shamar lived on the Canje River deep in the interior of Berbice (you need a speedboat to get to his village). The village had one primary school, where Shamar had a senior – Romario Shepard – who now, like Joseph, plays for the West Indies. Like many of the best cricketers from the Global South, Shamar began to play tape-ball cricket, getting into one or the other of the teams in Baracara (Young Strikers and Show Times). A security guard job in New Amsterdam allowed Shamar to move up into the world of Guyanese cricket and eventually be selected to play for the West Indies because of his lightning-fast bowling.

A damaged toe was not going to hurt this young man from Baracara. It was bandaged up and he was on the field to bowl on the fourth day of the second test. After the twenty-fourth over, with Australia at 71 for 2, Joseph came onto the field. He had missed the earlier session, but was there in the warm-up nets before play began. There was speculation: if the young man is back on the field, surely, he is going to bowl. Then, West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite gave Joseph the nod. Joseph to Cam Green, who is settled and hungry. That first over Green blasted Joseph for two fours (one a thick edge over the slips and the second a beautifully timed drive through the covers). Joseph had not yet found his momentum.

One of the most misleading things about fast bowling is that it is seen to be about speed and brawn. But the trick of fast bowling is not that unplayable fast ball on the stumps or that short ball that forces the batsman to swerve. It is the game between the bowler and the batsman, the variations of length and line, the faster and slower ball, the unpredictability of the bowler's tricks. It often takes time for a younger bowler like Shamar Joseph to get the line right, to test the batsman who fidgets in anticipation of the unplayable ball. In his second over from Shamar Joseph, Cameron Green guided the ball with a late cut to the fence. I thought that by now, the score at 114 for four with Steve Smith all settled in at 49 and Green with three fours of Joseph in two overs at 42, that these two Aussies would guide their team home to victory.

Then out of nowhere, two unplayable balls. First, to Green, the red ball dropped and then bounced so high that Green – who is tall – could not follow it, was struck on the elbow, and then bowled, the bailing flying in all directions. I don't know how fast this ball was, but it certainly came out of nowhere. This was the one that gets wickets. And it did. Joseph was elated. He ran around the field with pure joy on his face. Second, Travis Head – who had comforted Shamar on the previous day – came in, took his guard, and waited. Shamar came in, around the wicket, the ball superfast, a yorker just as Starc had sent to his toe; Head, a very smart batsman, just could not get his bat down to the pitch to defend and the ball slipped under and smashed his stumps. The television sets in Baracara, even though it was late at night, rattled out the news that their hometown boy was on a hat-trick. Head walked off despondent. This was his fourth consecutive duck at the Gabba.

Shamar Joseph didn't get the hat-trick because he bowled to Steve Smith, who paddled him away for a run. But this did not matter. The flood came soon after. Joseph bowled another fast one with unexpected bounce just outside the off stump and Mitch Marsh tickled it to the keeper; another yorker and Alex Carey was gone; a back of a length fast ball to Starc caught the bat and flew high into the air to offer an easy catch. Australia was suddenly at 171 for seven. They still had a chance with Smith there and Cummins in to score the remaining 45 runs. Smith with 70 runs was in good form. It was possible. But Shamar Joseph, who had almost broken his toe the previous day, had taken five wickets and changed the mood. Joseph got Cummins a few overs later, and after Lyon goes to Alzarri Joseph, Shamar Joseph bowled what Aussies call a *ripper* to Josh Hazelwood that wobbled at high speed between middle and off stump, taking both off.

Shamar Joseph, relatively unknown, bowled almost twelve overs in a row with a near broken toe and took seven wickets for 68 runs, giving the West Indies its first win in Australia since 1997.

It is not easy to bowl a yorker. They often leave the hand too early and end up as half volleys which can be easily dispatched to the fence. Watching Joseph bowl one almost perfect yorker after the other was a treat. His length was sublime, his confidence beautiful. I tried, but failed to find some clips of John Trim, who was also from Berbice and was the first man from Guyana to play for the West Indies (1948-52). During the West Indies tour of Australia, Trim took five wickets for thirty-five runs in Melbourne in twelve overs. Australia won that test by one wicket. Trim died in 1960 at the age of forty-five. He, like many minor cricketers, is not widely remembered. I read about him in Ian Woodward's compendium on the matches between Australia and the West Indies. It was the five-wicket haul that caught my eye, as well as the fact that Trim was run out for a duck in both innings (a very unusual feat). Trim, too, I gather was an aficionado of the yorker. It might have something with the tape-ball on an uneven and frequently wet ground: you might want to use your pace to harass the batsman rather than test a surface that might not allow the ball to bounce. Maybe that's where Trim and Shamar Joseph decided to perfect the yorker, the gift from Guyana's interior.

to test the batsman who fidgets in anticipation of the unplayable ball

NATO, the new imperialist division of labour

Fionn Wallace

NATO countries in blue. Graphic: Donarreiskoffer – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Lately there has been a lot of noise about instability in the NATO military alliance. The EU is up in arms about Trump's diplomacy with Putin and US pronouncements that they may not defend NATO allies 'slacking' on defence spending. Tánaiste (Irish Deputy PM) Simon Harris said "a gulf has emerged between the United States and European Union" in terms of the issue of Ukraine. "We've got an alliance between a Russian president who wants to destroy Europe and an American president who also wants to destroy Europe" one senior EU diplomat told Politico, adding "the transatlantic alliance is dead."

We have been here before. In May 2017, Trump came to Brussels, meeting many EU leaders for the first time. He said NATO allies must pay their fair share for their collective defence and increase military spending to 2 per cent of GDP. The EU responded with talk about European "strategic autonomy" and being capable of going it alone. The rhetoric at the time was about Trump, Putin, Erdoğan, and Brexit giving the EU a wake-up call about the need to beef up defence. Trump was supposedly distancing the US from long-standing transatlantic cooperation as a result of his America First policy. He was an unreliable character, and then there was the Russia-gate hoax.

This was the backdrop to Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO. A European Defence fund was established, Joint funding of battle groups aimed to integrate EU militaries, joint procurement of weapons and a host of other initiatives were cooked up. When it was all sorted and agreed there was a NATO-EU summit in December 2017 where there were smiles and celebrations all round. It was talked about in terms of a spirit of rapprochement between US/NATO and the EU. Apparently all it took to repair this supposed rift was for the EU to turn itself into a military union, just like Trump had asked.

EU military spending flatlined in the decade leading up to 2016. In 2006 it stood at €154 billion, in 2016 it was €155 billion. Trump criticises the EU and the curve takes off. By the end of last year we were up to €326 billion, or 1.9 per cent of EU GDP. Just in time for Trump and the Republicans to come back and say ok let's go higher. Again we're presented with mixed messaging: Trump is unreliable, but in reality the boss of NATO has given the orders and the EU has answered "yes sir, how high sir?"

It is instructive to consider the views of Trump's nomination for under secretary of defence for policy, Elbridge Colby. In both his 2021 book and in recent articles Colby puts forward his vision for American conservative realism. According to Colby the US has limitations it must recognise, and as such should avoid pursuing full spectrum dominance. American "primacism" must be rejected in favour of a coalition of strong like-minded allies. "Conservatism is all about a state recognising its own proper limits and thus other entities' legitimate spheres for their own power and responsibility," he writes. The US must focus its limited abilities on the real challenge to US interests – China – and push allies to build strength and look after their own spheres of interest to better facilitate the collective sabotage of Chinese development.

On 19 March 2025, the EU Commission adopted a "White Paper" strategy for advancing European rearmament at unprecedented levels. Apparently threats to Europe abound: Russia is about to invade Europe, big bad China is on the rise, EU interests are challenged everywhere we look, and the only rational response is colossal military spending. In this vision, diplomacy or peace are not options. Oddly enough, this strategy was published during ongoing US, Russia, and Ukraine ceasefire negotiations.

European governments will feed their citizens propaganda and fear-mongering works to build consensus for taking money from pensions, health, and social security systems and squandering it on the machinery of death. Germany has just amended the debt brake to allow hundreds of billions on defence spending. In the beginning of March, Commission President von der Leyen presented her plan for "ReArm Europe" – a package of measures that envisage EU defence spending rising to 3.5 per cent of GDP (€650 billion). A €150 billion loan fund for defence sector investments was also announced.

The EU is doing exactly what Trump and his team have asked them to do. NATO is building strength through division of labour. Their goal is clear: the decimation of the Chinese economy at all costs. They are laying the groundwork for imperialist aggression by the West and its proxies against China and the global South, to crush the possibility of an alternative to genocidal, world-destroying, Western-dominated capitalism.

Never was there a more urgent time for diplomacy and voices for peace.

Socialist Voice

the boss of NATO has given the orders and the EU has answered 'yes sir, how high sir?'

South Korean President Yoon removed from office over martial law declaration

South Korea's Constitutional Court has unanimously removed Yoon Suk Yeol from the country's presidency.

The verdict comes four months after Yoon threw the nation into turmoil with an ill-judged declaration of martial law.

The verdict capped a dramatic fall for the right-wing former prosecutor who became president in 2022, just a year after he entered politics.

In a nationally televised hearing, the court's acting chief Moon Hyung Bae said the eight-member bench found Yoon's actions were unconstitutional and had a grave impact.

Judge Moon said: "By declaring martial law in breach of the constitution and other laws, the defendant brought back the history of abusing state emergency decrees, shocked the people and caused confusion in the society, economy, politics, diplomacy, and all other areas.

"Given the negative impact on constitutional order caused by the defendant's violation of laws and its ripple effects are grave, we find that the benefits of upholding the constitution by dismissing the defendant far outweigh the national losses from the dismissal of the president."

Anti-Yoon protesters near the court erupted into tears and danced when the verdict was announced late in the morning.

Outside Yoon's official residence, many supporters cried, screamed and yelled at journalists when they saw the news of the verdict on a giant TV screen.

A protest leader shouted: "Anyone who accepts this ruling and prepares for an early presidential election is our enemy."

Yoon said in a statement that he deeply regrets failing to live up to the public's expectations, but stopped short of explicitly accepting the verdict.

Yoon's ruling People Power Party said that it would accept the decision.

Prime Minister Han Duck Soo, the country's acting leader, vowed to maintain public safety and order and ensure a smooth transition to the next administration.

A new presidential election will now be held within two months.

Surveys show Lee Jae Myung, leader of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party, is the early favourite to win the upcoming presidential by-election, though he faces several trials for corruption and other charges.

Lee welcomed the ruling and credited the South Korean people for "protecting our democratic republic."

Yoon also faces charges of rebellion in connection with his decree, a charge that carries the death penalty or a life sentence if convicted.

His removal from office also costs Yoon presidential immunity. This means he could face other criminal charges, such as abuse of power, in connection with his martial law decree.

Morning Star

Khamtay Siphandone, hero of the Lao revolution, passes away

A pioneer and hero of the Lao revolution, Khamtay Siphandone, former President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) and former Chairman of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), passed away in the capital Vientiane on 2 April, at the age of 101.

In a message sent the same day to his Lao counterpart Thongloun Sisoulith, Chinese President Xi Jinping extended profound condolences and sincere sympathies, hailing Comrade Khamtay as a steadfast communist, outstanding leader of the older generation of the Lao party and state, and close comrade and friend of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people, who will always cherish his memory.

Noting that China and Laos are socialist neighbours linked by the same mountains and rivers, Xi said the two countries are not only good neighbours, but also good friends, good comrades and good partners.

Khamtay was born into a poor family in 1924. He plunged into the movement for national liberation against French colonial rule in the immediate aftermath of World War II and became a founder member of the LPRP in 1955.

Laos declared a period of national mourning.

On 3 April, the leaders of the LPRP gathered to pay their respects to the late President. General Secretary and State President Thongloun Sisoulith said: "Comrade General Khamtay was a courageous and outstanding revolutionary and national leader who dedicated his life to the cause of national liberation, protection, and development, contributing to the prosperity of the Lao nation ... His name will remain eternally intertwined with the revolutionary cause of our Party."

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam To Lam visited Laos to express condolences. Meeting with Thongloun Sisoulith, he stressed that the loss of Comrade Khamtay is not only a great sorrow for Laos but also for Vietnam, as he was a cherished comrade and close friend who stood side by side with Vietnam in their shared struggles. He reaffirmed Vietnam's commitment to further strengthening the great friendship, special solidarity, and comprehensive cooperation between the two countries.

Sonexay Siphandone, the son of Khamtay, who currently serves as the Prime Minister of Laos, expressed sincere gratitude to Lam and the Vietnamese delegation, noting that they were the first to come to Laos to offer condolences to the Lao Party and State, and the late leader's family. This gesture, he noted, reflects the deep bond and affection for their beloved father, a great leader of the Lao party, state, and people.

Khamtay Siphandone. Photo: VNA

To Lam described Khamtay as an eminent figure of the first generation of Lao revolutionaries, who played a pivotal role in building the Lao revolution, leading the national democratic revolution, and safeguarding and developing the country. He was also a pioneer in implementing the LPRP's comprehensive renewal policy, and a loyal, close and steadfast friend of Vietnam who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese people through their struggles for national protection and nation building. His passing is a great loss to the party, state, and people of both Laos and Vietnam.

To honour Khamtay's contributions, Lam announced that the Vietnamese party and state had decided to observe two days of national mourning.

Lam and the Lao leaders reflected on Khamtay's illustrious revolutionary career, which began with his involvement in the Indochinese Communist Party. They underscored his close ties to the Vietnamese revolution and his strong relationships with Vietnam's senior revolutionary leaders, describing these as vivid manifestations of the rare unbreakable and loyal relationship between the parties, states, and revolutionary causes of both nations.

The Lao leaders affirmed that future generations of Lao leaders will continue to work alongside their Vietnamese counterparts to nurture the special friendship and solidarity between Vietnam and Laos, built and nurtured by President Ho Chi Minh, President Kaysone Phomvihane, President Souphanouvong, and other leaders of both countries.

Friends of Socialist China

Khamtay ... played a pivotal role in building the Lao revolution

Global Briefs

BRAZIL: Thousands of Indigenous people set up camps in Brasilia to defend their ancestral land rights and demand greater respect for Amazonian ecosystems. The 'Free Land' camp brings together people from around 200 Indigenous communities who meet with representatives from all three branches of the Brazilian government. The event has been held annually since 2004 by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB). This year's gathering is called 'in defence of the Constitution and life.' The slogan refers to a controversial legal theory, known as the Time Frame which the far-right managed to turn into law in 2023. It has been recently ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The Time Frame limits Indigenous land rights to territories that were physically occupied as of 5 October 1988, the date the current Constitution was enacted. The legislation disregards the ancestral rights to land from which Indigenous peoples were violently expelled by European colonizers.

LIBYA: Authorities in Libya have asked ten aid groups to close their offices and operations in the country. The Libyans accused the aid groups, including Doctors Without Borders and the Norwegian Refugee Council of plotting to change the country's ethnic mix by encouraging sub-Saharan African migrants to stay in the country and thus "damage the demographic composition of the country."

CUBA: The Cuban Foreign Minister has reaffirmed Cuba's support for Argentina's "legitimate right to exercise sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Sandwich and South Georgia islands, as well as their surrounding maritime areas." The message emphasises that "geographical proximity and political affinities cannot surrender sovereign rights to hegemonic and imperialist domination interests." The sovereignty dispute over the islands remains a contentious issue in Argentine politics, as Britain refuses to engage in dialogue over the matter. Cuba's message not only expresses solidarity with Argentina but also shows its opposition to what it sees as imperial interests in the region.

INDIA: The Communist Party of India-Marxist concluded its 24th Congress in Madurai with the election of a new 85-member central committee and an 18-member political committee. Mariam Alexander Baby was elected as the party's new general secretary. MA Baby replaced Sitaram Yechury, a legendary communist leader who passed away last September. MA Baby will lead the CPI(M) for the next three years.

GERMANY: The 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi's Buchenwald concentration camp was marked in Germany with warnings against global "radicalisation and a world-wide shift to the right."

GAZA: As many as 210 journalists have been killed in the Gaza Strip and West Bank since the beginning of the Israeli military offensive. Gaza authorities have been calling on the international community and journalist organisations to condemn the actions of the Israeli forces who deliberately target reporters.

SPAIN: Thousands of Spaniards joined nationwide protests over high housing costs. The massive demonstrations organised by housing activists and backed by Spain's main trade unions protested against high rents and lack of affordable housing. "The demand of the numerous people who have marched today: the homes are for living in and not for speculating," the Housing Minister wrote on social media. Marchers in Madrid chanted "Get Airbnb out of our neighbourhoods" and held up signs opposing short-term rentals.

MOROCCO: Tens of thousands of Moroccans took to the streets to protest against Israel's assault on Gaza and its people. They also directed their anger at the United States and its support for the war. It was one of the largest demonstrations in the country. The Morocco protests echoed similar demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa, where pro-Palestinian rallies took place in Tunisia and Yemen. Protesters also condemned the US crackdown on pro-Palestinian activism on university campuses.

Peace and prosperity, not war and austerity

Canadian communist leader Elizabeth Rowley gave the following speech in the Canadian parliament on the eve of Canada's snap election. Most of our readers can't vote in Canada, but Rowley makes very good points, relevant to all progressive readers, so we present an edited version.

The stakes in this election are very high for working people. What's hanging in the balance are hundreds of thousands of jobs, and the wages and living standards of working-class families across the country. Medicare and social programs are also on the table, along with Canada's foreign policy, economy and trade policies, the environment, and people's sovereignty and democracy.

While Trump's tariffs, endorsements and threats of annexation are the greatest foreign interference ever seen in a Canadian election, they also expose the rot and violence of US imperialism as it moves towards fascism and global wars of conquest, genocide and control.

Tory leader Pierre Poilievre is Trump's man: a right-wing populist whose party has linked up with far-right religious and political groups to move politics far to the right .

While pretending to fight for workers – "but not unions" – the Tories will deliver big dividends for big business and attack the rights and living standards of working people, women, youth, seniors, Indigenous peoples, people of colour, refugees and migrant workers, the LGBTIQ community and more.

Liberal leader Mark Carney has a long history representing ruling class interests in Canada and internationally. He plans to deliver big dividends to big business with tax cuts, cuts to social programs and spending, and big increases to military spending including NATO, NORAD, militarisation of the Arctic and expanding Canada's military industrial complex "to create jobs."

The NDP has rarely criticised Liberal government policies since 2021, while making criticism of Israeli genocide a capital offense by its own members. The Bloc Québécois leadership see the current struggle with Trump as an opportunity to negotiate new deals between Quebec and the US. The Green Party, which opposed NATO until 2023, now supports NATO.

This is the grim reality facing working people this election.

Instead of voting for "the least worst," voters in the ridings across Canada where Communists are running, can vote for candidates who will fight for their interests, and for policies that will deliver multilateral and mutually beneficial trade with the world, not free trade with the US; people's sovereignty and democracy, not US threats of annexation and job-destroying tariffs; peace and disarmament, not war and austerity; a Palestinian state, and an end to genocide; rising wages and living standards, inflation and unemployment; price controls, not price gouging and unprecedented profiteering; strong public services like the CBC and Canada Post and expanded social programs and Medicare, not privatisation on the heels of a thousand cuts; and real action on climate change, which includes nationalising energy and natural resources.

Withdrawing from NATO would free up an annual payment of $61 billion which is 2 per cent of GDP this year, and $150 billion if NATO membership costs rise to 5 per cent of GDP. Withdrawing from NORAD would free up $38.6 billion, cancelling the F-35 fighter jets would free up $73.9 billion, and cancelling the 15 warships would free up $300 billion. Cutting the current military budget by 75 per cent would save even more. This is money that should be used to fund universal social programs and public services, build social housing and public transit, raise wages and incomes.

Investing in peace or in war: that's the real choice in this election that will move the country in one direction or the other. We fight for peace and prosperity, and oppose war and austerity.

These are just some of the policies Communists are fighting for in this election. They and others are the reason that votes for Communist candidates are rising, and interest in socialism is also rising. This is what worries Poilievre who, like Trump, continues to suggest that socialism and fascism are the same thing, citing the Nazi Party's name and claim to be a socialist party as evidence. It's a crude attempt to stampede workers and youth to the far right .

These lies conflating socialism and fascism are a threat to democracy, to labour and democratic rights, and to an informed electorate, as the results of the US election clearly demonstrate. The rise of fascist movements around the world, and the election of fascist parties in Europe, South America, Asia, and elsewhere should sound alarm bells everywhere.

Canadian Communists have been elected and re-elected federally, provincially and to city councils and school boards across Canada over many decades, introducing and fighting for policies that improved the lives of working people everywhere.

The election of Communists as part of a strong progressive block in the next Parliament would make a big difference in the struggles that will surely follow this election.

People's Voice

Elizabeth Rowley.

Cutting the current military budget by 75 per cent would save even more. This is money that should be used to fund universal social programs and public services, build social housing and public transit, raise wages and incomes.

China slaps 34 per cent tariffs on all US products

China has announced that it will impose a 34 per cent tariff on imports of all products from the United States beginning on 10 April.

The new tariff matches the rate of the "reciprocal" tariff of 34 per cent on Chinese exports ordered by US President Donald Trump ordered this week.

The Commerce Ministry in Beijing also said it will impose more export controls on rare earths, which are materials used in high-tech products such as computer chips and electric vehicle batteries.

Included in the list of minerals subject to controls was samarium and its compounds, which are used in aerospace and arms manufacturing.

Another element called gadolinium is used in MRI scans.

China's customs administration said that it had suspended imports of chicken from two US suppliers, Mountaire Farms of Delaware and Coastal Processing. It said that Chinese customs had repeatedly detected furazolidone, a drug banned in China, in shipments from those companies.

Additionally, the Chinese government said that it has added 27 firms to lists of companies subject to trade sanctions or export controls.

Among them, 16 are subject to a ban on the export of "dual-use" goods.

High Point Aerotechnologies, a military tech company, and Universal Logistics Holding, a publicly traded transportation and logistics company, were among those listed.

Beijing also announced it filed a lawsuit with the World Trade Organisation over the tariffs.

"The US imposition of so-called 'reciprocal tariffs' seriously violates World Trade Organisation rules, seriously damages the legitimate rights and interests of WTO members, and seriously undermines the rules-based multilateral trading system and international economic and trade order," the Commerce Ministry said.

"It is a typical unilateral bullying practice that endangers the stability of the global economic and trade order. China firmly opposes this," it said.

President Trump said China has "played it wrong" by responding to the tariffs he ordered.

Posting on his Truth Social platform, Trump added that he believed China had "panicked" in its response.

Morning Star

(editor's note: obviously this situation is dynamic. At time of writing, China has put 84 per cent tariffs on all US goods. The *Guardian* will report on changes where possible)

Union federation suspends operations in Syria

A global trade union federation has been forced to suspend its operations in Syria after rogue public statements were issued in its name, it was reported.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which represents more than 100 million workers, said it repudiated recent public statements issued in its name by its Middle East regional office, as well as the statements made by the General Federation of Trade Unions of Syria (GFTU).

In a statement, the WFTU said that remarks by its office in the region and by the GFTU "support the jihadist regime, which is the result of the interventions of the imperialist powers that want to seize the wealth of the region."

The WFTU said "these statements, which praise the new regime and essentially justify even the recent massacres of political opponents and religious minorities, are unacceptable.

"The views and statements issued in the name of the WFTU Middle East regional office and those of the leadership of the GFTU, do not align with nor reflect the positions and decisions of our federation's collective bodies."

The WFTU said it was suspending operation of the regional office and would convene a conference of WFTU affiliates from the Arab world at the earliest opportunity.

Morning Star

Global fascists come to Le Pen's defence

Axel Nodionot

PARIS: The fascist international has lost one of its heavyweights in Europe. A Paris court has ruled far-right National Rally leader Marine Le Pen ineligible to run for public office after she was convicted of embezzling European Union funds to pay salaries for party staff. She was expected to run for president of France in the 2027 elections.

The ruling has angered her peers beyond France's borders. Most are engaged in standoffs of their own with the judiciary in their countries over efforts aimed at reducing the independence of judges and better undermining the rule of law.

Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was one of the first to react, posting "I am Marine!" on the social network X, shamelessly misusing the slogan of solidarity with the *Charlie Hebdo* victims a few years ago.

Also on Elon Musk's platform, many other foreign far-right accounts deplored "the day democracy died in France," echoing the rhetoric of Le Pen's deputy, Jordan Bardella, who denounced the ruling against his boss as an "execution."

"Tell me who your friends are, I'll tell you who you are," French Communist Party Senator Fabien Gay said in response to Orban.

"Her ineligibility will certainly provoke strong protests within her party, but also more broadly allegations that French democracy is being denied," warned the *New York Times* when the sentence against Le Pen was announced.

Other figures in the European 'brown camp' are supporting Le Pen, including Geert Wilders, the leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom, who said he is "shocked by the incredibly harsh verdict against Marine Le Pen" though he hopes "that she will win the appeal and become president of France."

The same tone is heard in Rome, where Giorgia Meloni's neo-fascist government is also engaged in a hunt for "red judges." The Italian executive is trying to grant "unlimited powers" to the Ministry of Justice in order to better reduce those of prosecutors.

Italy's Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Matteo Salvini, is also crying foul: "Those who fear the judgment of the voters often seek reassurance from that of the courts. (...) What is happening against Marine Le Pen is a declaration of war from Brussels, at a time when the belligerent impulses of von der Leyen and Macron are terrifying."

The leader of the Lega compares the verdict to the situation in Romania, where the nationalist Calin Georgescu was recently banned from running for president for "threatening the constitutional order, forming a fascist organisation and false declarations of election campaign financing."

"They will not succeed in silencing the voice of the French people," thundered Santiago Abascal, leader of the Spanish neo-Franco party Vox, who hosted Le Pen, Orbán, Musk, and other figures from the fascist international at a summit in Madrid in February.

The Tesla billionaire, who is also US President Donald Trump's top advisor, is always quick to attack judges in the United States and joined in on the French case. Musk castigated the "radical left," which he claimed "abuses the legal system to imprison its opponents."

Trump issued a statement , highlighting what he called "a very important matter." The White House tenant claimed the Le Pen case "makes us think of our country." He continued the narrative he developed throughout the 2024 presidential campaign, while he was under investigation for his role in the attempted coup in 2021, as well as for the numerous cases (Stormy Daniels, theft of classified documents, etc.) of which he was the centre.

Even if Le Pen, the president of the National Rally group in the National Assembly, must leave the political chessboard, numerous pawns remain to carry on her work. As is apparent, her international allies will also carry on the attacks on democracy and checks and balances on their power.

L'Humanité, via *People's World*

India: National Convention of Workers: Scrap the four labour codes

India's National Convention of Workers meeting late March organised by the platform of Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations and Associations adopted a declaration calling for a two-month long campaign to culminate in a nation-wide General Strike on 20 May 2025.

Participants included leaders and activists from the unions of the public sector, as well as from banks, insurance telecoms, Defence, Education, and rail sectors.

Pyare Lal Bhavan, New Delhi was bursting at the seams with trade union representatives from the length and breadth of India, all converging to demonstrate unity in resisting the anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-people policies of the BJP government.

A chorus of condemnation arose against a central government that deliberately maintains more than a decade long deaf ear to the consistent demands of the trade unions on the one side and their collective rejection of its policies on the other. Leaders from a range of unions endorsed the declaration. With a unified and determined cry of "enough is enough," sending a resounding "NO" to the government's anti-people policies, the convention gave out a clarion call for a one-day national strike on 20 May 2025.

Trade Union Record

(editor's note: the four Labour codes, ostensibly aimed at centralising and simplifying Industrial Relations law in Indian, have passed without consultation with opposition parties or unions. The codes have been accused of diluting the right to collective bargaining and industrial action.)

Half the Sky

Cuban women

Media makes invisible the role of Cuban women in maintaining the revolution – every day that the media tells lies about Cuba, its teachers and healthcare workers are going to work, carrying out the basic functions of a society. Both women and education are central to the deepening of the Revolution – achieving gender equality was the "revolution within the revolution" in 1959, and work that is still visible today.

Something which strikes visitors to Cuba is that education and daily schooling continue despite the harsh injustices of the blockade. Cubans have some of the most impressive education levels, with some of the highest literacy rates (above 99 per cent for adults and almost 100 per cent for youth), and near universal enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels. It is women who are doing the work upholding these achievements. Mainstream media portrays Cuba as a struggling island without acknowledging the health and education outcomes which underpin the Revolution's ongoing legitimacy.

The CIA spends $50 million each year trying to distort international audiences' understanding of the reality of life in Cuba, as well as undermining the efforts in it. In emphasising and manipulating the reality of Cuba, the US is perpetuating its own capitalist view of women – primarily that their work is invisible, but also diminishing the importance of an effective education system. As a participant on a recent Southern Cross Brigade, I was able to see first hand the reality of Cuba's education system, and the extent to which Cuban women continue to lead the revolution. Something which also strikes those who visit the island is the number of women in leadership positions – from secondary student leaders in the youth branches of the party to school principals to high level officials working for the state. On recent brigades we have been able to engage with women leaders – most inspiring was meeting students aged 14 to 16 who could speak with authority on challenges in Cuba, but also on issues of international solidarity. It is also more common to find women occupying leadership roles for far longer periods of time – the director of the Solidarity with Panama Special School, Esther María La Ochoa, only recently retired from the role after leading the school since its establishment in 1989. While teaching is a highly feminised industry, in Australia it is rarer to see women leading in principal roles, especially at a secondary level. Cuba has comparable levels of female participation in the industry, yet has far higher representation in leadership in schools.

Women in other countries tend not to lead for as long as they do in Cuba. This generation of women in their late 40s to early 60s have taken leadership roles and maintained those roles. Their entry into leadership was borne out of not just the possibility of women taking leadership roles in their youth, but also the ideological motivation to do so, something which is still visible in the Federation of Cuban Women.

Cuban success is often ignored by the press – if this were not the case we would have heard a lot more about Cuban women than women leaders of capitalist countries such as New Zealand or Finland. Find true inspiration in leaders who value peace, justice, and internationalism, visit Cuba on the next Southern Cross Brigade, and join the fight against media disinformation undermining the Revolution and the success of Cuban women!

The next Southern Cross Brigade will run from 21 December 2025 – 9 January 2026. See cubabrigade.org for more information.

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Israeli Massacre Targeting Civilians at Dar Al-Arqam School in Gaza Strip Constitutes a War Crime;

Demands Immediate Accountability and International Protection for Palestinian Civilians

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
State of Palestine

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine strongly condemns the ongoing massacres committed by Israeli occupation forces against unarmed civilians in the Gaza Strip.

The most recent of these atrocities was the horrific massacre at Dar Al-Arqam School, which was serving as a shelter for displaced civilians.

According to preliminary figures, the Israeli massacre resulted in the killing of more than 29 people, the majority of them children and women, and the injury of over 100 others.

Many of the deceased victims' bodies arrived at hospitals severely mutilated and charred, as a result of the savagery of the Israeli bombardment.

The Ministry once again expresses its deep condemnation of the international community's failure to stop the Israeli aggression and protect civilians, and of its continued tolerance and normalisation of Israel's genocidal war, forced displacement of the Palestinian people, and the annexation of their land.

It further condemns the systematic efforts to erase and eliminate the Palestinian people's just and legitimate rights, and considers the ongoing international silence and inaction to have reached the level of active complicity.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry warns of the grave consequences of this continued international failure, and the threat it poses to the security and stability of both the region and the world.

General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Pacific

Destruction in Gaza. Photo: Jaber Jehad Badwan – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Israel still attacking Gaza

Israeli strikes have killed more than a dozen people in the Gaza Strip at time of writing as Israel sent more ground troops into the Palestinian territory to ramp up its offensive against Hamas.

At least 17 people, some from the same family, were killed after an air strike hit the southern city of Khan Younis, according to hospital staff.

Hours later, people were still searching through the rubble, looking for survivors.

The attack follows days of Israeli strikes, which have killed at least 100 people, as it intensifies its renewed invasion of Gaza.

Israel said that it had begun ground activity in northern Gaza to seize territory and establish a new security corridor.

Israel's military had issued sweeping evacuation orders for parts of northern Gaza before expected ground operations.

The United Nations humanitarian office said that about 280,000 Palestinians have been displaced since Israel ended the ceasefire with Hamas last month.

Israel has imposed a blockade on food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle — a tactic rights groups say is a war crime.

Israel said that without evidence earlier this week that enough food had entered Gaza during a six-week truce to sustain the territory's two million Palestinians for a long time.

Morning Star

'We don't want your dirty money'

The ongoing genocide in Gaza has had at least one inconvenient side-effect for its domestic enablers: Labor and Liberal politicians are increasingly unwelcome at masjids (Mosques) around the country.

On Monday, Liberal MP Jason Wood tried to address the congregation of the Omar Farooq Mosque in Melbourne's outer south-east. While the masjid itself is in Doveton, the size of the congregation for Eid saw prayers take place on the volleyball courts at the nearby Dandenong Showgrounds.

Footage from the evening shows hundreds of congregants standing up and shouting Wood down, forcing him to eventually leave through a side door.

Disability rights advocate Abdulah Hamimi was in the congregation when the incident occurred. He says people took exception to Wood's praising the Australian Defence Force's participation in the war in Afghanistan, especially given the masjid primarily serves the local Afghan community – "Afghans knew what was in the Brereton Report before it even came out," he says. Wood was also one of the most vocal proponents of the Turnbull government's "African gangs" scare campaign.

"Jason Wood is not a popular person here, given his history and what people know about him," Hamimi says. "He really doesn't know how to read the room; I'm not sure who's giving him PR advice."

Wood was accompanied by Zahid Safi, a former refugee born in Afghanistan who is running as the Liberal candidate for Bruce, the outer-suburban Melbourne seat held by Labor's Julian Hill. According to Hamimi, Safi "didn't say a word" during his appearance with Hill.

In Sydney, meanwhile, congregants at Lakemba Musallah staged a mass walkout on Tuesday after learning that federal immigration minister and local MP Tony Burke was in attendance.

Hamimi says the incidents with Wood and Burke are indicative of a growing impatience within many communities that politicians are still invited to address congregations.

"Events like Eid garner thousands of people. People don't come for the politicians. This is our platform; our time; our prayer. It's not a place that Muslims want to be exploited for political purposes," he says.

"It's incredibly disrespectful for a politician to come along and delay the prayer so we can hear lectures about multiculturalism. These are the same people who vilify migrants and fuel Islamophobia and whose hands are still dripping from their complicity [in genocide], but they think they can come to these events with smiling faces and open hands."

While this sentiment has been present in Muslim and other migrant communities for some time, the genocide in Gaza has brought it to a head. Sydney pro-Palestinian groups, including Stand For Palestine Australia, have staged protests outside masjids and been prolific on social media in criticising community organisations that host politicians like Burke and education minister Jason Clare.

These groups have, in turn, been criticised in major media outlets that give ample and sympathetic coverage to Burke and Clare. *Daily Telegraph* columnist Joe Hildebrand called activists targeting Burke "a traitor to their cause," while the A*ustralian Financial Review* categorised leaflets and flyers criticising Burke and Clare's record on Gaza as a "smear campaign." The *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a long and friendly interview with 'Friends of Tony Burke' campaign founder Dr Jamal Rifi, described throughout as a "community leader."

But a growing body of congregants across Australian Muslim communities are increasingly impatient with the "community leaders" who invite politicians to their events. On Sunday, the leadership of Leppington's Al Madinah Masjid welcomed Peter Dutton, who announced $25,000 in funding for the mosque to upgrade its security cameras. Hours later, the masjid released a statement to the *Daily Telegraph* emphasising that Dutton's appearance was not an endorsement on their part.

In the wake of Wood being forced to leave the Dandenong Eid prayers, one of the masjid's executive committee members publicly revealed they had resigned over the decision to allow Wood and other politicians to attend.

"I cannot align myself with a committee or association who does not share the same sentiment as the wider Afghan & Muslim community regarding the Palestinian cause," former committee member Sami Sadat stated in an open letter. "I have always believed that Eid should remain a religious and community-focused event."

"They're not community leaders. They're community managers," Hamimi says. "Whenever something happens in the community, rather than gauge community sentiment to try and understand, these people are often the first one to bring in authorities. They're the first to police their own communities. The community's grown and changed over a long time, but a lot of these same people still occupy the same positions they were in 30 or 40 years ago. They have a disconnect with the sentiment on the ground."

That's why, he believes, someone like Jason Wood thought he could turn up at Eid prayers and be welcomed.

"When Jason Wood comes along and says 'Peter Dutton's offering you $6.5 million to build your mosque,' he thinks this is some sort of tribal politics where the 'leader' gets a handshake and everyone just follows," Hamimi says. "There's an assumption that the community doesn't have a mind of its own, can't make rational assessments, and has no principles or ethics. But people don't want funding that comes with strings attached, or that's given by that kind of person. We don't want your dirty money."

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