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COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

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Guardian

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DUTTON FUNDS FAVOURED, LESS MERITORIOUS PROJECTS

One would think that given how big the Morrison government is on ensuring a “fair go for those who have a go” that merit-based programs would be the shining example of this motto in practice. However, yet again, it has been revealed that the Coalition will play favourites with those who can help it maintain power. It seems that last year’s “sports rort affair,” wasn’t the time when funds were politicised. It has now been revealed that last year Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton has seemingly been providing funds to communities for political reasons instead of meritorious ones.

The Department of Home Affairs provides grants to organisations and communities to improve safety via the Safer Communities Program. The department has guidelines for the program, which it uses to assess and rank each project; however, ultimately, the Home Affairs Minister can overrule his department’s assessments – which is what Dutton did. And while Dutton’s actions fall within the grant’s rules, they raise a lot of questions about Dutton’s discretion.

Ministerial submissions given to Dutton by his department for round three of the Safer Communities Program, show that it recommended funding the seventy highest-ranking projects totalling over \$17 million. “The projects included CCTV upgrades, better lighting, and improved building security in non-government organisations and local councils” (ABC).

The department warned Dutton that deviating from the merit system for the grants could draw scrutiny from the Australian National Audit Office or news organisations.

However, in a handwritten note, Dutton reduced funding for nineteen of the highest-scoring grant applications, which totalled over \$5 million. For instance, Armidale Regional Council sought \$945,687 for its Safety and Security Project but received under half of that (\$450,000). The City of Karratha sought \$741,730 for its “Light the Way – Creating Safe Karratha Walkways” Project but only received \$400,000.

One might be inclined to think that the Coalition is merely attempting to save taxpayer’s money, but there’s a problem with that theory – this isn’t taxpayer money. The multimillion dollar program is funded by seized proceeds of criminal enterprises. This program is attempting to use ill-gotten funds to improve communities.

Dutton told *The 7.30 Report* in a statement: “The suggestion that the government has done anything other than support projects worthy of support is nonsense.”

Yet Dutton’s actions betray his words.

For instance, the department also provided Dutton with a “reserve list” of 211 other projects it considered were suitable for funding but received lesser scores. Like the first list, it too was ranked highest to lowest. “The department asked Dutton to rank these projects ‘to ensure all available funds are used,’” (ABC) – he only ranked fifty-three. The projects included on Dutton’s list were a church within his electorate, called the Vineyard Christian Fellowship and the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland. Projects that were assessed to have a much lower priority than others his department recommended.

As if this behaviour was not suspicious enough, Dutton announced community safety grants for two local councils before they had even been assessed! As part of a joint press conference with Liberal candidate for Braddon Brett Whiteley, Dutton announced that Waratah-Wynyard Council and Burnie City Council would receive security camera funding. Afterwards, his own department recommended not to fund these projects because they did not represent value for money. However, Dutton’s announcement was an attempt to win a highly marginal seat that the ALP ultimately gained in 2018 against Whiteley but lost in the 2019 election.

The right wing often accuses the left of “politicising” issues, as a way to trivialise concerns and to brush them aside. However, it is clear from the last two years that the Coalition will politicise funding to win favour with electorates and maintain power.

The CPA believes that funding should go where it belongs. It has formed The Communists, our party to fight in elections. If you want to see everyday Australians taken care of go to the link below and register today!

communists.org.au/registration

JOINT STATEMENT: SLANDER AND THREATS AGAINST THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VENEZUELA ARE UNACCEPTABLE

Solidarity with the people, the workers’-people’s movement and the CP of Venezuela.

The parties signing this Joint Statement have been firmly standing at the side of the people of Venezuela and have repeatedly denounced and condemned the imperialist aggression of the United States, the European Union, and their allies in Latin America against Venezuela and the coup attempt to overthrow the elected President Nicolás Maduro. For us, denouncing and opposing the imperialist attacks against the people of Venezuela and the peoples of the world are non-negotiable.

Based on the principles of Proletarian Internationalism, we maintain warm comradely relations with the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), which defends the interests of the working class and the working people of Venezuela both against the imperialists as well as the local capitalists that exploit the people and trample on their rights and thus it demands a revolutionary way out of the capitalist crisis in its country.

We defend the right of the Communist Party of Venezuela, based on its ideological, political and organisational independence, to distance itself from the ruling PSUV [United Socialist Party of Venezuela] party, to stand for election on its own ballot, to criticise the government, and to oppose its policies, since the government imposes measures that affect the rights and achievements of the people.

Before the December 2020 elections, the PSUV launched an attempt to slander and exclude the PCV. Initially, an attempt was made to silence and conceal the candidacy of the PCV by excluding its voice from the public and private media. Attempts are now being made to blackmail the PCV into joining one of the two majority parliamentary groups (of the government or of the right-wing opposition) as a precondition to have the right to speak in the National Assembly. Recently, the attack on the PCV escalated when President Maduro repeatedly implied that the PCV was part of “the long arm of US imperialism.” Based on this slander, threats of anti-communist persecution, criminalisation, and repression of workers’-people’s struggles and organisations are being launched.

This accusation is unacceptable and slanderous, as evidenced by the long course and the heroic struggles of the PCV against imperialism, for the rights of the Venezuelan people. We denounce any thought of persecution against the PCV and other organisations of the people’s revolutionary movement in Venezuela.

We reject any attempt to undermine the political rights of the PCV and the working class. In this sense, we demand that the government of President Nicolás Maduro stops the attacks and slander aimed at criminalising the fair struggle of the PCV and the workers of Venezuela.

Our parties express once again their solidarity with the people of Venezuela, who are the victims of imperialist attacks and the anti-popular management of the capitalist crisis. We particularly express our

support for the fair struggle of the Communist Party and the Communist Youth of Venezuela, which defend the interests of the working class and the people under all circumstances.

Solidarity with the Communist Party of Venezuela!

Proletarians of all countries unite!

SolidNet Parties

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Party of Labour of Austria
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Union of Communist Parties-CPSU
New Communist Party of Yugoslavia
Party Communists of Serbia
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Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain
Sudanese Communist Party
Syrian Communist Party
Communist Party of Swaziland
Communist Party of Sweden
Communist Party of Turkey
Communist Party of Ukraine
Union of Communists of Ukraine
Communist Party of Venezuela
Other Parties
Union of Communists in Bulgaria
Communist Worker’s Party – For Peace and Socialism (Finland)
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Find out more about the
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WHAT WILL LABOR'S JOB PLAN DELIVER?

Anna Pha

Labor Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese raised the expectations of many in the trade union movement with his announcement of Labor's Secure Australian Jobs Plan on 10th February of Labor's industrial relations (IR) reforms. He talked about the first eight elements of Labor's Plan, suggesting there are more to come:

- "Job security" explicitly inserted into the Fair Work Act (FWA)
- Rights for gig economy workers through the Fair Work Commission (FWC)
- Portable entitlements for workers in insecure industries
- Casual work properly defined in law
- A crackdown on cowboy labour-hire firms to guarantee same job, same pay
- A cap on back-to-back short-term contracts
- More secure public sector jobs by ending inappropriate temporary contracts
- Government contracts to companies and organisations that offer secure work for their employees.

He also promised the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and the Registered Organisations Commission (ROC), and to safeguard the legislated incremental increases in employer superannuation contributions to twelve per cent.

The defeat of the Coalition at the next elections would provide an opportunity to replace the Coalition's anti-worker, anti-union legislation with laws that protect workers' and trade union rights.

JOB SECURITY

Albanese pointed to the growth in numbers and different forms of insecure employment and promised to legislate to make "job security" a key objective of the FWA. The FWC would be required "to bring a sharp focus to job security when making decisions about your rights at work." He made particular reference to the "on demand," gig economy workers, whose wages and working conditions were well below those of other workers covered by the formal industrial relations structures.

Importantly, he said Labor would do this by extending the powers of the FWC to include "employee-like forms of work," allowing the Commission to make orders for minimum standards in new forms of work. There is no indication as to what the nature of these standards would be or suggestion that they would extend to trade union rights.

It is not clear whether other forms such as labour hire would be covered.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) calls for "on demand" forms of work to be replaced with secure, permanent work which carries with it the statutory wages and working conditions that apply to other workers.

ACCESS TO BASIC ENTITLEMENTS

Albanese correctly points to the "confronting revelations" that emerged during the pandemic of how many workers were casuals, contractors or gig workers, with no right to paid sick leave. "Far too many Australians had to choose between supporting their own family or playing it safe for the country," he said.

As a result, low-waged casuals working

several jobs, one of which was in the aged care sector, spread the coronavirus between centres as they went from job to job. These workers not only need basic entitlements such as paid sick and annual leave, but also secure work and a wage commensurate with their skills and responsibilities. If this was the case, they would not need more than one job.

Albanese promised to take a national approach, to develop, "where it is practical," portable entitlements for annual leave, sick leave, and long service leave for Australians in insecure work. Which insecure forms of work does Labor intend to cover with such measures? What about superannuation and workers' compensation contributions? These questions were not answered in his speech.

There is already a model for portable long service leave in the building and construction industry. What is not clear here is what is meant by "where it is practical."

The CPA calls for **ALL** workers to be entitled to all forms of leave, the compulsory superannuation guarantee, and workers' compensation cover, whether in secure or non-secure employment. Secure, ongoing employment should be the norm except where good reasons exist for a contract, such as filling in for a worker on parental leave or seasonal work.

"ABOLITION" OF ABCC AND ROC

The original ABCC was the brainchild of the Howard government with Tony Abbott, as Workplace Relations Minister, established it in 2005.

In 2012, the Gillard Labor government rebranded it as the Fair Work Building and Construction (FWBC) or more formally the Office of the Fair Work Building Industry Inspectorate. At the same time, Labor made a few changes to the ABCC, such as to the process of issuing summonses and reducing penalties by a substantial amount. In essence, the "former" ABCC remained largely in place. Trade unions and workers in the industry continued to be hounded, brought before the courts, and fined as before.

On becoming Prime Minister in 2013, Tony Abbott wasted no time taking to parliament legislation to restore and enhance the former ABCC. The bill, amongst other things, increased penalties ten-fold. It eventually passed in December 2016, under the leadership of Malcolm Turnbull following a double dissolution.

In reality, the ABCC was **NOT** abolished as promised but amended, although Labor's changes are often referred to as if it were abolished. Evidence of this can be found on the ABCC's website makes this clear. (abcc.gov.au, "History of the agency")

This raises the question: What does Albanese mean when he says "abolish?" Likewise, for the union-hounding ROC, another piece of Abbott legislation. Will it be torn up or rebranded with a few amendments?

It is in the interests of all workers and trade unions that the legislation creating the ABCC and the ROC is repealed, not amended.

PUBLIC SERVICE

As far as it goes, Albanese's commitment to public servants is good: "We will call time on the relentless outsourcing, off-shoring and short-term contracting that has undercut the capacity of departments to do their jobs and undermined the frontline services Australians rely on. [...] We will conduct an audit of employment within the Australian



Public Service and, as a model employer, take steps to create more secure employment where temporary forms of work are being used inappropriately."

What about the average staffing level (ASL) cap that has been imposed on public agencies? The ASL counts full and part-time employees, as well as casuals in the cap but not labour hire, incentivising public agencies to use labour hire more often. Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) National Secretary Melissa Donnelly noted recently that since 2013, more than 12,000 jobs have been cut from the APS as a result of the cap.

"We know that because of this staffing cap there are around 20,000 workers on labour hire in the APS. In fact, in some agencies over forty per cent of their workforce are staffed with workers who are not directly employed but are contracted through labour hire companies," she said.

Creating secure and permanent jobs is important, but will Labor also increase the number of jobs in the public service and government agencies, a pre-condition to restoring services to their previous levels? And will they do something about the cap?

Is a time-consuming and costly audit really necessary? The public sector unions are in a position to tell Labor now what is required, so that the additional necessary jobs and reforms could be created quickly following the election.

Labor, Albanese says, will also ensure that government purchases of goods and services are from companies and organisations "that are themselves providers of good, secure jobs."

Albanese is silent on the Coalition government's decision to cap wage rises to the average in the private sector. Public sector employees need a real wage rise to make up for years of cuts.

CASUAL DEFINITION

Today one in four workers in Australia are employed as casuals, even though they may be carrying out ongoing work. Casual employment is abused by employers who are not required to meet all of the entitlements that other workers receive – paid leave provisions, workers' compensation coverage, superannuation payments, etc. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that thirty-four per cent of employers do not meet their obligation to pay the twenty-five per cent casual loading to compensate for this.

Labor is promising a test to determine when a worker can be classified as casual. Albanese does not provide any details of what this might entail. He says, "[...] Labor's plan can be summarised in one simple phrase: same job, same pay." This could be made stronger by adding, "same entitlements, same rights."

Albanese says that workers employed

through labour hire companies would receive at least the same pay as workers employed directly. This is a very important commitment, one that would be of great benefit to workers in mining, construction and a number of other industries. Are other workers in other forms of employment being offered the same protection? Does it extend beyond wages to other entitlements? These questions remain unanswered.

WHAT NEXT?

Albanese has signalled that more provisions of Labor's Plan are still to be released.

The Communist Party of Australia calls on Labor, as a minimum, to include the following IR reforms in its plan which are in the interests of workers:

- Legislate for trade unions to take industrial action when and how they determine through their democratic structures. Without this right, workers cannot fight to defend and improve wages and conditions or enforce safety measures.
- Outlaw employer lockouts as they swing the balance of power to the employers and deny workers their right to collectively bargain and take industrial action. This is a powerful weapon being used more often than ever. Australian employers have powers to impose lockouts not found in any other OECD country.
- Trade union officials should have unfettered right of entry to workplaces without having to jump through hoops or risk losing their permit, as well as the right to organise.
- Secondary boycotts and trade union and community pickets be made legal
- Flexibility clauses should not be allowed in enterprise agreements, awards or any other employment instrument.
- Modern awards must be updated in line with increases in wages and conditions found in awards, with the minimum wage increased to become a living wage with regular adjustments.
- The focus should be on union-negotiated agreements that are industry based.

The plan so far is a step in the right direction but lacks detail, and there are glaring omissions such as those as indicated above. It is important that these are brought to the attention of Labor MPs and a campaign waged for such basic rights as the right to take industrial action, industry-wide bargaining, the outlawing of employer lockouts, the ongoing updating of awards, and comprehensive entitlements for ALL workers regardless of employment form.

The CPA says: Same job, same pay, same entitlements, same rights! 🗳️

Secure, ongoing employment should be the norm ...

OP-ED: THE GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE POST-PANDEMIC

Eileen Whitehead

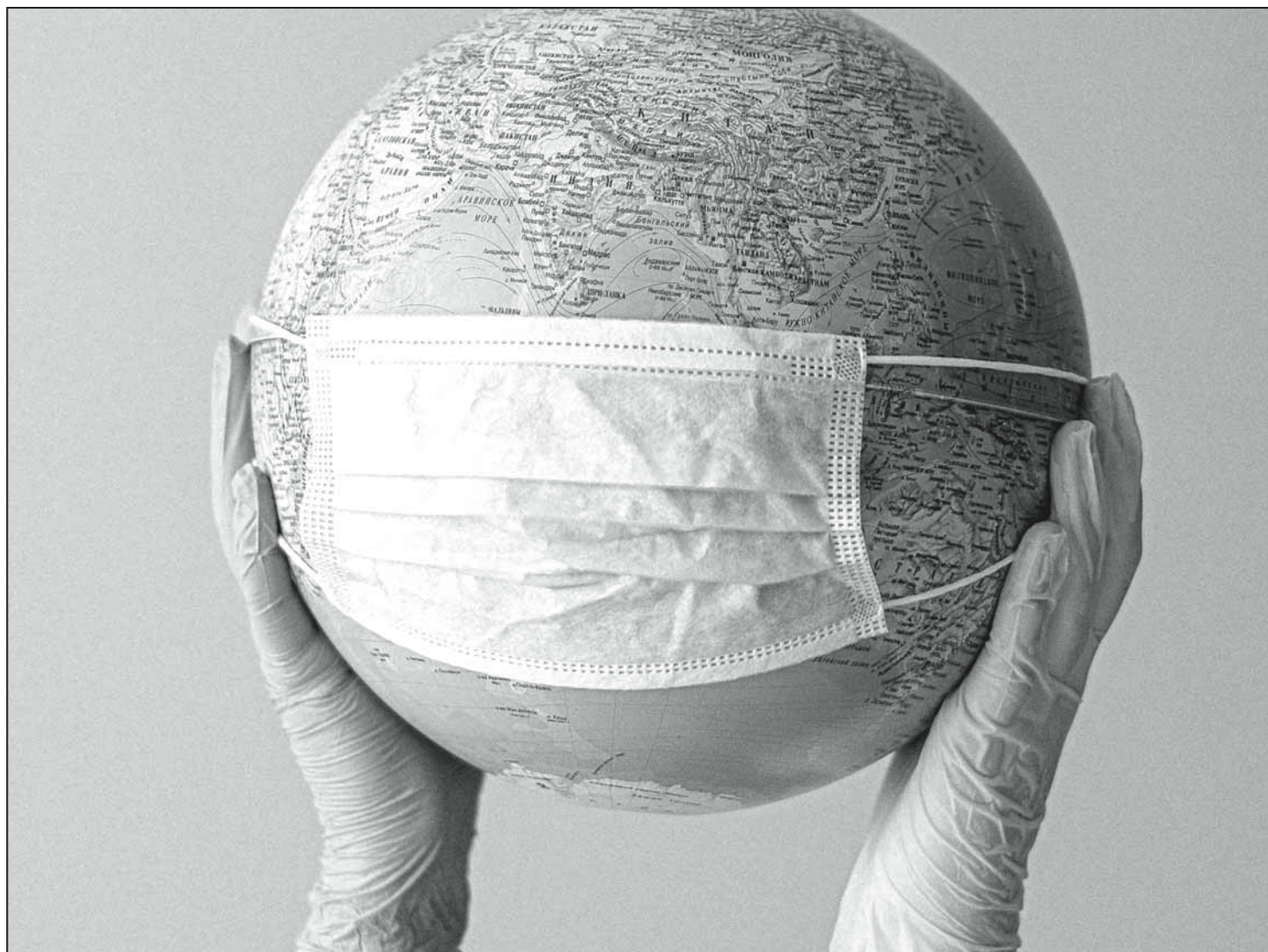
Over one year ago (30/1/2020), the World Health Organisation (WHO), declared that the outbreak of COVID-19 constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Ninety-eight cases were seen in eighteen countries outside of China. It was stressed that although these numbers were relatively small compared to the number of cases in China (how things have changed!), everyone must act to limit further spread. One year later, the total number of cases has passed 110 million. Deaths have reached 2,225,000 at the latest count, and the daily death toll is the highest it has ever been, with more than 14,000 people succumbing to the virus every day.

It is recognised that the pandemic has been a “trigger event,” comparable to World War I, which has accelerated the deep contradictions within the global capitalist system, and indeed it has evolved into a global social and political crisis. Over a year into the crisis, the pandemic has starkly revealed the class divide separating the capitalist and socialist programmes. The countries showing responsible, overall care for their people are led by socialist governments.

In the United States, 26,107,110 cases with a death toll of 440,000 have been recorded. In India, more than 10 million cases with 154,000 deaths; Brazil has more than 9 million cases and 223,000 deaths; the UK, nearly 4 million cases and 106,000 deaths; and Italy, 2.5 million cases and more than 88,000 deaths.

The struggle to contain this pandemic has developed into a class struggle, as it became increasingly clear that the major classes in society – the capitalist class and the working class – have irreconcilably opposed interests. The essential services needed to keep societies ticking over were those done by the working class's lower echelons – the cleaners, rubbish collectors, nurses, shop and transport workers, etc.

The pandemic is a striking illustration of the contrast between capitalism and socialism. Working class interests point objectively toward socialism, whereas the ruling class' main objective is the maintenance of the private ownership of the means of production and the geostrategic interests of imperialism.



The capitalists were of one mind in their response to the pandemic. Financial markets were given priority over saving lives. In socialism, the opposite approach is taken without hesitation. The capitalists wanted the pandemic policy driven by profit interests, whereas socialist governments have followed a medical policy guided by science.

In America, the capitalist programme advocated the idea of “herd” immunity, thus allowing the virus to rapidly spread before vaccinations were produced, whereas in the socialist countries all measures aimed

at impeding the virus transmission were followed to stop community spread. The capitalist ethos was to keep factories and other workplaces open for business in order to stabilise profits, while the socialists kept all non-essential workplaces closed. In the case of schools, the capitalists kept claiming there was little risk to students and teachers and demanded schools remained open. In contrast, socialists, adhering to scientific evidence that schools were a major source of virus transmission, kept them closed until the pandemic was brought under control.

On the question of vaccination, capitalist and socialist thinking also differ widely: capitalists preferencing wealthy countries with more ability to pay, while socialists demand a scientifically directed international strategy and globally coordinated inoculation.

The working class response to the pandemic must be to recognise the need for class unity, militant class action, and an international socialist and revolutionary political strategy. This attitude needs to continue long after the virus is defeated. Capitalism is the next virus that needs to be eradicated! ✪

TRUCKIES PUSHED TO THE CURB: NO RESPECT FOR OUR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

B A Ford

At 2 am on Thursday the 11th of February there was a crash between three trucks at the SA-Victorian border two hours after the SA government shut its border to Victoria. One of the trucks was carrying chemicals that caused the crash to be fiery.

The crash caused one death, while two other drivers were taken to hospital. This casualty marked Victoria's second workplace death and came four days after the Transport Workers Union (TWU) announced that there had already been four truck driver deaths across the country so far in 2021.

The SA-Victorian border was understaffed and under prepared with only four officials advising traffic and supervising the border. This meant the traffic backed up for kilometres to the closest town Kaniva, twenty-five kilometres

away from the border. Both cars and trucks were backed up without trucks prioritised, and a driver, unaware of the changed road conditions, crashed.

In their statement on the death, the TWU called for a “national plan on border closures” to avoid confusion between states, and a plan to prioritise truck drivers with truck lanes set up before border closure to allow their safe passage while carrying out essential work.

TWU Vic/Tas Secretary John Berger said that “Fatigue is a major killer in our industry and it is abhorrent that drivers are being forced to work fatigued all because the federal government won't put in place clear guidelines on border closures.”

In 2019, a total of fifty-three truck drivers died making it the deadliest industry in Australia, an increase of sixty-seven per cent when compared to 2018 with many of these deaths linked to fatigue,

according to National Transport Insurance.

The Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal was established in 2012 under the Labor government to address the conditions of the road transport industry. A review of the tribunal in 2016 showed that the then current Road Safety Remuneration Order 2014 would see a twenty-eight per cent reduction of truck crashes. However, this tribunal was repealed in April 2016, despite there being twenty-five truck related deaths in March 2016, according to TWU.

Currently, we wait for the report from the senate inquiry into the “importance of a viable, safe, sustainable and efficient road transport industry.” This report, which was once due for April 2020, has been pushed back again until the 23rd of June 2021. The inquiry investigates minimum working standards for road transport, the social and economic impacts of road injuries,

trauma and death, the current education and training for road transport, the current regulations of the road transport industry, and so on. In their article “Truckies to Tell Senate Inquiry of Horror Crash Deaths and Armed Hold Ups” published in early February, the TWU stated that since the tribunal “841 people have died in truck crashes including 182 truck drivers.”

This year, Monash University released a study involving 1400 truck drivers that examined the conditions for drivers and how it relates to their health. The study found that 50 per cent of those surveyed worked 41-60 hours per week, 37.5 per cent worked over 60 hours per week, 13 per cent had a crash in the past year, and over 70 per cent have a near miss once a week. Over 70 per cent of these drivers also experience chronic health issues and almost a third have multiple chronic health conditions.

The ruling class won't admit the

truth that better working conditions are needed to save lives of workers and the community. They are aware that bosses can pressure drivers to forge their work diaries, drivers can skip maintenance checks before driving to save time, and will ignore their fatigue or other health issues that may impede their driving just to make sure they retain their work and financial security. It is important to understand that this is not individual drivers' fault, but the fault of the system that puts the extraction of profit over the safety of all of us.

The Communist Party expresses our condolences to the friends and family of the drivers involved in this crash. We also express our solidarity with all road transport drivers fighting for improved working conditions, and the right to come home at the end of their shift. ✪

THE ROT AT THE HEART OF OUR FRUIT-PICKING INDUSTRY

Bree Booth

Sunraysia, in Victoria's north known for its table grapes, vineyards, citrus fruit, and olives. It is a popular working holiday destination, with plenty of work on the fruit blocks for migrant labourers. But this year, despite rising unemployment and food insecurity among Australian workers, the fruit blocks are empty, and thousands of kilograms of fruit are being left to rot on the trees. There is a shortage of migrant workers due to the pandemic, but the problem runs deeper than that. The current situation on Australia's produce farms exposes an industry where exploitative conditions are driven by the capitalist profit motive.

In mid-2020 the Australian government lobbied young Australians to take up work in the agricultural sector, following a sharp decrease in the number of migrant workers during the pandemic. It was billed as a fun, easy way to make some money and meet new people, while seeing some of the countryside. This may have seemed an attractive offer to many of Australia's young people – one in three young Australians are currently unemployed or underemployed – but the reality is far from glamorous. Migrant workers and backpackers in the fruit picking industry are among the most exploited employees in the country.

Without the status of permanent residency or citizenship, migrant workers are unable to receive social security benefits. They are therefore often very dependent on their jobs to get by, especially given that working visas have very strict conditions on the amount and type of work which migrants can do in Australia. This, combined with the isolation, insecurity and low pay of farm work, as well as a general sense of unfamiliarity with their rights as workers in Australia, make it difficult for migrant workers to speak out about their treatment at work.

The majority of farmworkers – up to sixty per cent on some farms – are migrants or working holiday makers, but the conditions are no better for domestic workers. Farm work is unstable, the pay is low, and the hours are long. Some fruit pickers work up to twelve hours a day for piece rates (a pay rate for the amount picked, packed, pruned or made). One piece-rate worker reported an income of just \$550 for sixty hours of work. That's less money than the full rate of Newstart, for more hours work than the average office worker in the major cities. Hourly rates can be as low as \$9.

Therefore, it is not surprising that for many farm workers, the cost of their accommodation is more than they make in a week. Workers are often forced to live in local hostel-type accommodation at up to \$250 per week for a bed in a shared room. In some situations, this accommodation is owned or run by the employers themselves and is often cramped, un-airconditioned and in poor condition.

Conditions on the fruit blocks are not better. Fruit pickers work up to twelve hours a day in the heat and the cold, with workers reporting being fired on the spot for infractions as minor as having their phone out during the day. This insecurity is compounded by the geographical isolation of many agricultural regions. Major fruit picking districts like Sunraysia in the north of Victoria are often many hours' drive from the nearest capital city. Public transport infrastructure is also severely lacking in these regions.

The border closures and restrictions on travel distances have further impeded the mobility required for migrant workers to fulfil their visa obligations. When Melbourne and then regional Victoria got shut down, many migrant workers got trapped in the city unable to look for rural work. Those whose visas allowed them to seek work in the city were forced to compete in a highly competitive domestic labour market in the city as unemployment



soared. For migrant workers the stakes were life or death – at no point was Jobkeeper extended to them even though many became trapped here due to international travel restrictions.

Marx observed that “[it] is in the very nature of the capitalistic mode of production to overwork some workers while keeping the rest as a reserve army of unemployed paupers.” In ordinary times, cheap migrant labour acts as this reserve army on the fruit blocks, keeping the demand for jobs high and wages low. High demand and hard work makes for very unstable jobs. But the pandemic is not ordinary times. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the extent to which the profit motive drives the conditions of farm workers.

This is a system that was bound to fail the moment access to cheap labour could no longer be sourced. Low food prices make mean razor thin profit margins for fruit growers. Domestic workers are more expensive than migrant workers, not only because they're paid more but because they're more prone to

speaking up and exercising their rights as workers.

For this reason, small growers on orange blocks in Sunraysia have begun to turn away all domestic workers rather than run a loss for this year's harvest. Along the highways in the Victoria's north, hand-painted signs proclaiming “No workers needed!” are a common sight. With the added pressure of bushfire damage and climate change many employers simply cannot afford to pay award wages. Of course, the obverse of this is that domestic workers are also less willing to do gruelling farm work for extremely low rates of pay.

As the major supermarkets compete to keep the price of basic foodstuffs low, farmers feel the pressure to cut costs. Outsourcing farm work to migrant workers protects the bottom line. The less they have to pay their pickers, the higher the profit they can fetch for their produce. There is no reason why this fruit cannot be sold, other than that farmers can't pay their workers, and distributors won't buy for a higher cost. Capitalist greed

is leaving good food to rot on the tree while Australian workers in the cities starve.

So what is the immediate solution for a crisis this complex? To begin with, the fruit picking industry is badly in need of regulation, especially concerning the pay and conditions of migrant workers. The AWU calls for fair piece rates for farm workers. But fair wages are expensive for small growers struggling as it is to get by. Small farms ought to be subsidised by the government to make higher wages feasible and to ensure that food isn't left to rot when millions of Australians need it.

Better transport networks are needed to allow pickers to travel easily to and stay in the fruit-picking regions, and visa conditions must be loosened. Jobkeeper ought to be extended to all unemployed workers unable to leave the country. Most fundamentally, migrant workers ought to be educated on their rights at work and their class position, to help them organise and demand a return to work under fair conditions. ✪



STOP THESE PROPOSED ANTI-WORKER LAWS

The Morrison Government's proposed Omnibus Bill will leave Australian workers worse off at a time when they can least afford it. It tips the balance of our industrial relations system in the favour of employers – and will lead to less workplace rights as well as cuts to our pay and conditions. Help us stop the Bus.

These Senators can stop the anti-worker Omnibus Bill:

Jacqui Lambie, Malcolm Roberts, Pauline Hanson, Stirling Griff & Rex Patrick

Tell them to vote No in the Senate

go to: www.stopthebus.com.au

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REPEAL THE ANTI-WORKER LOCKOUT LAWS

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“CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY NEEDS TO BE REBUILT”

Demonstrators protest ongoing lockout of Coles workers

E. Lennon

Three-hundred and fifty workers at the Smeaton Grange Coles warehouse have been indefinitely locked out of their workplace.

The lockout comes after the company announced plans to shut the facility, which is its largest distribution centre in NSW. The warehouse would be replaced by an automated one in 2023.

May 1 Movement organiser Robert Car, who coordinated the day of action, has encouraged people to build solidarity through engaging with the affected workers.

“It’s all about talking to the Smeaton Grange workers,” said Car. “It’s great that leftist organisations will come out to these actions, but without actually going out to the Smeaton Grange picket line and actually supporting them and talking with them, having that strong sense of community, we’re in a bit of an echo chamber.”

“Workers are very intelligent and adaptive. We often don’t give them credit for how intelligent and adaptive they are. If you speak to one of the lead delegates for Smeaton Grange, even if they’re the delegates against further actions, they fully understand and fully advocate that we should have an onsite committee from the start and that we should have had a strike fund.”

“That would have taken the class struggle further. It’s a bit of a no-brainer. Building unity in that respect is actually quite easy. It’s all about having an ideological mindset.”

One Coles worker who came out to show their support at the action condemned the laws.



“The lockout shows that industrial law in Australia is massively in favour of employers,” they said. “The fact that it’s even allowed to be done. The culture of solidarity needs to be rebuilt to combat this.”

“I’m here as a Coles supermarket worker because I believe that when there’s conflict in the Coles supply chain, it’s my struggle as well. I believe that other people from Coles should also get involved in the lockout demonstrations. What happens in one warehouse will happen in other warehouses, where

automation can occur. As a RAFFWU [Retail and Fast Food Workers’ Union] member, it would be good to see other workers engage with comrades’ struggles. We’re employed by Coles and similar employers on the shop floor, but we should come together to support distribution centres.”

“Similarly, with other UWW [United Workers’ Union] members, they should be directly tied to their other comrades in Smeaton Grange and fighting for their rights. Switching from industry to enterprise

bargaining has destroyed the culture of solidarity and allows big employers to get away with what they want in workplaces. Workers in the same jobs, but different workplaces, won’t come out in support. Even though Coles will try and do the same thing to them in the future. It’s the job of unions to support their members, and a big part of that is getting other workers to support them in their campaigns. Things like the May 1 Movement are great ways to get the community involved in the struggle for workers.” ✱

YEMEN'S VICTORY AGAINST WAR

Casey Davidson

The new Biden administration announced it will end US support for offensive operations in Yemen, following a six-year war which has claimed the lives of over 200,000 innocent Yemenis and led to the starvation of over ten million more. In arguably the worst humanitarian crisis today, the US, and its Anglo-American allies, including Australia, have backed Saudi Arabia to gain strategic control over the region, against the wishes of the majority of Yemeni people. As Australia continues to march lockstep with US interests, it is provided with an opportunity to also remove troops from the Middle East and stop supporting this genocide.

In 2014, the US framed the invasion of Yemen to be for the purposes of defeating Iranian-backed rebels who were fighting against the Yemeni government, however the reality is that these so-called “rebels” are made up of Yemeni soldiers, known as Ansarullah, or the Houthis, fighting to protect their country’s people from exploitation from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Global North.

Yemen has a long history

of defending its country from imperialism, with South Yemen also being a Marxist-Leninist state before the fall of the Soviet Union. Although Yemen has suffered terribly in the recent war, the Ansarullah are winning, and are so popular, that the Yemeni state and army shifted to the side of the revolution.

Despite this, Australia is complicit in its support for the Saudis and Emirates imperialist war of aggression, supporting the mass starvation of a population due to crippling and unconscionable sanctions. In 2017, it was reported that the Royal Australian Navy trained Saudi soldiers not far from a location enforcing a naval blockade of Yemen. In 2018, it was discovered that Australian military contractors were training National Security Forces in the UAE.

Spokesperson for the Yemen Solidarity Council, Jay Tharappel, explained that the UAE “alongside Saudi Arabia, were attempting to partition the country so that the north is ruled by a pro Saudi dictator, while the south becomes a protectorate of the UAE.”

Regardless of all this, Ansarullah has prevailed, and in April 2019, the US Congress voted to end US support for the war. In what Tharappel describes



as “perhaps the single most evil act of his administration,” Donald Trump vetoed the US Congress’ decision.

The Biden administration, other governments, the UN, and aid organisations all agreed that the sanctions imposed on Yemen would further complicate food deliveries amidst the famine. In response, Ansarullah leader Mohammed Ali al-Houthi tweeted “America is the source of terrorism. It’s directly involved in

killing and starving the Yemeni people.”

Now with the inauguration of President Joe Biden, this ruling has again been overturned, with a commitment to end all US support for the war in Yemen, including arms sales. “This war has to end,” Biden said.

This brings an important question to the table here in Australia. Last year, the Brereton report was released, which included allegations of horrific

war crimes by Australian Defence Force (ADF) soldiers in Afghanistan. Australian troops are on the ground in the UAE right now, and were training their soldiers who were attacking Yemen. With the new policy in the US with regards to Yemen coming into place, an opportunity presents itself to bring ADF soldiers home and for Australia to stop assisting in inhumane and needless attacks on people who are fighting for sovereignty. ✱

SOCIAL IMPERIALISM: ITS

David Matters

Assistant General Secretary of the CPA

In some sections of the international communist movement today, China is characterised as imperialist, capitalist, or “social imperialist.” Despite being around since the turn of the last century, the phrase “social imperialism” really took flight when the international communist movement split in the 1960s under the weight of the divisions between the Soviet Union and China.

But what is social imperialism? Communists and non-communists use this phrase to mean wildly differing things. To understand social imperialism, we must understand the conditions out of which the phrase arose and the nature of imperialism more generally.

World War II presents us with perhaps the clearest manifestation of the shades of imperialism. Capitalism had split its imperial armies into three divisions: the first was “anti-fascist” but was still colonial and imperialist (UK, France, Australia, etc.); the second was allegedly “neutral” section took care of the banking (Switzerland, Sweden, US, etc.); the third was the unification of the most aggressive bourgeois forces (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan). The initial skirmishes that took place were between the first and third of these wings of imperialism. The results were a redivision of the world’s resources between these two camps with the “democratic” imperialists being overcome by the fascist Axis with the creation of Vichy France and collaborationist governments all over Europe.

The “democratic” wing of the bourgeois imperialists added the US who left the “neutral” camp as the Japanese started to dominate Asia and the Pacific – a territory that the US felt complimented their holdings in Latin America and the Pacific. US imperialism worked through ostensibly independent but comprador governments in Latin America but had consolidated holdings in the Pacific by assuming overt control. Australia became a major strategic partner of the US in the Asia-Pacific during this war, as significant US forces were concentrated in the inter-imperialist conflict in Asia and the Pacific.

Thus, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the war taking place was not concerned with liberation but with claiming territories and resources to exploit for profits. Imperialism here is evident in that rich economies were vying to develop monopolies in other lands.

However, a different strategy was adopted by the Soviet Union, the Communist International, and workers’ movements. For starters, the war was defensive, rather than aggressive. The USSR only entered the war *after* it was attacked by Axis forces. The basis of its defensive position came from the division between the imperialist camps where it developed a broad anti-fascist movement, assisting the exploited masses in their wars of liberation, which pushed out the fascist forces. This revolutionary tactic

opened new fronts against the imperialists throughout the world and led to the independence of many dozens of nations around the globe. Many countries occupied by the Japanese launched wars of liberation such as China, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar. These wars of liberation and independence struggles are still an ongoing feature of the region. Currently, one of the most significant is in West Papua, which is held under Indonesian dominance as a base for US mining interests.

Here, the non-bourgeois elements worked to put power in the exploited masses’ hands and free them from imperialism’s yoke, reclaiming territory and resources to ensure their sovereignty and betterment of their peoples.

SOCIAL IMPERIALISM: LENIN’S DEFINITION

In the above, we have developed an understanding of imperialism in action. So if imperialism is to be understood as the development of capitalist forces competing for resources in other regions, spurred on by the emergence of the dominance of monopolies and finance capital, what is “social imperialism?” In *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin develops the theory of social imperialism, using it to characterise the betrayals of the social democratic parties of Europe. Here, Lenin describes the situation as it existed in Europe in the lead-up to World War I:

“The enormous dimensions of finance capital concentrated in a few hands and creating an extraordinarily dense and widespread network of relationships and connections which subordinates not only the small and medium, but also the very small capitalists and small masters, on the one hand, and the increasingly intense struggle waged against other national state groups of financiers for the division of the world and domination over other countries, on the other hand, cause the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of imperialism. ‘General’ enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defence of it and painting it in the brightest colours – such are the signs of the times. Imperialist ideology also penetrates the working class. No Chinese Wall separates it from the other classes. The leaders of the present-day, so-called, ‘Social-Democratic’ Party of Germany are justly called ‘social-imperialists,’ that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds; but as early as 1902, Hobson noted the existence in Britain of ‘Fabian imperialists’ who belonged to the opportunist Fabian Society.”

In these circumstances, the social democratic parties provided support for their bourgeoisies’ colonial policies and

supported their capitalist governments in WW1. As these parties have evolved, they have become a mainstay of imperialism and are in opposition to the revolutionary proletariat. This opposition is based on the system of imperialism that has as its core the enslavement of other nations and the bribing of a layer of the working class.

In colonial settler states such as Israel, Australia, and New Zealand, this layer has formed into a political party of capitalism in the form of the “labour” parties. For example, The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has supported wars of imperialist aggression, including the latest wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They support international violations of the refugee rights through the offshore detention of migrants who arrive by sea.

Thus, in the above, social imperialism refers to those parties and individuals in the imperialist countries who advocate for certain “social” policies which benefit workers to some extent, but ultimately reject radical change to the capitalist system and support the imperialist policies of the state.

SOCIAL IMPERIALISM IN THE ALP

As mentioned above, social imperialism is alive and well today, particularly in the ALP. Thus, it will serve us well to have a deeper look at the ALP and its relationship to Australia’s communist movement and how it promotes social imperialism.

It is crucial to understand that the general character of the ALP is set by the strengths and weaknesses in extra-parliamentary organisations. As a result, the ALP has adopted an aggressive and mixed attitude towards communists, depending on the latter’s influence in trade unions. Draconian election laws and acts against the trade unions were instituted (and still are) in order to drive communists out of the unions. In contradiction to this, a united front policy was able to be built to defeat legislation banning the Communist Party in 1951.

However, regardless of the attitude to the workers’ movements in Australia, the ALP has supported imperialist actions, as other social democratic parties have across the world. For example, despite the major reforms the Whitlam government enacted, such as the abolition of tertiary fees, the Whitlam government continued imperialist practices. This is evident in Whitlam ignoring Indonesia’s annexation of East Timor which, according to the Lowy Institute, was in part because “communist rule in Dili was as inimical to Australia’s interests as it was intolerable to Jakarta.”

The ALP’s social imperialist character was further crystallised with the election of the Bob Hawke government. Hawke, a former ACTU president, was the perfect choice for a party claiming to represent workers. With Hawke as Prime Minister, reforms that were considered too extreme from the Whitlam era were rolled back, and he readmitted rebel unions and rightist Catholic forces

to the ALP. Like Whitlam, while big social programs like Medicare were enacted and equality was championed for apartheid South Africa, both of these are dwarfed by the ALP’s other decisions in government. With Medicare came the Prices and Incomes Accord, which severely harmed the union movement. And while *looking* like a human rights champion, like Whitlam was seen as with the withdrawal from the Vietnam War, Hawke continued the ALP’s social imperialism, particularly in its grab of East Timorese oil which accumulated in the Timor Gap Treaty. Indeed Lenin’s words, “socialists in words and imperialists in deeds,” couldn’t be more accurate when describing the ALP.

Thus, the ALP, like social democratic parties across the world, pretends to represent the working class, through the connections shared between leadership in the ALP and the union movement. However, its reforms do not go past capitalism, and continue its exploitation. When it comes to foreign policy, the ALP is a party still dedicated to imperialist actions, either directly with its relationships with Asia Pacific nations, or in collaboration with US imperialism, as noted above with the wars in the Middle East.

WARPING MARXISM: SOCIAL IMPERIALISM TRANSFORMED

One of the worst setbacks of the last period was the competition between the Soviet Union and China in the international communist movement, which led to differing ideological developments and mistrust. The Sino-Soviet split put a tremendous amount of pressure on the international communist movement, which allowed developments of opportunism – of both left and rightist deviation – to appear. One of the results of this competition was the transformation of what the term “social imperialism” is often used to signify.

In Australia, this played out with the transformation of the CPA after the events of the Prague Spring. The deviation that occurred was the transition from Marxism-Leninism towards what is commonly referred to as “Eurocommunism.” The Eurocommunists disavowed the socialist revolution in practice under the guise of “Anti-Stalinism” and opposition to “authoritarianism.” In general, the “destalinisation” of communist parties spread division and confusion, which challenged support for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Other opportunist deviations have been successfully promoted by the US imperialists, who added whole schools of “Marxism,” such as the Frankfurt School, to their arsenals. The Western imperialists played up to each “Marxist” tendency in different ways and assisted in increasing the divisions. In addition to denouncing “Stalinism” and opposing the Soviet Union’s “authoritarianism,” was the characterisation of the Soviet Union as a “social imperialist power.” And it is here where the warping of the term

“The leaders of the present-day, so-called, ‘Social-Democratic’ Party of Germany are justly called ‘social-imperialists,’ that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds.”

Lenin

HISTORY AND EFFECTS



Preschoolers learn about Chinese culture and festivals. The deepening of socialism requires ongoing reforms to bring forth the creative powers of the people.

“social imperialism” emerges, that Lenin’s words “socialists in words and imperialists in deeds,” are distorted.

What made the Soviet Union a “social imperialist power?” According to those who categorise the Soviet Union as such, Soviet aid was one element of its imperialist character. That despite claims that it was a workers’ state, Soviet assistance was in fact a nefarious plot by the USSR to leverage vulnerable countries into allowing them to exploit their resources. Thus for those who criticised the USSR, the Soviet Union only proclaimed socialism but was in fact imperialist.

SOCIAL IMPERIALISM APPLIED TODAY

As a result, several communist parties have developed a concept that China, and similarly Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, and the DPRK are not socialist countries. That China, in particular, is now practising some form of “social imperialism,” that its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a form of this imperialism. This theory is strongest amongst those who initially held to the view that the Soviet Union was social imperialist. They have now transferred this theory to China. It is based on the premise that capitalist companies and capitalists exist in China.

The understanding of imperialism by these observers is usually based on simplistic statements. That by advancing loans in the form of investments in infrastructure, China has somehow become the new slave master. These views are conveniently repeated by the

capitalists who accuse China of new forms of exploitation. These same capitalists will state that the US and other imperialist forces are only interested in bringing “democracy” to these nations.

Neither the Soviet aid nor the Chinese BRI induces dependency. In fact, the Communist Party of China has studied the experiences of Soviet aid practices, and has developed the socialist policy of mutually beneficial cooperation in trade and development. The Chinese model challenges imperialist dependency while respecting non-interference.

The demise of the Soviet Union gave us new experiences in colour revolutions and began to force a reassessment in the international communist movement. It became clear that right up until the counter-revolution the Soviet Union remained a socialist country. Some of the internal factors contributing to the demise of socialism in the USSR were the difficulties it encountered in carrying forward timely reforms to increase productivity, dealing with corruption and subversion, and over-reliance on military might to combat imperialist imposition.

China and Vietnam paved a new road forward and made timely reforms to remove the structural hindrances to labour productivity. Work has been done in practice on Stalin’s theory that socialism only modifies the law of value, that the true measure of socialism is the raising of the material and cultural standards of the people, which is facilitated by the working-class state, Communist Party leadership on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, and planned development facilitated by

maintained state ownership of key sectors. By these measures, China and Vietnam are building socialism. The other advance is the resurrection of the understanding that so long as commodity production remains a necessity, capitalist restoration remains a threat. The deepening of socialism requires ongoing reforms to bring forth the creative powers of the people. The development of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat needs to keep pace with the development of the proletariat as the ruling class.

The negative attitude towards China outlined above only assists the imperialists in their war ambitions. It is used to turn working people in the capitalist countries not just against China but against socialism in general. It thus provides a “left” cover for anti-communism.

This “left” anti-communism becomes a feature of these “left” groups’ activity. Their opposition to the actual development of a unified communist party is justified by their idea that the communist parties are actually agents of this other kind of imperialism.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of social imperialism as a label applied to communist parties is not scientifically accurate. The situation of the social imperialists in the capitalist countries is based on a layer existing in those societies and is at the behest of the big bourgeoisie.

When this is applied to the socialist nations, it is on the basis that capitalism has been restored in those countries. So far in all the counter-revolutions where capitalism

has been restored, it has seen the liquidation of the communist parties and the abolition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The leading role of that class, expressed through communist parties, has been abolished. Even in Yugoslavia, which had long weakened the proletarian dictatorship and the Party, a counter-revolution was still required to overthrow the position of the working people.

This application of the theory of social imperialism is usually accompanied by ultra-left utopian concepts, with socialism being defined in simplistic terms. “Workers still work for wages, profits are made, capitalist investments have occurred!” Thus, the argument is advanced that socialism has been abolished, and a new ruling class has been created. These concepts advance on Trotsky and his followers who argued that a “Thermidor” had set in, that the Soviet Union was, at best, a deformed workers’ state. Or worse, that a form of state capitalism – another term used by Lenin and misused by left anti-communists – was being created, as according to Zinoviev.

The modern theorists of “social imperialism” need to be combatted. It is imperative that proper, scientific analysis be done, that the material conditions be properly assessed. As communists, we must strive to move away from dogmatic interpretations of Marxism-Leninism but instead have a dialectical one. Most importantly, we must be willing to educate and dispel myths about actually existing socialism to help further the cause of the international communist movement. ☺

As communists, we must strive to move away from dogmatic interpretations of Marxism-Leninism but instead have a dialectical one.

ON THE RISE OF FASCISM

Seamus Carey

Although the new problems of the pandemic have distracted from it, the dangerous worldwide upsurge in fascism has continued apace.

The US fascists emboldened by Trump have not disappeared with his exit from office. The Indian fascists emboldened by Modi are stronger than ever. In Japan, PM Suga continues Abe's mission of upholding the legacy of the Japanese fascist regime and pushing Japan towards remilitarisation. Fascist movements around Europe grow, and the US-chosen opposition figure of Navalny in Russia and various US-sponsored figures around Latin America have open fascist connections.

A strong understanding of fascism is vital to workers' and progressive movements. There are many contradictions between its external appearance and its true nature that can confound analysis undertaken without a solid consciousness of its class nature.

The reasons why individuals are drawn to fascism in its embryonic stage, and the causes of fascism as a mass movement and state system, are connected but not identical. Both must be understood and opposed.

Fascism as a state system is the open dictatorship of a particular section of the bourgeoisie – the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capital. It is a form of capitalism, the other form being the disguised form of bourgeois dictatorship, bourgeois "democracy." Under "normal" conditions, the bourgeois democracy, with certain rights extended to the people and a more or less well functioning democratic system for the capitalist class and its internal contradictions, is more effective as a form of rule by the bourgeoisie. The open dictatorship by a particular section of the bourgeoisie only becomes necessary for them under the conditions of the utter decrepitude of capitalism in its parasitic, imperialist stage.

When fascist ideas take root in fringe groups, it is already creating a reserve for this section of the bourgeoisie should exercising open dictatorship become more convenient for them. The bourgeoisie's control of public discourse and opinion through media and politics means that it is no great difficulty for them to turn

fringe into mainstream, if it should suit their interests. We have seen development in this direction around the world.

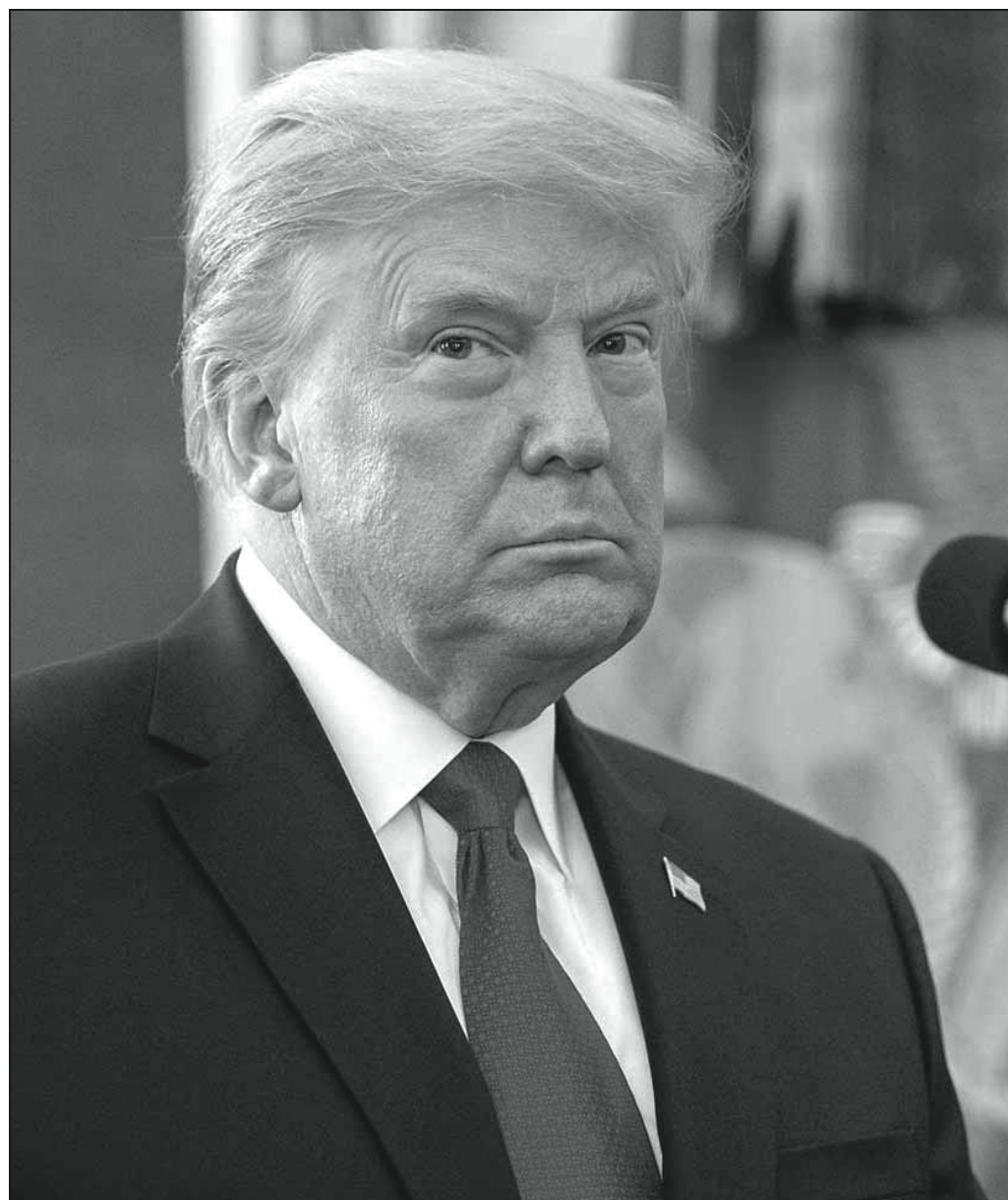
So long as there is bourgeois democracy, there are certain disagreements among the bourgeoisie as to how to rule most effectively. The death cult of fascism is the ultimate endpoint of bourgeois ideology, although some sections of the bourgeoisie are capable of perceiving its self-destructive nature and holding back from it, which is coincident with their false but necessary conviction that capitalism is indefinitely sustainable.

While fascism is chauvinistic and nationalist, it is an extension of the international nature of imperialism. There is no contradiction between these things, as it is the logical endpoint of the imperialist system and ideology, where a few countries are the dominant powers in the world, through their financial system and military, and all other countries are either auxiliaries, subjects, or opponents of this power. Fascism aspires to either continue or achieve this position for a country, in the face of the ever-nearer collapse of global capitalism. It is an expression of the violent desperation of the most single-minded capitalist oppressors.

While we must understand that fascism is a form of capitalism and non-fascist capitalism is also a form of dictatorship, this does not mean we should not care about which arises. As Dimitrov said in 1935:

"We are not Anarchists, and it is not at all a matter of indifference to us what kind of political regime exists in any given country: whether a bourgeois dictatorship in the form of bourgeois democracy, even with democratic rights and liberties greatly curtailed, or a bourgeois dictatorship in its open, fascist form. While being upholders of Soviet democracy, we shall defend every inch of the democratic gains which the working class has wrested in the course of years of stubborn struggle, and shall resolutely fight to extend these gains."

Building a united front of the people against fascism is a necessary struggle and component of the movement towards socialism in the conditions of a minor imperialist power like Australia. ★



The US fascists emboldened by Trump have not disappeared with his exit from office.

SHIFTING THE BLAME: HOW A CONDEMNATION OF THE FAR RIGHT BECAME AN OPEN ATTACK ON THE LEFT

John Fegebank

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) put forward a Senate motion on 4th February to condemn and recognise a rising far-right in Australia. The motion made specific reference to the National Socialist Network, a far-right neo-Nazi group, as well as calling out Coalition members Craig Kelly and George Christensen for promoting several conspiracy theories related to COVID-19, vaccines and the US Capitol "coup" earlier in January.

The move would represent an important step in dealing with a growing problem that plagues Australia and countries around the world, costing many lives in the process. Of course, those of us with any insight into Australian politics will know this motion was far too good to be true. The Coalition,

along with One Nation, the Centre Alliance, and independents Jacqui Lambie and Rex Patrick, had it significantly stripped and repurposed. The motion now makes no reference to the rise of the far-right, instead calling Australia "one of the most successful multicultural countries in the world" in a chauvinistic attempt to hide our severe issues with racism. All mention of Coalition members of parliament was removed, and specific reference to the contents of the dangerous far-right conspiracy theories was scrapped. Essentially all acknowledgement of the problem was taken out of the motion as a whole.

What was added is even more concerning. The motion now makes a distinct "both sides" style condemnation of extremism, arguing that the issue comes from both the far-right and the far-left. It lists anarchism and communism in the same breath as fascism, as

if they have anything in common. If this is the case, where then, are these "far-left" mass shootings? Where are the "far-left" attacks on minority groups? It is easy to see that such "centrist" positions are merely used to target communists and not take responsibility for the disgusting actions they encourage. While we stand out there fighting for the rights of the downtrodden and exploited, the right commits another heinous act and calls it an issue of both sides.

During the vote for the LNP's changes to the motion, the ALP opposed the amendments. However, when it came time to pass the amended motion, the ALP supported it, allowing it to pass without a vote. The Greens stated that, had a vote been taken, they would have voted against it.

Given the language of the initial motion, it is difficult to see how the ALP did not predict such a result

in an LNP-dominated Senate. The original motion outright named Liberal politicians for their actions. For the ALP to expect any other result could only be sheer incompetence; the only alternative is that this was the intended outcome. Either way, this once again shows the ALP acting akin to a moderate wing of the LNP.

This shows an Australian right wing becoming more and more unified in their attacks on the left and the working class as a whole. It is now all the more important a task to build unity among left, working class, and progressive people, working in unity on issues held in common, and respecting differences. A divided left is not going to effectively oppose anyone but ourselves.

We must ask ourselves what it is they truly condemn when they speak of far-left extremism. Workers' rights; anti-imperialism;

climate change action? What they condemn is opposition to their capitalist lobbyists and the abusive system they uphold. It is with such actions that activities of activists become increasingly more dangerous and critical at the same time. A target is being fastened to our backs, one which justifies increasing hostilities. One which will make it easier for those with power to silence those without. One which is likely to be followed by a push for full legislation against we who fight against the capitalist system. It is in these times that we must remain firm in our opposition. The only way to overturn such repressive measures, is to ensure they do not succeed. Though they will try time and time again, our struggle will not be dulled. ★

WHO EXPERTS SLAM NYT FOR TWISTING, MISQUOTING THEIR WORDS ON VIRUS ORIGINS PROBE

Liu Caiyu and Leng Shumei

World Health Organisation (WHO) experts who recently visited Wuhan slammed the *New York Times* (NYT) for twisting their words and casting shadows over the efforts to uncover the origins of the virus, after the newspaper accused China of refusing to hand over sensitive data to WHO experts.

Chinese observers said they are not surprised by the *New York Times*' baseless report given those in the Western media have insisted on politicising the virus origins investigation.

The report by NYT titled "On WHO Trip, China Refused to Hand Over Important Data" accuses China of failing to share important data that may help in identifying the origins of the virus and prevent future outbreaks.

After the report was published, two WHO experts slammed *New York Times* for misquoting them in the report to fit its own narrative, with the report casting a shadow over the scientific work of seeking for virus origin.

Peter Daszak, British zoologist and part of the WHO expert team,

said on his personal Twitter that it's shameful for *New York Times* to engage in selectively misquoting WHO experts to fit its own narrative.

"Hear! Hear! It's disappointing to spend time with journalists explaining key findings of our exhausting month-long work in China, to see our colleagues selectively misquoted to fit a narrative that was prescribed before the work began. Shame on you @nytimes!" Daszak posted on Twitter.

In sharp contrast to the NYT report, that has accused China of refusing to hand over important data, Daszak wrote on his Twitter that "We DID get access to critical new data throughout. We DID increase our understanding of likely spillover pathways."

Daszak said his experience is nothing like the NYT depicted and said as the head of animal and environment working group, he found trust and openness when working with his China counterparts.

Thea Kolsen Fischer, a Danish epidemiologist on the team echoed Daszak, who was quoted by the NYT in the report, wrote on Twitter that "This was NOT my experience either on the Epi-side. We DID build up a good relationship in the

Chinese/Int Epi-team! Allowing for heated arguments reflects a deep level of engagement in the room."

Fischer continued that "Our quotes are intendedly twisted, casting shadows over important scientific work."

"Throughout the WHO expert team's trip in Wuhan, Western media's goal had been to push their theories that China is guilty of causing the COVID-19 pandemic and hiding information," Peking University professor Zhang Yiwu told the *Global Times* on 14th February.

As the results WHO experts released at the press conference were opposite to what the Western media were looking forward to, some Western media become so desperate that they made such false report, twisting experts' words, to continue hyping their conspiracy theories about China, Zhang noted.

Countries that accused China of trying to hide information or prevent WHO experts from investigating would not even allow a WHO expert team to enter their countries to investigate, Zhang said, slamming their double standards.

On Twitter, Fischer also said it's "important to stay true to facts if building up trust, calling to stop



A potential Covid-19 vaccine at a production plant of SinoPharm in Beijing. (Photo: Xinhua)

this negative spin about "no access to raw data."

In the EU, the access of person-identifiable data is either not possible if without official permission under General Data Protection Regulations (EU GDPR), Fischer said.

Wang Guangfa, a respiratory expert at Peking University First Hospital, told the *Global Times* on Sunday that "Truth will tell everything."

"Virus traceability investigation is a scientific issue. It should not become a tool for political attacks and brings no good for the identification of the virus origins," Wang stressed.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organisation, said at a briefing on 12th February that the summary findings of the mission team would be released soon next week, with the full version of the report due for release in the following weeks.

After the WHO stated that all hypotheses relating to the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic remained open following the visit to Wuhan, Chinese experts and netizens called on the WHO to launch a broader probe mission on the origins of the virus in other potential source countries.

Global Times ★

DISABILITY RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS CONDEMN DO-NOT-RESUSCITATE ORDERS ON PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Peter Lazenby

Disability campaigners reacted with horror on 14th February to further reports that do-not-resuscitate (DNR) notes are being applied to people with learning disabilities who contract coronavirus.

The campaigners also condemned the government's failure to place people with learning disabilities in a priority category for vaccination.

Charity Mencap said that it had received reports from people with learning disabilities in January of them being told that they would not be resuscitated

if they were taken seriously ill with Covid-19.

Paula Peters of direct action group Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) told the *Morning Star* that "people with a learning impairment have been horrendously discriminated [against] during the coronavirus pandemic."

"A recent report from Public Health England has shown that people with a learning impairment are six times more likely to die from coronavirus than the rest of the population and, if in the 18-34 age group with a learning impairment, 30 times more likely to die from coronavirus."

"That is a travesty and could have been

preventable if DNRs had not been placed on their medical records."

Ms Peters said that people with a learning impairment are being denied the right to healthcare and treatment, with DNRs imposed without their or their families' knowledge or consent.

This practice reflects the view that the life of a disabled person with a learning impairment is of less value, she argued.

Ms Peters called for "the practice of placing DNRs on people with a learning impairment [...] to be stopped and removed with immediate effect."

She said that people with learning disabilities in care homes "have yet again

been forgotten about as a vaccination priority."

"This, coupled with DNRs being forced illegally onto them, shows clearly how little value this government place on the lives of disabled people," Ms Peters insisted.

Mencap chief executive Edel Harris said: "It's unacceptable that within a group of people hit so hard by the pandemic and who, even before Covid, died on average over 20 years younger than the general population, many are left feeling scared and wondering why they have been left out."

Morning Star ★

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HISTORIANS SAY CNN WRONG TO COMPARE COMMUNISTS TO TRUMP'S COUP PLOTTERS

NEW YORK: Dozens of historians and academics, including Angela Davis, Gerald Horne, and Michael Honey, have signed a statement to CNN challenging an article published on the news corporation's website on 3rd February that equated the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) with the coup plotters who perpetrated the 6th January insurrection at the Capitol.

The article placed the Trump coup in the context of previous supposed attempts to overthrow the government. According to its critics though, the CNN article, titled "With coup label, Capitol rioters join the Communist Party in plotting against the USA, university project says," confuses more than it clarifies.

"Not only is CNN's characterisation dangerous, it's outrageous," Gerald Horne, the author of over forty books on Communist, African-American, labour, and US history said.

"CNN's characterisation is dangerous because it flips facts on their head. Far from plotting a coup attempt, Communists in 1948 were in fact the victims of a government plot to deny democratic rights – the right of association, the right to speak, the right to their beliefs."

"To make this comparison during African American history month is even more outrageous, as a number of prominent Black Americans, such as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois, were affiliated with or were members of the Communist Party USA, an organisation that championed equality," Horne added.

In 1948, eleven leaders of the CPUSA were indicted under the provisions of the Smith Act. It was alleged that they sought the violent overthrow of the US government. However, unlike the 6th January, Trump-inspired insurrectionists, the Communists were never charged with any overt act.

The arrest of the Communist leaders

came amidst a major pushback by government and business against a surging labor movement and a massive peace mobilisation opposed to the Cold War. Communists were major organisers in both struggles, and in the emerging Civil Rights movement, as well.

"Their crime," according to CPUSA National Co-Chair Rossana Cambron, "was thinking about and teaching Marxism. Their crime was building a working-class movement for socialism."

The Supreme Court later ruled that the Communist defendants could only be prosecuted for their actions, not their beliefs.

A renewed interest in the ideas of socialism has seen a surge of growth for left groups like the Communist Party and Democratic Socialists of America in recent years, especially among youth. As it did in the late 1940s and 50s, the expanding influence of the left and an increasingly active trade union movement have given rise to a virulent anti-communist trend, expressed both in Trump-GOP circles and among a number of centrist-leaning liberals.

"Facts and context matter," Tony Pecinovsky said. "That is why over thirty-five historians and academics from across the country have come together to issue a statement calling on CNN to retract the article and apologise to its readers and the CPUSA."

Pecinovsky, the author of a book of biographies on prominent CPUSA leaders, added, "It is well known that the CPUSA was at the forefront of the struggle for workers' rights, African American equality, and peace. They were not coup plotters. They were movement builders, a part of the American radical democratic tradition."

The CNN article, by Eliot C. McLaughlin, was based on research done by the University of Illinois Coup D'état Project. However, the Coup Project itself does not agree with McLaughlin's characterisation



of the government's repression of Communist leaders and has asked that a correction be issued.

"CPUSA leaders were indicted for their beliefs, not their actions. The 6th of January insurrectionists have been charged due to their actions, not their beliefs. Any comparison to the contrary is insanity," the CPUSA's other National Co-Chair, Joe Sims, added.

During the Smith Act court hearings, the government's "evidence" consisted of rumour, hearsay, and fabrication, often sourced from paid FBI informants who later recanted their testimony.

Government prosecutors' only other evidence against the CPUSA leadership were the books, newspapers, speeches, and reports that had been published and widely distributed by the party in decades prior.

None of these publicly available materials constituted evidence of a conspiracy.

In a divided political environment already full of "alternative facts" and "fake news," the signatories to the statement see McLaughlin's article as particularly damaging, a view shared by those in the CPUSA today.

"With red-baiting and anti-communism again a favoured tool of the far right, it is important that all Americans know that Communists have nothing in common with the right wing, white supremacists who stormed the Capitol on the 6th January," Sims concluded.

The complete text of the historians' statement and a list of signatories calling for CNN to retract the article and issue an apology is available at *People's World*: www.peoplesworld.org.

LATIN AMERICA IN INTENSIVE CARE

Nuria Barbosa León

The health crisis generated by the pandemic continues unchecked in Latin America, plagued by corruption in the distribution of vaccines, insufficient health coverage, and the lack of protective equipment for personnel on the front lines.

The region reports 45.6 million infections and one million deaths. In twenty-three countries vaccination plans have been developed, while efforts have begun in Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, Panama, Chile, Bolivia and Brazil, although inequitable distribution has been condemned by the Pan American Health Organisation.

In Ecuador, the National Assembly approved the dismissal of Health Minister Juan Carlos Zevallos, and the initiation of impeachment proceedings as a result of his mismanagement of the national COVID-19 vaccination plan. The Minister is accused of prioritising his relatives and a private nursing home in Quito, disregarding the list of public hospitals prepared by the Ministry of Health.

Likewise, police are investigating a clandestine clinic to the south of Quito, where an unknown substance has been distributed as a vaccine against the coronavirus, at a cost of US\$15 per dose.

Brazilian Minister of Health Eduardo Pazuello is also being investigated by the Federal Supreme

Court to determine responsibility for the lack of oxygen, desperately needed to treat COVID-19 patients, in the state of Amazonas, principally in the capital, Manaus.

This Brazilian state experienced two weeks of total collapse of its services, with an insufficient number of beds available and no plan to refer patients to other cities. Also under investigation is the use of 120,000 units of hydroxy-chloroquine to treat the disease, although no scientific evidence of its effectiveness exists.

In the wake of these scandals, the impeachment of President Jair Bolsonaro is being considered, based on his irresponsibility and negligence. Faced with the government's passivity in the face of

the epidemic, the coalitions Brasil Popular and Pueblo Sin Miedo organised eight-seven mobilisations throughout the country to demand the President's resignation.

Colombia's situation is grim as well, with intensive care units reaching a 90 per cent occupation rate, mostly COVID-19 patients. Health workers are exhausted and protective biosecurity equipment, medicines, and supplies for the care of critical patients are in short supply. The government and President Iván Duque have responded with silence and ambiguous speeches.

According to the Chilean Ministry of Health, only 192 beds are available nationwide to treat patients in intensive care, and

Minister Enrique Paris stated that the number of infections has recently increased by six per cent. In addition, a complaint has been filed against the private clinic CareFullHome, which has charged some US\$80 for tests, which it then reported as negative without performing the necessary molecular study.

This is the dilemma faced in many Latin American nations and it is not yet known how much longer the pandemic will continue to rage.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean warned, on 2nd October 2020, that the region is experiencing the worst crisis seen in the last 100 years, with major social and economic impact.

Granma 🇨🇺



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