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Capitalist crisis hits workers

M Santos

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) is loading the burden of the capitalist crisis onto workers, students, the unemployed, and pensioners, and others on low to middle incomes in the guise of reducing inflation. But workers did not cause the inflation and the RBA is not addressing the causes.

What the RBA is doing quite deliberately through higher mortgage repayments and the flow-on higher rents is reducing the amount of money in people's pockets to pay for essentials such as fuel, food, transport, energy, and other goods and services at a time when their prices are rising.

In other words, less to spend on essentials and higher prices – a double whammy.

It hits those on lowest incomes such as the unemployed, pensioners, students, people with disability, First Nations people, and those on minimum wages or in part-time or insecure employment.

The high price of oil caused by the US/Israeli war on Iran cannot be reduced by cutting the amount of money consumers have left to spend.

Climate change induced price rises resulting from drought, monsoons, and other extreme weather events combined with higher transport costs cannot be addressed by short-changing consumers.

These global price rises include:

- Rice up 63% since February
- Wheat, oats, sugar & fertiliser up more than 30%
- Arabica coffee up 29% since June
- Canola by 30%
- Soya beans by 24%
- Cocoa by more than 90%.

The RBA is not tackling the causes of inflation – it cannot. In addition, it is not assisting people to meet higher living costs – but it could if it were not serving the interests of big corporations. It could counter the outcomes of inflation by reducing interest rates.

Higher interest rates are ripping billions out of people's pockets while failing to address inflation.

The government could provide assistance to those impacted by inflation. It has the tools at its disposal.

POLICY

Independent Senator David Pocock asks: "Why do we just smash Aussie households when there are … clearly so many other factors?"

"We need to rethink how we tackle inflation." He could not be more correct.

"The government must take bold and fair action to address the true drivers of inflation without needless damage to living standards," ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie said.

"Higher interest rates create unemployment by design," Goldie said. The RBA have admitted that is an aim. They are forecasting that the official unemployment rate, now 4.7% could reach 5.1% by the end of 2028. That may prove to be an underestimation.

ACOSS said the government should resist calls to make further cuts to public spending, saying such cuts would only hurt those struggling the most. It wouldn't reduce inflation.

"Public spending is not the driver of the present bout of inflation – in fact public demand is now growing at less than half the rate of private demand and public spending in Australia is well below that of most other wealthy nations," Goldie said.

"Cutting spending doesn't fix the problem – it just shifts the pain onto people who can least afford it.

"Well targeted public spending – including investment in health and other essential services to reduce out-of-pocket costs – can actually reduce inflation," Goldie added.

The government is preparing further budget 'savings' – read cuts to essential services – to be announced in its mid-year financial statement next month.

The NDIS and aged care are already reeling from billions of dollars in cuts. They need to be fully funded to meet people's needs.

Social security payments must be raised above the poverty line to a level that enables recipients to live with dignity and meet their basic needs.

Universal bulk billing and inclusion of dental under Medicare would also be of great assistance in addressing the impacts of inflation.

Caps on rental increases could bring an end to rapidly rising and unaffordable rents.

The housing crisis could be addressed with a massive program of public housing construction. And that includes not trying to compete with One Nation in cutting immigration.

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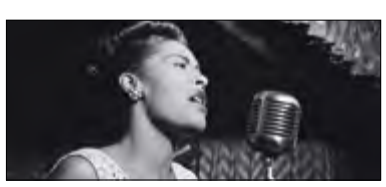


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On unity

For the broad sweep of the working people there is not one single unity but at least four distinct levels of unity. They are all interlinked and interdependent but they are not the same. Firstly, there is the unity of the Communist Party. For the CPA this means acceptance by the membership of the policies determined by the Party organisations from time to time and acceptance and application of our Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The maintenance and strengthening of party unity is an every-day task. It has to be worked for and fought for. It can never be taken for granted and it does not come about automatically. The best sort of unity and the only kind with lasting substance is conscious and disciplined unity, brought about by an understanding of policies and why they are adopted. An understanding of ideology, and how to apply it, is also an essential ingredient of party unity.

Secondly, we advocate left unity. In Australia there are several left parties and although there are left-minded individuals to be found outside any of the parties, the main force of the left is to be found in the membership of these left parties.

Thirdly, working class unity. Despite considerable changes in its composition, the working class is the most numerous class and remains potentially the strongest force in the struggle against capital. It is the main force for social change and eventually for socialism. The capitalist ruling class knows this very well so it ceaselessly works to keep the workers divided. Progress depends on overcoming these divisions and uniting the workers in a united front.

The united front means the unity in action of the workers in support of their economic and political interests at each stage of the struggle against capital. Without the united activity of millions of working people for their many demands and directed against state-monopoly capitalism, there can be no real prospect of altering the direction of Australia's political life or winning working class power and building a new socialist society.

There are many issues which provide a firm foundation for working class unity in action. They include democratic rights, the right to organise, living conditions, jobs, the environment, peace and national independence, problems created by new technology, the maintenance and extension of the public sector, etc.

The united front can be facilitated by agreements between working class organisations and parties to achieve certain policies. Such agreements, by themselves, do not constitute a united front but they can help lead to united action by workers. The CPA puts forward the united front as a political concept, the essence of which is unity of those forces favouring a revolutionary change to socialism, with those who, as yet, limit their political concepts to the struggle for reforms.

Fourth is people's or democratic unity. The working class is not the only social force which is exploited by big capital and threatened by a loss of democratic rights. Small farmers and small businesses are being squeezed out. Intellectuals, technologists, scientists, cultural workers, teachers, etc, are also used in various ways by big capital to further its profit interests and maintain its domination of society.

The peace, environmental, and democratic rights movements, for example, bring together people from different social circles. These mass movements and the organisations which express the aims of these movements play a very important part in political life. They provide a realistic form by which to build a broad and active people's unity in support of democratic and progressive issues and demands.

Party unity, left unity, working class unity and democratic or people's unity, while having different characteristics and involving different social forces are all interdependent. The more they are integrated, the stronger the progressive forces become.

Building unity at these various levels is a long-term task for the CPA. We must achieve it if the working class and other progressive social forces are to make any significant gains. In the whole complex of unity processes the role of the party is essential.

Capitalist crisis hits workers

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The elephant in the room is the hundreds of billions of dollars that the government is throwing at US war plans and running up government debt in the process. AUKUS must be cancelled. The US alliance must be cancelled. They create social insecurity and turn Australia into a target in any US war against China.

The government's refusal to act in the interests of the people is not a result of lack of funding. It is political and ideological.

Five interest rate hikes in less than a year amount to a massive cut to living standards amidst a cost-of-living crisis. Interest rates have risen from 3.6% to 4.85% – a whopping increase of 34.7% in interest being paid on loans in less than a year.

People with mortgages have been hit hard with interest rates at their highest since the global financial crisis 18 years ago. This has seen mortgage repayments increase by anything up to $1,000 or more a month depending on the size of the mortgage and how recently it was taken out.

The fall so far in housing prices is not of great benefit to potential home buyers because of the higher interest rates and shortage of housing on the market.

Landlords have increased rents in a tight market to compensate for higher mortgage rates and exploit the housing shortage.

Price inflation hit 4.3% in September, well above the RBA's arbitrary target ranges of 2% to 3% and looks set to increase further.

RBA Governor Michele Bullock continues to emphasise inadequate productivity increases and surplus demand as the main causes of inflation. This serves to justify the interest rate hikes but fails to address the main causes of rising inflation.

Inflation is not caused by unemployment being too low, as the RBA would have us believe.

RECESSION

Michele Bullock says the RBA does not want to drive the economy into recession "if we can avoid it." They could avoid it by cutting interest rates.

But she then continues: "It is going to make people feel like it's a recession because they feel poorer." "Feel"?

They don't just feel poorer, they are poorer, they are in recession. That is the aim of the interest rate rises.

Higher interest rates are aimed at reducing purchasing power of consumers so that they can afford fewer goods and services. This has a serious impact on consumers and businesses, especially but not only, small businesses.

A number of large corporations are feeling the pressure as demand for discretionary spending, in particular, declines.

These include David Jones, Myer, Barbeques Galore, Betts footwear, Aussie Disposals, and Taco Bell, JB Hi-Fi, Kmart, Bunnings, Rebel Sport, and BCF.

Some have closed stores, others have experienced a decline in sales, and in the case of David Jones is on the brink of a takeover or being put in the hands of receivers.

We are already seeing a rise in bankruptcies and liquidations with mass sackings. These sackings are not only due to interest rate rises but inflation caused by existential factors.

The Finance Sector Union estimates more than 10,000 banking jobs have disappeared in the last two years with more job losses to come. The principal reason for these cuts is the drive to increase profits, already at record levels. Cost-cutting measures include new technology, AI, offshoring for cheaper labour, branch closures, and the shift to online banking.

The banks stand to make a killing with higher interest rates.

Anecdotally there appears to have been an increase in shop front vacancies, with the disappearance of small businesses that were hit with higher costs.

Unemployment is on the rise.

There is a time lag between interest rate hikes and their impact on spending. The flow-on from the most recent interest rate increases is still to be felt. ✪

Quote of the Week

"Only when it had overrun Western and Southern Europe, did Nazi Germany attack the USSR. In the autumn of 1941 the Germans approached Leningrad and Moscow. … Fascism was at its zenith, but this marked the beginning of its downfall. Two worlds collided: the world of arrogance and the world of human dignity, the world of violence and the world of creativity, the world of fascism and the world of socialism."

Soviet author and anti-fascist Ilya Ehrenburg

EQUINOX – Art, Diversity, and Resistance

The Greek Democritus Workers League proudly presents its 5th art exhibition, EQUINOX, celebrating artists and promoting the values of equality, diversity, solidarity and cultural freedom in Melbourne/Naarm.

Art can do more than entertain. It can challenge power, question injustice, preserve memory, and give voice to those too often excluded. Young artists have the right to tell their own stories and to imagine a different future.

This year's theme is 'Multicultural Australia'. The exhibition welcomes artworks that reflect the many cultures, identities, languages, histories, struggles and experiences that make up contemporary Australia. Artists are encouraged to draw from their own lives, families, communities and cultural backgrounds, while also engaging with the broader questions of belonging, identity, equality, racism, migration, solidarity and social justice.

The exhibition will be held at Democritus Cultural Centre
583 High Street, Northcote, Naarm/Melbourne

21-28 November 2026

Contact democritus@bigpond.com for conditions and to apply.

The shadow of Robodebt

Last month the secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) announced that the powers to cancel social security payments related to compulsory activities had returned on 26 October. These penalties were paused because the department failed to administer the law correctly. Prior to the pause, more than 80,000 payments were cancelled under these rules in just one year.

As members of DEWR's Targeted Compliance Framework Reference Group (see list below) advocacy organisations, including the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), say they "are deeply concerned" that the Secretary intends to push ahead with bringing back these powers despite questions that remain unanswered, and without ensuring basic human rights will be protected.

"We are also concerned about a lack of capacity in DEWR and Services Australia to handle any increase in call volumes as wait times remain unacceptably long, particularly on the National Customer Service Line where people routinely wait more than 3 hours to get help with unfair penalties."

The groups warn the department has not adequately demonstrated how its processes will address unfair and unlawful decision-making investigated by the Commonwealth Ombudsman. "Our concerns remain largely unanswered and we are yet to receive a satisfactory response to issues raised by members of the reference group about the lawfulness of the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF), including the use of payment suspension penalties."

Despite payment cancellations being paused, automated systems and outsourced employment services have retained the ability to apply payment suspensions for the entire period that the TCF has been under scrutiny.

"We strongly oppose all compulsory activities for people on Centrelink payments, and the government's plans to restart some payment cancellations and suspensions under the problematic framework."

The Antipoverty Centre, ACOSS, Economic Justice Australia, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) and Inclusion Australia call on the government to:

- Remove the Targeted Compliance Framework immediately, including payment suspensions and financial penalties.
- Provide full back-pay and compensation to every person affected by unlawful decisions.

Losing income support has catastrophic consequences for people in poverty, causing significant distress, putting strain on relationships and derailing people as they try to manage complex challenges or make progress towards their goals. It means going without food, missing rent and potential homelessness. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately affected by the welfare penalties framework.

The framework also applies to people with disability compelled to take part in Workforce Australia and Inclusive Employment Australia, including thousands of people with an intellectual disability. Putting these penalties back in place means there will be more harm to people affected by racial and disability discrimination. Penalties like these have no place in a system that is supposed to help people into paid work.

The lessons of the Targeted Compliance Framework are clear: punitive financial penalties cause harm, deepen poverty and undermine trust. Building a better employment services system requires leaving behind failed and coercive policies such as compulsory activities and investing instead in proper support and genuine pathways to employment.

Signatories

Members of the Targeted Compliance Framework Reference Group:

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
- Antipoverty Centre
- Australian Council of Social Service
- Economic Justice Australia
- Inclusion Australia

Antipoverty Centre co-coordinator Jay Coonan said:

"We are extremely alarmed by this announcement that will see the screws turned even tighter on welfare recipients who are already under so much strain. Compulsory activities and payment suspension penalties cost money that people can't afford, create unnecessary stress and waste time.

"We are concerned by the lack of transparency surrounding this process. There are serious questions Minister Rishworth is refusing to answer about what evidence the government has that the TCF is operating lawfully. The government has the power to stop the harm these penalties cause and it should do so immediately. The bottom line is, it will never be possible to fully protect the safety and wellbeing of people in poverty while compulsory activities remain."

ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie AO said:

"Payment cancellations are completely disproportionate and leave people unable to pay rent or buy food, with no benefit to their search for paid work.

"The government has said it wants to reform employment services so people are genuinely helped into paid work. Restarting harsh, unreasonable penalties sends the opposite message to the people whom these services are meant to support.

"ACOSS is deeply concerned that the digital protections framework isn't in place. Strong digital safeguards are essential given how heavily the system relies on automation and the catastrophic administrative failures of recent years, including Robodebt. We strongly opposed the Targeted Compliance Framework when it was first introduced by Minister Cash under the Coalition government. It should be abolished once and for all."

Economic Justice Australia CEO Kate Allingham said:

"Last year, our own analysis revealed that roughly 310,000 people had their payments cancelled illegally. Time and time again, our member centres heard from people who were not able to pay rent, or who could not afford to eat, when their payments were suspended without notice.

"The government committed to a suite of reform measures to employment services, and as they undertake this reform process, we urge them to keep firmly in mind that the systems they are tinkering with have the very real capacity to put human lives at risk. Reform has to be thoughtful and thorough, and any decisions related to payments that allow people to survive need to have discretion applied by human beings who take adequate time to understand the person's circumstances. As far as we're concerned, there are still legal issues that have not been addressed, and yet the government has decided – for no reason that we can understand – to resume the functioning of this flawed and dangerous system."

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Executive Director Nick Espie said:

"Two Ombudsman Reports have found welfare cancellations under the Targeted Compliance Framework were unlawful, and the efforts to remediate the debts unfair. NATSILS notes that of all people who had their welfare payments unlawfully cancelled between April 2022 and July 2024, a staggering 46% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"This is systemic and structural racism at play. Governments have committed to improve the economic prosperity and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. These kinds of measures, and inaction on righting the wrongs, demonstrate how governments are failing on those commitments.

Inclusion Australia CEO Maeve Kennedy said:

"There are over 3,200 people with an intellectual disability who are subject to compulsory activities under the Targeted Compliance Framework. These figures are likely to underestimate the true number, as they reflect primary diagnosis only and do not account for people who have not disclosed their disability or do not have a formal diagnosis.

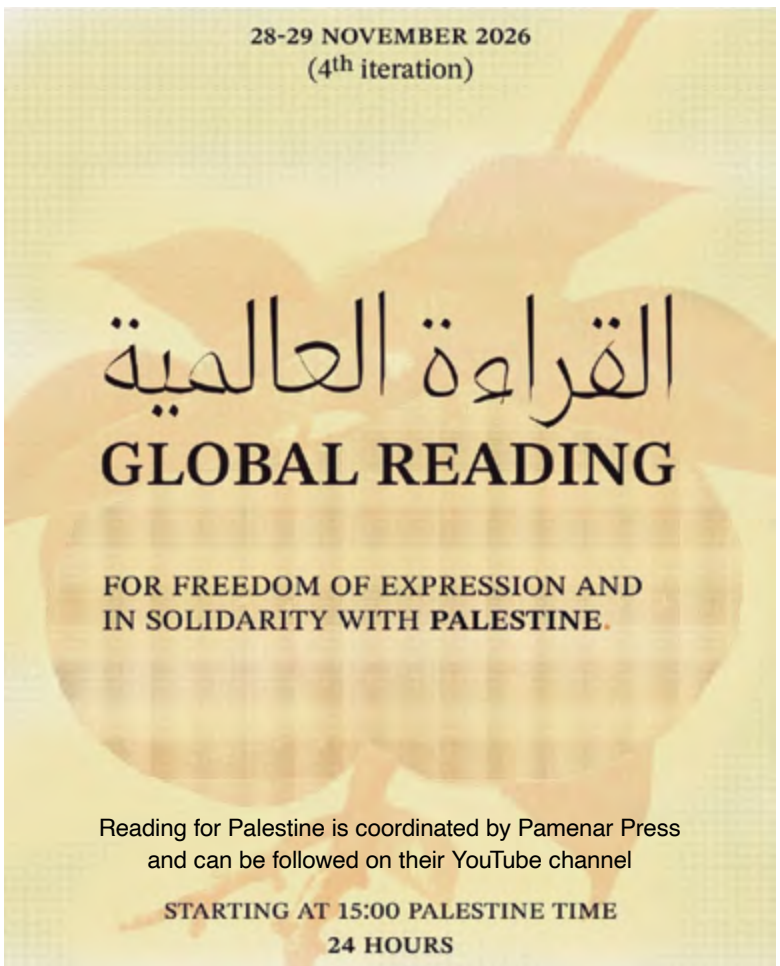
"People with an intellectual disability face significant barriers to navigating requirements, communicating with providers, using digital systems and completing administrative processes. The introduction of an insufficient Digital Protections Framework is not an adequate safeguard. In addition, if the support people rely on to manage compulsory activities is no longer available because of recent NDIS reforms leading to plan cuts, these requirements become significantly harder to meet.

"Financially penalising people for barriers created by an inaccessible system is fundamentally unfair, and our position continues to be that no one should be subject to compulsory employment activities as a condition of receiving income support."



Photo: pxhere.com

Losing income support has catastrophic consequences for people in poverty



Chaos of over-production

As mountains of cast-off clothing are buried in landfill here in Australia, police in Bangladesh are firing tear gas and using stun grenades to disperse garment workers protesting for higher wages, a scenario being played out over the chaos from capitalist over-production.

Hundreds of factories remain shut after days of protests disrupted the country's garment industry, which earns about $40 billion a year from exports. Bangladesh has some 2,500 garment factories.

Workers are demanding a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 takas (AU$350) up from 12,500 takas. They say rising living costs and inflation have eroded their purchasing power.

The industry employs about four million workers, mostly women from rural Bangladesh.

As well as days of demonstrations in the capital, Dhaka, violence was reported in several industrial areas on its outskirts.

In Fatullah, in Narayanganj district outside Dhaka, dozens of people were injured in clashes between protesters and police. Police fired tear gas and used stun grenades.

About 100 factories remain shut in Ashulia, in Savar near Dhaka. Workers also blocked a major highway in Gazipur district, another major industrial hub.

More than 10,000 police officers had been deployed in Dhaka's Mirpur area, an epicentre of recent protests, to maintain order. The government has responded to the wage demands by forming a new wage board.

The board's chairman, Syed Azad Subhani, said workers would receive their first salaries under the new pay scale in January.

Defend multiculturalism



Photo: Australia's Multicultural Policy – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

Marcus Browning

The attacks by the Liberal/National coalition in concert with the fascist One Nation party on multiculturalism cannot be properly understood in isolation. They are taking place in the context of the world-wide opposition to neo-colonialism and are related to:

- The revival of the objective of assimilation of Aboriginal Australians and all migrants.
- The drive to promote bellicose, flag-waving nationalism.
- Support for US-led wars, the increased interference by Australia in the affairs of neighbouring countries in the Asia Pacific region and the promotion of militarism.
- The appalling treatment of refugees displaced, to a great extent, by the actions of capitalist globalisation, with its consequent wars and economic and environmental devastation.
- The attacks on democratic rights under the guise of combating "terrorism."
- The denigration of Muslim Australians and the encouragement of intolerance in general.

The attacks on multiculturalism are, in essence, part of an overarching policy of cementing Australia more firmly into the US empire and giving further privileges to the transnational corporations favoured by US imperialism.

Multiculturalism is a process by which a new (in our case Australian) culture is derived from the interaction and merging of the various cultures present in the community. It is more than the simple sum of those cultures considered separately.

All these cultures have been developed in a long historical process in their original homelands. Because the cultures developed in class-exploitative societies, they all have their progressive and reactionary aspects.

Multiculturalism as government policy in Australia dates from the time of the Whitlam Labor government. It replaced previous policies that sought to assimilate "new Australians" and impose an "Anglo Saxon" cultural stereotype on them. Multiculturalism encouraged ethnic communities to preserve their languages and to become involved in the teaching of them as community languages. It assisted ethnic communities to preserve their artistic and food culture and to share this heritage with all Australians of other backgrounds. A widespread misunderstanding of multiculturalism sees it as simply the spicing up of daily life with exotic food, music and festivals courtesy of this or that migrant group.

The CPA supports giving recognition, encouragement and assistance to ethnic communities to preserve the cultural heritage of their homelands. This in no way contradicts the support for the process of the continued development of Australian culture but, rather, enriches and complements it. From the outset, the CPA has supported the teaching of community languages in schools and institutions of higher education and welcomes the fact that, while English is the official and main language spoken, Australia is a multilingual as well as a multicultural society.

"Citizenship," in the outlook of the government, is not about the possession or granting of full political rights, but primarily the requirement for migrants to subscribe to Australian cultural, social and political capitalist values.

The capitalist ruling class knows that resistance to the policies that boost their interests can be weakened by dividing and distracting the working class. Religious and other cultural differences are small compared to the common interests workers have as exploited people. However, as has been seen throughout history, tensions arising from a shortage of jobs and services and declining living standards can be channelled into ethnic tensions.

Solidarity with "guest" workers and struggle for equal treatment for foreign workers are the only proper responses for the labour movement.

The government is not seeking solutions to the problems suffered by remote Aboriginal communities – quite the contrary. Intolerance of these problems by the rest of Australian society is being fanned with the ultimate aim of allowing the conversion of Aboriginal lands into private property. The land would then be more easily accessed for resource development and other purposes.

The intolerance promoted by the government and large sections of the media can cause communities to withdraw into themselves and to divide people along ethnic lines. In these circumstances, the less open and less progressive aspects of the communities' cultures are reinforced. It slows the process of multiculturalism.

These developments must be answered with working class unity and solidarity, the promotion of peace and a proper understanding of patriotism and multiculturalism. Citizenship, understood as the acquiring of full rights as a citizen, should be promoted.

Internationally, the fostering of fears about "Islamic terrorism" has been used to justify new wars to gain resources, markets, and strategic assets for US imperialism. Howard has even more firmly linked Australia's fate to that of US imperialism, effectively cutting Australia off from the development of a new and more progressive system of international relations.

The CPA calls on the federal government to remove all legislation which makes it more difficult for migrants to settle in their new country.

Attempts to force people into one cultural or linguistic mould will not produce a harmonious society. Howard's attacks on multiculturalism have already increased racial tensions and led directly to a number of racially-based incidents.

It is vital to beat back the attacks on multiculturalism which drag Australia back to the already failed policies of assimilation. Preceding governments attempted to impose these policies on the Indigenous people – the original inhabitants and owners of the Australian continent – but they failed.

Promotion of multiculturalism and acceptance that Australian society is also multilingual will, on the other hand, enrich the totality of Australia's culture life. It will unite society and not divide it. It will create a tolerant and vibrant society.

Dingo bytes

The USA is the world's biggest debtor nation. The economy at the heart of the capitalist system owes so much money that if the countries that leant the money asked for it back, the effect would be economic disaster.

Shortly after WW2, the US was the leading economic power globally, and could impose its will on much of the rest of the world. Only the socialist countries were able to withstand its economic pressure, but doing so meant enduring a US-imposed economic blockade that warped their development and frustratingly denied their people many of the consumer-oriented products of modern technology.

The US and European leaders of imperialism successfully used the shortages and other supposed "inadequacies" of socialism to besmirch the very concept of a non-capitalist system.

The leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) watched these developments with interest, especially after the treacherous strategies of the opportunist Gorbachev finally led the USSR to destruction.

Steps were taken to minimise the anticipated ill-effects of working with and for capitalists: their factories were restricted to certain designated zones; workers had to be paid at higher rates than in other parts of China; factories were on leases that in 20 to 40 years reverted to China. The foreign companies using the Chinese labour also had to train the workforce in all aspects of the business, from factory floor to international sales, so that when the factories reverted to China, they could be successfully managed by the local workforce.

As China's workforce learnt how to run the various industries and took more and more control of them, the country's economy grew apace. Socialist China became more and more entrenched in the global economic system, and there was nothing the capitalists could do about it.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is transnational bloodsucker Palantir. British Health Secretary Yvette Cooper was accused of a shameful dereliction of duty following reports that the government will extend the National Health Service's (NHS) contract with Palantir, a tech company linked to the Gaza genocide. Unions, medics and two Commons committees have urged ministers to axe the US firm's contract to deliver the Federated Data Platform (FDP) AI system that connects medical notes across the health service.

The company's billionaire founder Peter Thiel – who has questioned the "compatibility of freedom and democracy" – has contracts to supply AI to the Israeli military and the US federal government as part of President Donald Trump's crackdown on immigrants.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign's Lewis Backon slammed the "shameful" plans to hand "this disgraced company millions more pounds of public money." Palantir is "deeply complicit in Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people," he said.

Ministers face mounting fury over plans to extend the parasitic Palantir's NHS contract, with unions, doctors, and MPs warning of threats to patient privacy and public trust.

Keep Our NHS Public co-chair Dr John Puntis warned: "Dependency on Palantir has been identified as a national weakness by select committees that called for re-tendering. Continuing this dependency serves nobody's interest except Palantir's.

Unison head of health Helga Pile warned that Palantir's involvement in the NHS's overhauling of patient data handling could "undermine the whole system." "Improvements to the healthcare of millions are at stake."

"Adopting the FDP – which trusts did not want to do – was disruptive, with attendant patient safety risks as well," she added. "I urge the government to listen to experts and the public and act in the interests of patients and taxpayers by exercising the break clause at the earliest opportunity and getting this vile company out of our NHS."

The *Strange Fruit* of Abel Meeropol

Jo Dunleavy

The song *Strange Fruit*, the number popularised by Billie Holiday, *Time* magazine called simply, "The best song of the century." That it was written by a communist was neither accidental nor incidental. *Strange Fruit* is a harrowing song about a lynching (the bodies hanging from the tree are the "strange fruit").

In the 20s, 30s and 40s, lynchings of Blacks, union organisers and "Bolsheviks" were commonplace occurrences in the US, especially in the South. They were part of the right-wing's tactics of terror.

The communists, themselves victims of this terrorism, were among its fiercest and most assiduous foes. They campaigned to arouse awareness of the evils of lynching through the civil rights movement, the labour movement, and every available political forum.

One of those communists was a Jewish New York City high school teacher of Russian immigrant origin named Abel Meeropol. In his spare time, Meeropol was a poet and composer who wrote under the name Lewis Allan.

In a 1930 civil rights magazine, Meeropol came across a photograph of a lynching. The photo haunted him, and he was moved to write a poem about the scene.

As befits a communist poet, Meeropol's poem was a powerful indictment of inhumanity. He said later: "I wrote *Strange Fruit* because I hate lynching and I hate injustice and I hate the people who perpetuate it."

Originally titled *Bitter Fruit*, it was published in the communist cultural journal *New Masses* in 1936. The poem was set to music by Meeropol and sung by his wife Anne at Communist Party functions and other progressive gatherings.

It became popular within the Left, taken up by such notable Left singers at the time as Josh White and Laura Duncan. In 1939 Meeropol introduced the song to black singer Billie Holiday.

Holiday was then a regular performer at Café Society, one of the very few integrated nightclubs in New York, serving Black, as well as White, customers. Its management's approach and line-up of artists (and their material) had a decidedly anti-rich and progressive, anti-corporate, anti-plutocrat outlook.

This outlook reflected the growing Left upsurge of the time, the result of the communist-led movement against war and fascism, the communist-led development of industrial unionism and communist influence on the arts and culture generally.

The US jazz writer, Leonard Feather, called *Strange Fruit* "the first significant protest in words and music, the first unmuted cry against racism."

Strange Fruit became a staple in Billie Holiday's career. She was a courageous as well as talented artist, who popularised the song, singing it regularly and frequently, despite ferocious attacks on her in the capitalist press (as well as by many record executives and promoters) for giving prominence to such a political song.

In the 30s and 40s, the Communist Party was an influential part of US political life. Billie Holiday and artists like her performed at rallies for Ben Davis, the communist councilman from Harlem.

Holiday's life exemplified the racist atmosphere that made lynching conceivable. Although her vocal style is considered to be one of the most vivid musical manifestations of personality ever achieved, she had to struggle to gain recognition.

With no technical training, she created beautiful and sophisticated musical effects, her diction being unique and her phrasing inimitable. Most memorable of all was an acute dramatic intensity that rendered the most banal lyric profound.

Journalist and author Vernon Jarrett wrote: "She impressed me as someone who had also been wronged, as if she'd been lynched herself in some fashion or another. There was a sense of resignation, as if 'these people are going to have power for a long time and I can't do a damn thing about it except put it in a song' ...



Billie Holiday, Downbeat jazz club, New York, 1947. Photo: William P Gottlieb (public domain)

"To me, that was part of the whole lynch syndrome, the lynching of the body and the spirit put together. That's the way her face looked when she sang that."

Drummer Max Roach said that "when she recorded it [*Strange Fruit*], it was more than revolutionary; she made a statement that we all felt as Black folks".

Abel Meeropol's other best-known composition is *The House I Live In*, about the multi-cultural mix of the USA, sung with irony and power by Paul Robeson and with patriotic fervour by Frank Sinatra. Abel and Anne Meeropol are also known for having adopted the orphaned children of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 who were executed by the US state after being convicted on trumped-up charges of spying for the Soviet Union.

Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the gallant South
The bulgin' eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolias sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burnin' flesh

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather
For the wind to suck
For the sun to rot
For the tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop

Slavery and reparations

A British state apology for the transatlantic slave trade, and the reparations called for by some Caribbean governments, are current controversies.

The British (and Australian) King's Caribbean tour saw him address the royal family's complicity. British PM Andy Burnham says he is open to a formal apology but not reparations. Opposition leader Kemi Badenoch says even an apology should be avoided.

The political right's narrative is superficially plausible: nobody alive today was involved in the trade in enslaved Africans, so why hold them accountable? It is part of a grievance culture that holds white people, many of whom are working class and poor, responsible for crimes committed by others.

To that we can add an objection sometimes raised on the left: who pays if reparations are granted? Telling working-class people that they should accept new liabilities on the public purse to atone for historic crimes is unlikely to be popular.

Answering these two questions – why is recompense for slavery relevant today, and who should pay for it – is key to winning class unity on these demands.

Jamaica's reparations petition to the British monarch comes the same year that the United Nations endorsed a resolution from Ghana deeming the transatlantic slave trade "the gravest crime against humanity." The resolution is linked to the African Union's declared "decade of action on reparations" beginning last year.

It is part of a vision of decolonisation that – rightly – sees this as an unfinished process.

The formal independence of countries colonised by European powers from the 15th century on did not in most cases lead to real political and economic liberation: the global majority remained trapped in an international system of ownership and trade controlled by Western capital.

The dividing line globally is now between those who welcome what Chinese President Xi Jinping dubs "changes unseen in a century" (the rise of the Global South, potentially ending the long domination of the world by Europe and its white settler-colonies), and those – led by the United States, whose Secretary of State Marco Rubio openly lamented the end of the colonial empires in Munich last February – determined to stop it.

That division was clear at the UN: 123 countries, the majority, voted with Ghana. Three extreme-right governments voted against – the United States, Israel, and Argentina – while Britain, Australia, Canada, and the EU members abstained.

A snapshot of today's world. The majority demand justice, the aggressive new right declare war against it, the liberals are frozen in the headlights of history.

As Karl Marx observed, the slave trade was instrumental in the birth of capitalism. The patterns of ownership and exploitation established by force then are very much alive. Demands for justice are demands for a new world order and the end of Western hegemony.

The high cost being paid by Global South countries for a crisis, climate change, largely created by the Global North explains the urgency behind calls for reparation.

International solidarity requires support for the cause as well as for the wider international transformation under way. UN abstentions aside, Britain is not really sitting on the fence between Rubio's new colonialism and a multipolar future: through NATO, rearmament and hostility to reform of international institutions, we are on the wrong side.

Different models for reparations have been proposed, from reallocated foreign aid determined in conjunction with victim countries, to targeted financing penalising institutions and corporations that profited from slavery.

Placing these demands in the wider context of the fight against capitalism – the battle to expropriate the owners of capital and to share the wealth our collective labour creates – is no more than 20th century national liberation movements, whose history is inseparable from that of international communism, did. And it is key to ensuring the fight for racial justice unites rather than divides workers.

Accepting the principle is the first step. Justice is owed: it cannot be denied.

Morning Star

Shove it in the shredder

Members of the Community and Public Sector Union's (CPSU) federal arm have officially told the Australian Public Service Commission they can take their pay proposal of 9% over three years and put it into the secure document shredder, setting the scene for a pre-Christmas industrial showdown.

In a statement the CPSU said it had "formally advised government negotiators that the pay offer proposed in this round of APS-wide bargaining has been overwhelmingly rejected by CPSU members."

"More than 20,000 members participated in a snap poll conducted by the union, with nearly 90% of participants rejecting the offer. This sends a clear message to the government's negotiators – the Australian Public Sector Commission – that the pay offer on the table is not good enough," the CPSU said.

"CPSU members' strong rejection of the Commonwealth's pay offer follows the release of the 2025-26 APS Employee Census data that shows the level of satisfaction among the APS workforce on pay has fallen in the previous 12 months – with APS employees' views on whether they are fairly remunerated decreasing 5%, down from 66% to 61% in the 12-month period."

The CPSU said that the union had identified wage increases and remuneration "as priority matters" for its members and that in April 2026 "over 18,000 CPSU members endorsed a claim for wage increases of 5% or CPI (whichever is higher) to support public sector workers keep up with cost-of-living pressures and attract and retain critical and diverse talent to the APS."

The 5% per annum wage claim figure, which works out at 15% over three years, is below that of some agency-specific unions, namely the Australian Services Union Taxation Officers' Branch, which is pursuing 8% a year or 24% over three years on the basis that better wages are required to attract and retain revenue collection and enforcement talent.

"CPSU members have delivered a clear message to the Commonwealth – we reject your pay offer," CPSU national secretary Rebecca Fawcett said.

"Trained and trusted public sector employees go above and beyond to deliver vital government services that keep Australian communities supported, safe and secure – it's only fair they get a pay offer that keeps up with the cost of living."

Fawcett said that the Albanese government "must tell the APSC to make a better offer – CPSU members and the Australian community are counting on it."

"CPSU members are on the frontline at Services Australia, defending our borders in Home Affairs and supporting the community through the NDIS. The government should support them, not propose a pay deal that will send them backwards"

The pressure on the Albanese government and Minister for Finance and the Public Service Katy Gallagher to sharpen the wage pencil increased markedly last week after headline inflation jumped to 4.3%, up from the previous number of 4%.

As it stands, the Commonwealth's wage offer to the APS now sits 1.3% behind inflation, with another official interest rate hike meted out on Melbourne Cup Tuesday to rein in the surging Consumer Price Index.

At the same time, the Opposition is seeking to construct a narrative that public sector wage costs are propelling government spending, fuelling inflation, with Gallagher on Sunday saying that no area of government expenditure was exempt from potential savings.

Against cuts to services

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) has called for fairer ways to fight inflation and protect people at risk of unemployment. "The government must take bold and fair action to address the true drivers of inflation without needless damage to living standards," ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie said.

"The last thing we need right now is another interest rate rise when the main causes of inflation are on the supply side. Higher interest rates create unemployment by design. We cannot be certain what the impact of another rate hike now will be on unemployment in a year's time. An increase towards or above 5% would be disastrous, locking people out of jobs for years and forcing them to rely on grossly inadequate income support payments.

"The government must take action to place downward pressure on energy and housing prices as well as the costs of out-of-pocket fees for medical care in order to reduce inflation."

ACOSS said the government should resist calls to make further cuts to public spending, saying such cuts would only hurt those struggling the most and wouldn't help reduce inflation. "Public spending is not the driver of the present bout of inflation – in fact public demand is now growing at less than half the rate of private demand and public spending in Australia is well below that of most other wealthy nations," Dr Goldie said.

"Cutting spending doesn't fix the problem – it just shifts the pain onto people who can least afford it. Well targeted public spending – including investment in health and other essential services to reduce out-of-pocket costs – can actually reduce inflation."

ACOSS is calling on the government to:

- Slow rent increases and reduce out-of-pocket medical costs such as specialist fees.
- Reduce energy costs by taking solar subsidies off energy bills, establish a domestic gas reserve and implement a 25% tax on gas exports.
- Delay or cancel next year's tax cuts and target cost of living support to people on the lowest incomes though the income support system.

BACKGROUND:

- Headline inflation (Consumer Price Index) is 4.3% through the year to September 2026. Core inflation as measured via the 'trimmed mean' currently sits at 3.6%. This is much lower than 2022, when core inflation was as high as 6.8%.
- Headline inflation is rising around the world due to the impact of the Iran war, fuel prices and flow on effects (especially transport, food, building); climate change, energy prices, and related risks to food supply; and housing supply shortages.
- Public spending is not causing inflation – private demand and investment (including data centres) grew at twice the rate of public demand through the year to June 2026.
- Spending by governments in Australia is the 11th lowest (as a share of the economy) among 33 wealthy OECD nations.
- Inflation is not too high because unemployment is too low. Real wages are below their pre-pandemic level and wage growth is not driving higher inflation.
- The unemployment rate now stands at 4.7% and over 600,000 people have now relied on JobSeeker payments for over a year.



www.cpa.org.au

Workers force NAB back-off

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) and its members at NAB have forced the bank's CEO Andrew Irvine into an embarrassing backdown over his botched restructure that would have seen 1,500 workers lose their jobs before Christmas.

The backdown comes as NAB announces another excessive annual profit of $6.14 billion – demonstrating NAB's ruthless pursuit of profits over the wellbeing of its own people.

Late last month, the bank announced it would lay-off 1,500 workers before the festive season, avoiding a scheduled January 2027 pay rise.

However, following fierce worker backlash and a series of intensive meetings between the bank including some with the union, NAB has agreed to defer forced redundancies to 27 January 2027 and extended worker consultation to 11 November.

The bank has also agreed to improved retraining and redeployment opportunities, improved redundancy payments with January salary increases included in final calculations, and greater transparency and accountability, including detailed assessments of proposed changes and ongoing engagement on work, health and safety concerns.

The bank's sudden announcement that it would slash its headcount by 6% sent shockwaves through the already stressed NAB workforce.

Thousands of NAB staff around the country shared their horror stories of cancelled Christmas plans and the dread of contemplating unemployment amid a cost-of-living crisis.

Some workers broke down during meetings with FSU representatives, while others expressed white-hot anger at their treatment. NAB exacerbated their anxiety by keeping workers in the dark about how the redundancy process would proceed.

Despite the bank's concessions, the FSU continues to hold grave concerns for the health and safety of all NAB workers – including those left behind to pick up the pieces and face even heavier workloads.

NAB's financial success has been built on the hard work, dedication and expertise of its employees.

Finance Sector Union National President Wendy Streets stated:

"Today NAB is celebrating billions in profits, but just weeks ago Andrew Irvine was preparing to throw 1,500 workers out of their jobs right before Christmas," Streets said.

"NAB's success doesn't happen without its people. These are the workers who have built the bank's reputation, supported its customers and kept the business running. Yet Andrew Irvine has treated them as nothing more than a cost to be cut.

"Thousands of NAB workers stood together, demanded better and forced Andrew Irvine to back down. These concessions were not handed to workers – they were fought for and won.

"But delaying redundancies is not the same as saving jobs. NAB still intends to cut 2,500 positions, and we remain deeply concerned about the impact on workers, their families and those left behind to manage growing workloads.

"A bank making billions in profit can afford to invest in its people rather than discard them. We will continue fighting for every job and holding Andrew Irvine accountable."

Arctic warning: Trust the science



Laura Quinone

Somewhere in the darkness of the Arctic Ocean, 12 people and a dog named Örkki are drifting right now across the frozen sea, with little say over where they are going.

Their home for the winter is Tara Polar Station, a 26-metre-long French research vessel that departed Norway in August with an unusual purpose: to become trapped in ice.

Locked into a floating sheet of sea ice above more than 2,500 metres of water, the station moves wherever the winds and currents carry it. There is no destination to steer towards, and in the middle of the polar night, no sunlight to mark the passing days.

The team is taking part in *Tara Polaris I*, the first of 10 planned expeditions in a 20-year international program to study the transformation of the Arctic Ocean.

The research program brings together 80 scientists and some 220 research protocols to investigate everything from how marine life responds to warming to the ocean's role in storing carbon.

Ahead of the COP31 UN climate conference in Türkiye, UN Secretary António Guterres spoke by video link to the expedition's chief scientist, Maxime Geoffroy, asking what message he should take to world leaders about an Arctic which is warming three to four times faster than the global average.

"I think that, unfortunately, the political leadership in this world is not yet entirely aware of how serious the situation is," Guterres said. Geoffroy's message was simple: "What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic."

The changes unfolding beneath the expedition's feet could have far-reaching consequences for the world's oceans, climate and biodiversity, he warned.

The expedition spent three weeks navigating along Russia's northern coast before heading into the Arctic ice pack in search of a suitable floe (a large flat piece of floating ice) for its research station.

"We reached 82 degrees north just through leads," Geoffroy said, referring to channels of open water between the floes.

PLANET'S 'MIRROR' IS MELTING

Arctic sea ice plays a vital role in regulating the Earth's temperature and keeping the planet cool. "This large ice sheet on which we are drifting, when the sun comes back, acts as a mirror," Geoffroy explained. Like a giant reflector, the white ice sends much of the Sun's energy back into space. But as it melts, the darker ocean beneath absorbs that heat instead, warming the water and accelerating the loss of ice.

The consequences are far reaching. Ocean currents carry heat far beyond the North Pole, influencing marine ecosystems and climate patterns across the planet. As Arctic ice disappears, these circulation systems could be disrupted, with consequences scientists are still struggling to predict.

Firsthand observations are crucial to improving climate models and predicting what lies ahead.

But the team's questions go far beyond climate forecasts, reaching into one of humanity's oldest mysteries: the origins of life. Could life on Earth have begun in sea ice?

Geoffroy pointed to organisms that survive extreme cold thanks to anti-freeze proteins, and to the intriguing hypothesis that frozen environments may have played a role in life's earliest beginnings.

But while researchers race to understand the disappearing ice, others are already looking to profit from its retreat.

NEW SHIPPING ROUTES

On their way north, the scientists encountered another unmistakable sign of change: oil tankers navigating the Northeast Passage along Russia's Arctic coast. The retreating ice makes the route more accessible but increases the risks of pollution and accidents.

An oil spill in these waters could be disastrous. Petroleum can become trapped in the ice for long periods, threatening marine life and making clean-up exceptionally difficult.

Commercial interests are not the only ones turning their attention north. Guterres pointed to tensions surrounding Greenland and the growing strategic importance of the Arctic, warning that countries increasingly viewing the region through a security lens could threaten the very environment scientists are trying to understand.

"I think that is a central battle we have now. The battle for truth and the battle for science," Guterres said. Guterres accused powerful economic interests, particularly those linked to fossil fuels, of seeking to obscure scientific evidence and undermine its role in public debate.

"We went from the climate denial to the climate [...] delay and 'green hushing,'" Geoffroy observed, lamenting how climate action has slipped down political agendas despite decades of scientific warnings.

HUMAN CHOICE

"The findings of this science [...] need to be trusted, they need to be followed and they need to be supported." Guterres recalled visits to Antarctica and the Himalayas, where he had witnessed glaciers retreating.

Those experiences, combined with the continued refusal of some political leaders to act, had left him with more than concern.

"All these things I think have created in me a sense of urgency and, to be honest, also a sense of fury," he admitted. "It's an existential battle."

In Antalya, Türkiye at COP31 world leaders gather to negotiate how to confront the climate crisis.

And while the scientists have no control over where the ice carries them, the future they are documenting remains a matter of human choice.

UN (Edited for space)

What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic

GREEN NOTES

Inquiry into AUKUS

Denis Doherty

Peace Notes makes no apology that it is mostly concerned with AUKUS, the Australian, US and UK agreement, which will see Australia paying for and operating nuclear-armed attack submarines supposedly for the defence of Australia. We can only use the word 'supposedly' in relation to AUKUS because the biggest recipient of Australian largess will be the US. It will receive a new base in Stirling WA, its arms corporations will receive billions of dollars to subsidise US operations, with us to paying for three second-hand submarines. The plan is rightly seen as an incredible risk and will probably not result in the appearance of a new class of submarine adequately configured for Australian needs. Rather the plan is to participate in aggressive actions against China for the good of the USA.

A public inquiry into AUKUS, was headed by Peter Garrett former politician and best-known front man for 'Midnight Oil.' The commissioners leading the inquiry were Carmen Lawrence former premier of WA and Federal MP; Chris Barrie former Admiral and head of the Australian Defence Force; Leanne Minshull, co-CEO of The Australia Institute and Karina Lester Yankunytjatjara woman and ICAN Australian Ambassador. The inquiry was crowd-funded and union-funded as the government was not willing to discuss this important issue with the public.

Peter Garrett delivered its report, *Surrendering Australia – The AUKUS Deception*, via the National Press Club. It is well worth a look on the ABC's Iview or on YouTube.

AUKUS involves vast amounts of money and resources. At an initial estimate of $386 billion – the equivalent of spending $30 million a day for 30 years – it could blow out to $500 billion or as some commentators are saying, $1 trillion when bases and other infrastructure are included! Plus, the agreement puts us in lockstep with a foreign power – the US. The agreement was never fully debated in Parliament. It was signed five years ago by Prime Minister Scott. The ALP under Albanese accepted the deal without question, without public or parliamentary debate.

Peter Garrett reported that the enquiry heard from former military officials, academics, former PM Malcolm Turnbull, two former Foreign Ministers Bob Carr and Gareth Evans, three former Defence Ministers, unions, peace groups, and many concerned citizens with well over 1,000 submissions as well as oral contributions. Apart from former Defence Ministers Beazley, Pine, and Reynolds and a few others the vast majority were opposed to the AUKUS agreement. Currently serving ALP and Coalition MPs failed to give evidence. The overwhelming view of the contributors was that AUKUS was seriously flawed and unlikely to contribute to the security of Australia.

The enquiry's findings include:

- AUKUS is the worst and most costly military spending in Australia's history
- AUKUS submarines are not useful to Australia and may never arrive
- They and subsidise construction facilities in the UK and the US
- Seriously undermines Australia's sovereignty
- Gives the US control of our forces.

There is next to no chance of Australia ever receiving the AUKUS submarines; meanwhile Australia hosts visits of US nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered submarines with free accommodation for its sailors while ordinary Australian citizens languish without adequate housing.

The location for storing the depleted radioactive fuel rods from the submarines remains undecided. Neither the US nor UK have identified a sufficiently secure way of storing such dangerous material. The Albanese government is hiding this from the Australian public by making variations to the freedom of information laws.

The overwhelming finding of the enquiry is that AUKUS should be scrapped as soon as possible.

It was disappointing that at the National Press Club many journalists were absent and the quality of the questions put to Peter Garrett and Chris Barrie were of poor quality and its findings were not reported widely or thoroughly. Obviously mainstream media has decided AUKUS is a project to support and opposition to it should be limited, along with government and the Opposition they too support AUKUS.

The Communist Party of Australia is working with the US and UK communist parties on a global campaign against AUKUS.

NO to evictions!

Nathan Barnes

I suppose the scene in the TV news editor's office must have gone something like this: "We need to jazz up this financial crisis news – it's getting stale. Get me some human interest stuff: send out a crew to film an eviction."

And with the co-operation of the NSW Sheriff's Department, viewers were treated to the agonising spectacle of a distraught woman standing on the lawn in front of her home. Alternately sobbing and screaming, she and her family were evicted from it by officers of the Court. They had no responsibility for where the evicted family would sleep that night (assuming they could get any sleep after such an horrendous event).

Unlike the traditional picture of an eviction, in which the bailiffs put the unfortunate family's furniture on the street outside their house, in this one the court appeared to be seizing house and contents. A sheriff advised the evicted woman that they were changing the locks and told her that if she wanted to come in and take away a few personal belongings she had better do it now while she could still get in the house.

Credit cards are financed by banks, which are getting the money they use to pay for the goods practically for free or next to nothing, and charging the people using the cards around 20 per cent or more in interest. It's usury, to use an old-fashioned term, although perhaps a legal form of loan-sharking would be a clearer description.

It's also parasitic and non-productive, and most certainly immoral. But it's the capitalist way.

Having your home and your belongings seized and taken from you in this manner is like a massive mugging, one that you cannot even report to the police. The traumatising effects would be felt for years.

It's legal under capitalism to throw people out of their homes for failing to meet their mortgage payments, to seize their furniture and belongings for failure to meet the payments on their credit card debt. The only concern of capitalism, and of the governments that do its bidding, is to see that the capitalists who "own" the money that was loaned are paid their pound of flesh.

But the wealth that money represents was not created by those capitalists, whatever they may say. It was created by the expenditure of the labour power of workers. Just because capitalism allows employers to appropriate a large chunk of the wealth the workers create does not mean that employers are actually entitled to that wealth.

The workers created it and the workers own it by right. Ever since 1917, workers in different parts of the world have been asserting their rights to take that wealth back. Eventually, they will have taken it all back. The right to shelter is a basic human right; housing, despite what LJ Hooker would have you believe, is not a privilege for those who can afford it, but a right. To kick a family out of their home should be more than just a human interest story: it should be a crime.

In the Great Depression, the Communist youth organisation would battle the police to halt evictions, help families break back into their homes, try to carry furniture in the back door as fast as the bailiffs and police took it out the front door.

Capitalism's latest economic crisis is the worst for decades with the US and its unfolding wars, and is likely to last for some time. Throwing money at banks and other capitalist corporations is no substitute for direct expenditure on developing the country's publicly-owned infrastructure: constructing schools, hospitals, highways, concert halls and public transport systems.

Unfortunately, all they are concerned about protecting are their profits, not the people. The demand for a moratorium on evictions should be raised now, before the burden of salvaging excessive corporate debt impacts even further on the Australian people. This human tragedy adversely affects only the poor (never the rich) gets worse.



Evicted from their home, Redfern, 1934. Photo: State Library of NSW

COMRADE JESUS

Thanks to St Matthew who had been
At mass meetings in Palestine,
We know whose side was spoken for
When Comrade Jesus had the floor.

"Where sore they toil, and hard they lie,

Among the great unwashed dwell I
The tramp, the convict, I am he,
Cold-shoulder him, cold shoulder me."

By Dives door, with thoughtful eye,
He did tomorrow prophesy:-
"The kingdom's gate is low and small;
The rich can scarce wedge through at all."

"A dangerous man" said Caiaphas;
"An ignorant demagogue alas!
Friend of low women, it is he
Slanders the upright Pharisee."

For "law and order" it was plain
For holy church he must be slain.
The troops were there to awe the crowd
Mob violence was not allowed.

Then clumsy force with force to foil,
His strong clean hands he would not soil.
He saw their childishness quite plain
Between the lightning of his pain.

Between the twilights of his end,
He made his fellow-felon friend;
With swollen tongue and blinded eyes,
Invited him to Paradise.

Ah, let no local him refuse!
Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.
Whatever other be debarred
Comrade Jesus hath his red card.

Sarah Cleghorn

Pokies' trail of destruction

The NSW Greens have put a spotlight on the atrocious record of Labor governments in dealing with harm caused by poker machines. It was a Labor government that legalised poker machines in NSW clubs in 1956. It was a Labor government that later expanded them into pubs in 1997. And it's under a Labor government that losses to poker machines in NSW will hit $10 billion per year!

The Minns government has had three and a half years to act and hasn't.

The result is the gambling harm crisis we see today: on track for $10 billion lost every year, mini-casinos creating false local economies stripping local communities of their wealth and wellbeing, organised crime using poker machines to launder money, and thousands of families dealing with addiction and financial stress.

Now, with the March 2027 state election approaching, NSW Labor wants voters to believe it has suddenly discovered a backbone and will take on the pokies industry.

Don't believe it.

After three and a half years in government:

- Almost 1,000 more poker machines than when Labor took office
- Organised crime risks identified by the NSW Crime Commission remain unresolved
- Refusing to respond to the Independent Panel on Gaming Reform's recommendations including a mandatory cashless gaming card
- Refusing to respond to the review into the dodgy ClubGRANTS scheme for 18 months
- Delaying a state-wide self-exclusion register. If Labor was serious about reform, they would have acted already.

It's time for Labor to break up with the pokies.

Labor's conference generated headlines, but most of it is recycled announcements, existing measures or measures that the government should be doing because it's already the law (i.e. banning incentives to gamble). They're also relying upon most people not understanding the difference between a gaming machine 'entitlement' and an actual machine.

The plan to reduce poker machines by 50% was so watered down in the final motion that it's almost meaningless. The policy is for one machine to be "forfeited" when at least two are traded between venues. The government said they were going to do this in 2023 and the existing practice is every one machine forfeited for every 2 to 3 traded. But still machine numbers have increased by almost 1,000 under the Minns government.

"Account-based play" is also meaningless as a harm minimisation tool unless it is mandatory with play limits, spending controls, and self-exclusion features. Many clubs are already moving to card based and account-based gaming. But without strict harm minimisation features this could actually make people gamble more!

Facial recognition? Labor is promoting facial recognition technology while refusing to adopt the stronger anti-money laundering and harm minimisation measure: mandatory cashless gambling linked to exclusions and spending limits.

NSW communities deserve more than headlines and half-measures.

They deserve a government willing to take on the clubs lobby, reduce gambling harm and stop organised crime laundering money through poker machines.

The Greens will wean NSW off the pokies:

- Mandatory cashless gambling with harm-minimisation protections
- Phase pokies out of pubs within 5 years and clubs within 10 years
- Introduce pokies super profits tax beginning with 50% on all poker machine profits
- Establish a community reparations fund paid for by the super profits tax to replace the dodgy ClubGRANTS scheme
- Provide support for venues to move away from dependence on gambling revenue
- Power down the pokies every night from midnight to 10am



Dolores Huerta: ‘Yes, we can’

Chauncey K Robinson

Longtime union activist and workers’ rights fighter Dolores Huerta has died at age 96. She leaves behind a decades-long legacy of resilience, historic wins, and inspiration for generations to come. The labour leader and feminist activist, who coined the slogan “*Sí, se puede*,” (Yes, we can) showed what was possible for workers through organising and determination in the face of discrimination and exploitation by the bosses.

Huerta was born Dolores Clara Fernández on 10 April 1930, in Dawson, New Mexico. From an early age, she was connected to the workers’ struggle, as her father, Juan Fernández, was a farm worker, miner, and union activist who won a seat in the state legislature in 1938.

Huerta often credited her mother, Alicia Chávez, as one of her primary reasons for being a feminist. Huerta noted she was inspired by her mother’s independence and entrepreneurial spirit, along with her compassion for low-wage workers and involvement in their community.

As noted by the Dolores Huerta Foundation, Huerta’s mother “encouraged the cultural diversity that was a natural part of Dolores’ upbringing in Stockton. The agricultural community where they lived was made up of Mexican, Filipino, African-American, Japanese, and Chinese working families.”

ORGANISER

After graduating from Stockton High School, attending the University of the Pacific, and earning a teaching credential, Huerta began a teaching career. Yet, when witnessing the hardship of her students, many of whom came to school with empty stomachs and bare feet, she started on what would become a lifelong journey of fighting economic injustice.

“I couldn’t tolerate seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes,” she later said. “I thought I could do more by organising farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children.”

Her political activism began when she met community organiser Fred Ross, Sr, a founding member of the Community Service Organization (CSO). Through this work, she registered voters and helped run civic and educational programs. By the late 1950s, she was one of only a few women lobbying lawmakers in Sacramento, where, as a young Mexican American, she confronted the male-dominated political landscape.

Her legislative victories included extending Aid to Families with Dependent Children to California farmworker families, a California measure allowing driver’s licence examinations in Spanish, and disability insurance protections for agricultural workers.

Getting involved in organised labour, Huerta helped establish the Agricultural Workers Association with Larry Itliong. In 1962, she joined Cesar Chavez in building the National Farm Workers Association, which merged in 1966 with the Filipino-led Agricultural Workers Organising Committee to form the United Farm Workers (UFW).

Huerta was a key organiser in the historic five-year Delano grape strike. The strike, which began in 1965 and fought farm worker exploitation, ended in victory, showing the power of a grassroots-led movement that also used effective boycotts. Huerta was instrumental in enacting the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first law of its kind in the US, which gave California farm workers the right to organise collectively and bargain for better wages and working conditions.

GROWTH THROUGH STRUGGLE

Huerta never shied away from the front lines of the struggle. In 1988, she was brutally beaten by San Francisco police during a protest, resulting in broken ribs and a shattered spleen. Although this serious injury forced Huerta to take a leave of absence from organising, she later returned with renewed vigour. It’s estimated that Huerta was arrested more than 25 times over her lifetime while participating in civil disobedience, protests, and strikes.

Huerta’s journey exemplified growth through struggle, as her ideas about feminism also evolved. Although Huerta always considered herself a feminist, there was a time when she initially opposed contraception and abortion. Huerta credited her longtime friendship with well-known feminist and *Ms. Magazine* Founder Gloria Steinem with helping her reassess some of her views.

Huerta understood feminism also had to include race, class, and labour. She advocated for women to hold more leadership positions in labour organising. Huerta would later travel to Colorado in 2014 to campaign against Colorado’s Amendment 67, which would have changed state laws to define “unborn human beings” as people.

In 2012, President Barack Obama awarded her the Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award. In her acceptance speech, Huerta said, “The great social justice changes in our country have happened when people came together, organised, and took direct action. It is this right that sustains and nurtures our democracy today. The civil rights movement, the labour movement, the women’s movement, and the equality movement for our LGBTQ brothers and sisters are all manifestations of these rights.”

SURVIVOR

Throughout her life, often as the only woman in the room, she faced the movement’s contradictions and hardships when it came to sexism. Her name and accomplishments were often only recognised when coupled with those of once-beloved labour organiser Caesar Chavez, though for decades Huerta held the secret of the abuse she suffered at his hands.

In fear of not being believed and burdened with the belief that somehow her silence concerning Chavez’s atrocities towards her and other women was necessary to protect the movement as a whole, Huerta was unable to tell her story for years.

Yet, after the *New York Times* published an extensive investigative article detailing Chavez’s sexual abuse, Huerta courageously let it be known that she was a survivor, too.

Huerta defended the farmworkers – and the broader labour movement – while also putting in perspective the crucial work still needed to protect women and fight for their equality – not only in society generally but also in spaces often considered “progressive” and supposedly free of the ills of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

“I have never identified myself as a victim, but I now understand that I am a survivor – of violence, of sexual abuse, of domineering men who saw me, and other women, as property, or things to control,” Huerta wrote. “Cesar’s actions do not reflect the values of our community and our movement.… Cesar’s actions do not diminish the permanent improvements achieved for farmworkers with the help of thousands of people.… I have kept this secret long enough. My silence ends here.”



Dolores Huerta. Photo: Gage Skidmore – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

OUTPOURING OF THANKS

After Huerta’s death was announced, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler stated, “Dolores Huerta will forever be a shining example of the best of the labour movement, embodying the fighting spirit of our unions and workers for generations” and that “her superpower was sparking workers to achieve what was thought to be unachievable.”

Shuler called Huerta “a catalyst for one of the greatest organising efforts over the past century, catapulting the farmworker movement and ultimately winning huge victories that improved the lives of generations of working people.”

Co-chair of the Communist Party USA and longtime labour activist Rossana Cambron told *People’s World*, “There is much to be proud of in the legacy Huerta left. As a Mexican American woman, she inspired me; she was an example of courage and dedication to the movement despite all that she had to fight through.”

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) President Milton Jones pointed out that “Dolores continued to lend her voice to the labour movement” this past summer, “speaking at the AFL-CIO Convention in Minneapolis, the site of ICE operations that terrified workers and left two protesters dead.

“At the end of her speech, she led us in a chant of ‘*Sí se puede*,’ or ‘Yes, we can,’ the rallying cry she coined. She brought an energy and hope to the crowd that was nearly impossible to recreate, even in her 90s.”

AFSCME President Patrick Moran noted that Huerta understood that “lasting change only comes with political power.” He said she “helped people with no voice overcome barriers to the ballot box. She fought for immigrants, for women, and for every worker who had been told to wait their turn.”

Sal Rosselli, the National Union of Healthcare Workers President Emeritus and longtime friend of Huerta, said in a statement that “Dolores understood that a union is not just about winning contracts; it’s about bringing people together to demand dignity and respect in their workplace, and justice for everyone.”

As founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, she made it part of her life’s work to continue developing leaders and advocating for working people and families everywhere. In her long life, Huerta never stopped fighting for a better tomorrow for the working people of today. Her inspirational legacy inspires others to carry on the movement she helped grow.

As the union she helped to create, UFW, asserted after Huerta’s passing, “Dolores’ work remains as important now as ever, and it continues with her example and her inspiration before us. The greatest possible tribute to her life is for her work of organising to continue.”

Huerta once was quoted as saying, “I hope my legacy will be one of an organiser that organised to fight injustice.”

It’s clear that mission was accomplished as others around the world are inspired to continue following in her footsteps. *Sí se puede*.

People’s World (Cut for reasons of space)

Huerta understood feminism also had to include race, class, and labour.

TV Review

Mums v Big Pharma

Will Stone



It was back in 2010 when the *Morning Star* first covered the collapse of a landmark legal case brought by mothers against pharmaceutical giant Sanofi-Aventis. They were seeking compensation from the manufacturers of anti-epilepsy drug Epilim, taken by the mothers during pregnancy, because the sodium valproate it contained caused birth defects in their children.

Many of the children live with a range of physical and developmental issues such as skull and facial malformations, heart defects, cleft lip, spina bifida, delayed speech and learning difficulties. A victory could have seen Sanofi paying out tens of millions of pounds in compensation to affected families for the lifelong harm caused by the medication.

But the mothers were forced to drop their case after legal aid was withdrawn. The reason? They were deemed to have less than a 50 per cent chance of winning.

Their brave fight for justice seemed to be over. But they refused to give up, and here we are at the end of 2026 with a new BBC documentary, *Mums v Big Pharma*, which introduces Janet Williams, 62, and Emma Murphy, 45, whose tenacious campaigning over the years has frequently been featured in *Morning Star*.

Made by the team behind *Mr Bates vs The Post Office*, the film candidly follows the two women, their husbands and their children, and contains heartbreaking footage of their decades-long struggle, alongside frank interviews with the families.

"We're fighting a cause that's one of the biggest medical scandals this country has ever seen," says Emma, who lives in Salford with husband Joe and their five affected children aged from 17 to 23.

"They have had 53 years. We will keep coming back until these children get the justice they deserve."

Sanofi had evidence sodium valproate caused malformations in animal foetuses in 1974, the documentary highlights, but the drug still received a full licence for use in the UK. By the 1990s sodium valproate was one of the most widely prescribed anti-epileptic drugs in the country. In 2004 Sanofi had an annual turnover of £200m (AU$291m) from sodium valproate and by the mid-2000s about 50,000 women in Britain were taking it daily.

At least 20,000 children are thought to have been affected by the drug in Britain since the 1970s.

Both Janet and Emma have argued that they were denied the right to make an informed decision about taking the drug as they weren't warned of the risks by healthcare professionals, and that drug safety information was inadequate.

In one scene Janet, who lives near Blackpool, with husband Steve, 65, and children Lee, 36, and Philip, 34, produces a letter from a specialist dated March 30, 1993, that marked the first time she was told that her children's birth defects were caused by Epilim. It's incredible to think that since they were first told 33 years ago they have still not been compensated.

SCANDALOUS

But it's what Janet and Emma discovered in the national archives in 2015 that is the most explosive evidence yet in support of their cause. They found a document from 1973 showing that the Committee on Safety of Medicines regulators knew sodium valproate could cause birth defects but chose to withhold warnings from patients in case it led to "fruitless anxiety."

This stark paternalism denied women's autonomy and was a smoking gun that shifted the blame directly onto the government and regulators.

England's patient safety commissioner Professor Henrietta Hughes has called it "a bigger scandal than thalidomide." She carried out a government-ordered review into valproate, which in 2024 recommended a compensation scheme for families of children affected. Yet there is still no sign of one.

Janet and Emma have written to Prime Minister Andy Burnham requesting a meeting but have had no reply.

The Department of Health and Social Care said: "Women put their trust in the system and were badly let down.

"Significant changes have already been made to the role of the medicines regulator since these failings were exposed and they are now better equipped to act quickly when safety concerns are raised."

Sanofi called sodium valproate an essential medicine for serious conditions, supplied under strict regulatory supervision. The company said it gave information to regulators and that guidance to clinicians and patients has reflected the evolution of scientific knowledge.

Speaking on the next stage of their campaign, Janet says: "We have achieved a lot during this campaign over the years.

"But there's still a big one for us and that's to get redress, and compensation for the children affected because they've been disabled in so many ways. They need so much support."

But it's her son Philip who has the final word: "I just want to say that I'm really proud of my mum and Emma for just carrying on with the campaign.

"In my eyes it's not their fault. It's the government's fault.

"In a way it's gross negligence for them to not tell my mum and Emma about what these drugs can do and how much harm they can actually do to children like me."

One of the film's strengths is its use of animation by the Tin Bear Project. It serves partly as a device to keep viewers abreast of the case's long, dense history, and partly to help visualise what these resilient mums have been through. There's one animation that shows Janet and Emma enter a room full of towering men in suits, representing the pharmaceutical giants and other healthcare executives, who peer down at them in a clever visual nod to their David and Goliath battle.

Janet describes the neurologist who first prescribed her the drug as a dinosaur. In another animation she asks him to take her off it, and he refuses without looking up from his papers, before transforming into one.

Unlike the Post Office scandal, which needed a drama to move a government to action, this documentary has no actors to lean on.

But the harrowing experiences of these two women and their families are enough to highlight a scandal that is no less devastating. And it leaves the viewer with no doubt: the government must act.

At present the documentary is airing on the BBC.

Morning Star

Book Review

Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Graham Holton

Leo Tolstoy's classic novella, *Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886, 2025), is a scathing condemnation of bourgeois alienation, commodification of human relations and conformity demanded by Tsarist bureaucratic capitalism (the third estate).

Alienation is not a personal failing; it is the product of Russia's social and economic structure. Ivan Ilyich's doomed life and agonising death exposes how capitalist social relations objectify human consciousness making status, property and class deportment objects of desire.

His is a life "most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible." Ivan Ilyich's death exposes how Russian capitalism turned status, property, and correct class behaviour into subjects of deification.

The novella tells of Ivan Ilyich Golovin, a high-court judge in late 19th-century Russia living in St Petersburg. After a fall while hanging drapes, he develops a terminal illness.

Hanging the drapes was driven by petty-bourgeois upward mobility and wealth display. Ivan Ilyich's colleagues regard him as an impediment to their career advancement and higher pensions.

They treat him with superficial concern. Their coldness is necessary to advance within Russia's socially competitive bourgeoisie. His peasant servant, Gerasim, is the only one who genuinely offers him genuine unselfish care.

While dying Ivan Ilyich experiences an existential awakening. He realises his life was a fraud. He had mistaken bourgeois success for any genuine happiness. In this psychological breakthrough he discovers his own humanity.

Ivan Ilyich's entire existence is governed by *comme il faut* (as it is necessary). Commodity fetishism and social pretences had replaced genuine relationships.

His marriage to Praskovya was little more than a transaction, an arrangement for mutual comfort and social standing. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels argued that rather than reflecting true mutual affection, bourgeois marriages were made for economic interests, as part of their class hierarchy.

The novella is one of the most perceptive literary studies of 19th century bourgeois consciousness and its ultimate emptiness. It reveals how class ideology, careerism and striving for status alienate people from any meaningful work, relationships and their humanity.

Tolstoy portrays this with remarkable psychological insights.

His protagonist is redeemed in a moral awakening through Christian compassion. Marxists would argue it requires transforming the social conditions that generated his alienation.

It is a book I could not put down. Well worth reading.

The film of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (2024) was directed by Noah Cohen, David Seymour, and Alex Squires.

The novella inspired Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru* (1952), and Alexander Kaidanovsky's *A Simple Death* (1985).

The chamber opera in one act of *Death of Ivan Ilyich* (2021) was composed by John Young.

Rating: 5 out of 5 Red Stars.

(Note: Russians use both first names Ivan Ilyich while referring to each other.)

TV Review: *East of Eden*

Dennis Broe

***East of Eden*, the Netflix series based on the John Steinbeck novel and the '50s film that followed it, is a work of two remarkable auteurs, the writer Zoe Kazan and the actress Florence Pugh.**

Steinbeck's sometimes sprawling critique of American values and the American character and their moulding by a rabid capitalism where money and getting ahead are the primary values is refined and crystallised in Kazan's adaptation, which makes her grandfather, the director Elia Kazan's film, pale by comparison.

The series begins and ends with two wars, the Civil War and World War I, with the Native American genocide in the middle of these. All three works also victimise the Trask family, reminding us that the great events in American history happen around that history's overarching pattern of bloodshed in a country that since its inception has been involved in five declared wars, 36 major conflicts, and some 400 foreign military actions.

Steinbeck describes Americans as "a violent people ... descended from the restless, the nervous, the criminals, the arguers and brawlers ..." Likewise, the series tracks the way this virulent form of American capitalism lays waste to the country as a whole and its individuals.

The first episode begins with the revelation of two secrets about the original patriarch, Cyrus. One, that his war stories about planning the Union victory at Gettysburg are false, and two, that the inheritance he passes to his sons was stolen from the veterans he is in Washington supposedly representing.

Cyrus sends his son Adam to the army to follow in his footsteps, and he is roped into a massacre of women and children in the Indian Wars. A generation later, Aron, Adam's son, enlists and becomes a victim of World War I.

Over its eight episodes, the series also traces the growing increase in speculation in American society.

Adam's wife Cathy, the most remarkable character in the novel, brought stunningly to life by Florence Pugh, begins as a teenage victim of a teacher's "affection," and learns early that if she is to survive as an independent woman, she must manipulate the situations men consign her to.

She escapes Adam's repressive family trap and slowly becomes a madam in her desire to control her own life. Her new role involves an understanding of and catering to male depravity, practiced especially by the towns and California's state leaders.

However, the profit motive lays hold of her as well in her management of the house of prostitution. "Add another show," she barks at one of the women, "build demand then raise prices."

She betrays a woman who shows mercy to her, and in one of the most stunning scenes of the series, which recalls Macbeth's torment by the spirit of the murdered Banquo, she conjures that woman's ghost beckoning her. Cathy, now called Kate, though, is not Lady Macbeth; she is Macbeth.

Kate's desire, scheming and ultimate duplicity, all fostered by a male world that allows few avenues for female expression, is the heart of the series and the novel. When Kate departs, Pugh's masterful performance leaves a gaping hole in the production.

The book and series are at pains to describe a split in the American character, evidenced by both sets of boys, Cyrus and then his son Adam. Adam and his boy Aron are the innocents, idealists blithely and in many ways stupidly, blind to the world around them, including sex and female desire, which they regard as impure.

As Steinbeck describes it, "Aron didn't grow up. Maybe he never will. He wanted the story, and he wanted it to come out his way. He couldn't stand to have it come out any other way," while his father Adam is "the most rigidly honest man it was possible to find, living all his life on stolen money which his father pilfered."

Adam's brother Cal and Adam's other son Caleb are the realists, who at least have a chance of happiness, but only if they recognise the truth and the at least partial ugliness of the world around them.

The series contrasts the bleak world of the small farm in Connecticut with the verdant fields of California's Salinas Valley. However, the promise of this new Eden is shattered by a culture of greed and easy money.

Adam's refrigeration scheme to ship produce east ultimately fails and causes him to lose his ill-gotten fortune.

Lee, the Chinese philosopher posing as a nursemaid and cook and subject to extreme racism, sees his plan to open up a bookstore in San Francisco's Chinatown flounder as he finds his countrymen herded into a segregated space, formed into Tongs for protection, and uninterested in any culture except that which is necessary to survive.

Cathy/Kate's dream of having her own business is equally destroyed by the actions she must take as a woman to achieve it.

The Salinas Valley Eden in the end is a rotten garden, much the way modern-day Americans are experiencing the once verdant promise of the country, with nearly 50 per cent of working people living below, near, or just above the poverty level.

People's World (Edited for space)



the promise of this new Eden is shattered by a culture of greed and easy money

Book Review

American Scoundrel

By Kai Bird with Susan Goldmark

Sue Turner

Part of Roy Cohn's infamy comes from his collaboration with two of the most mendacious men in post-war America; Joe McCarthy and Donald Trump.

Born an only child with a doting mother into a wealthy New York family, he soon learnt to get his own way by lying and bullying. His father taught him that life was a transactional game, and from his mother he learnt that whatever he wanted he could demand it.

At his elite Jewish school, he learnt to wheel and deal, ignoring rules and realising that if you have the right connections, strings can be pulled and favours called in. As a teenager he was already a member of the American Jewish League Against Communism.

He became a federal prosecutor at 21 and was instrumental in the prosecution of 12 leaders of the CPUSA on charges of advocating the overthrow of the government by force. They were sentenced to five years.

His next big case was to convict William Remington, a civil servant accused of passing information to the Soviets. After a complex set of proceedings and irregular tactics from Cohn, Remington was sentenced to three years.

Cohn was to use many questionable methods to gain prosecutions but the most infamous and sickening case of all was his pursuit of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were charged with spying for the Soviets and convicted partly on the false testimony of Ethel's brother, who had been induced to lie by Cohn.

Cohn later remarked that he had done nothing wrong, saying they only framed people they knew were guilty. Cohn held out for the death sentence for the Rosenbergs, and after they were sent to the electric chair he boasted: "I think it's been a very good year for the anti-Communist front. I have no misgivings about the execution of the Rosenbergs... I would have pulled the lever myself."

Having proved himself in winning convictions, Cohn was appointed chief counsel on the House Un-American Activities Committee headed by Senator McCarthy. The two were a match made in hell; the drinking, gambling, womanising, street-smart McCarthy and the abstemious, non-gambling and certainly non-womanising Cohn. Both were ruthlessly ambitious and committed to the Communist witch-hunt of the early 1950s.

Bird details other examples of Cohn's modus operandi, showing what an unprincipled operator he was, feeding off, and feeding into, a murky pit of corruption. Cohn said that to be successful as a lawyer: "I don't need files, l don't need case histories. Just give me the judge."

By 1960 he was a millionaire lawyer, businessman, and New York celebrity, with mobsters among his clients. Accused of bribery, extortion and blackmail, Cohn found himself in the dock more than once, but always went free.

He had learnt some useful lessons: attack your critics in the public arena, delay proceedings with challenges and appeals, deny everything, never apologise nor admit defeat.

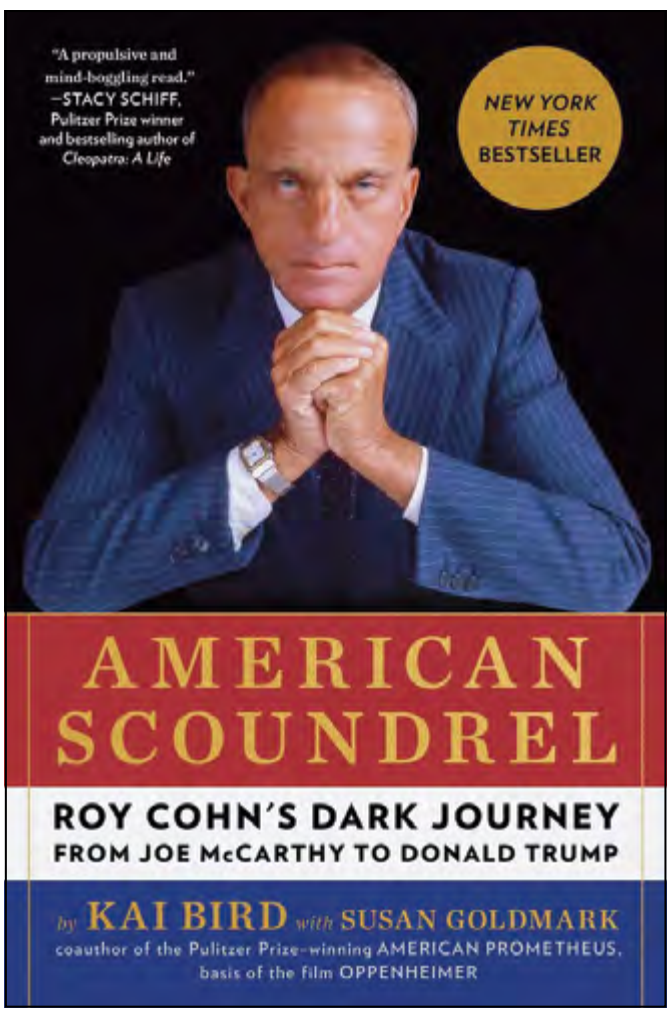
Cohn was reviled by gay rights activists due to the lifelong denial of his homosexuality and his hounding of gay men out of their federal jobs. He opposed any positive legislation for gay rights, despite it being common knowledge that he was very actively gay.

Cohn met Trump in 1973 and became his legal counsel. At that time Trump wanted to expand his property portfolio from Queens into the more upmarket Manhattan. He learnt a lot from Cohn: do business by phone leaving no paper trails, ignore rules, avoid paying taxes and bills.

By the late 1970s Cohn was known for mob law and divorce law. In 1986, after he was found guilty of unethical conduct, he was barred from practising law, dying soon after from AIDS.

At 500 pages this is a detailed and often gossipy biography of Cohn. Bird tries to give a rounded picture of him by describing his active social life and his friendships, but despite the eulogies at his memorial service, Cohn had no redeeming features, ending up a disgraced lawyer and a feared, ruthless business operator.

Morning Star



Azov prison scandal

Russian soldiers are reportedly being held in secret prisons run by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, where they face beatings, deprivation of food and water, and confinement in cages, Rodion Miroshnik, Russian Foreign Ministry Ambassador-at-Large, revealed in an interview for *RIA Novosti*.

The envoy said that these secret facilities are used to extract military information. He described a system in which prisoners face beatings upon arrival, followed by prolonged torture that includes electric shocks, psychological pressure, and denial of basic needs. He added that personnel from Ukrainian security services, including the SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] and GUR [Main Directorate of Intelligence], sometimes stage videos in which prisoners are beaten and subjected to psychological stress.

"This is a conveyor belt that involves beatings at the entrance, a marathon of torture for these people – electric chairs, psychological pressure, coercion, denial of food and water.

The scandal over a secret prison near Kiev could push Ukraine into open civil war, according to political analyst Oleg Soskin, a former advisor to ex-Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma. He noted on his YouTube channel that the country's divisions have passed the point of no return.

Soskin argued that the discovery of the facility and the protests that followed have exposed a deep rift in Ukrainian society. One side backs the military, while the other has run out of patience with abuses tied to forced mobilisation.

He said the outrage over the illegal detentions has now brought the two camps into direct confrontation.

He also warned Kirill Budanov, the head of Vladimir Zelensky's office, against trying to justify the incident or contain the fallout. In Soskin's view, events have already slipped beyond control and cannot be reversed.

Ukrainian media reported that armed people were holding about 40 individuals in the basement of a private house in Petropavlovskaya Borshchagovka, on the outskirts of Kiev.

A medical worker said she had received a video of detainees in critical condition, many with injuries consistent with torture, *TASS* reported. The guards refused to let medics inside.

Residents gathered outside the building, and clashes broke out. Tear gas was also used on locals who tried to break down the gate.

Guards allowed an ambulance to take four injured men to hospital only after the incident drew wide attention, and one of them was in serious condition. Media reports also said a 14-year-old boy was among those held.

Commander Alexander Pivnenko acknowledged that the basement held servicemen who had left their units without authorisation, along with newly mobilised men.

He called the building a "temporary deployment site" and said the four injured men were absentees.

The house belongs to members of the neo-Nazi Azov Brigade, which is part of the National Guard as its 1st Corps and which Russia has designated a terrorist organisation. Azov confirmed that the four men had been injured.

After the protests, the National Guard agreed to send everyone held at the site for medical examinations.

The State Bureau of Investigation opened a case under the Criminal Code article on abuse of power by a military official. Ukraine's military ombudsman, Olga Reshetilova, has also announced an investigation.

The SBU has meanwhile opened three criminal cases against participants in the protest, SBU Deputy Head Ivan Rudnitsky told *Ukrinform*. The charges cover obstructing the armed forces, disclosing the deployment of defence forces without authorisation, and mass unrest. Rudnitsky said investigators have identified about 100 protesters, are carrying out searches, and are weighing arrests.

Acknowledgements *Al Mayadeen*

India: Informal workers lack protection

India's informal sector, according to the government, contributed about 45% to India's gross domestic product in 2022-23.

India defines the unorganised sector as enterprises "owned by individuals or self-employed workers and engaged in the production or sale of goods or providing service of any kind whatsoever," and where an enterprise employs less than 10 workers.

More than 90% of India's workforce is engaged in the informal sector, according to a 2025 policy paper from the IZA – Institute of Labor Economics, Germany. Informal workforce includes domestic workers, home-based workers, contributing family workers, casual day labourers, construction workers, street vendors.

It also includes workers in the formal sector lacking social security benefits provided by employees.

Street vendors are considered self-employed and fall outside many worker protection systems, while many construction workers on small sites are not eligible for protections.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

India's experience with construction worker welfare also shows that access is low. As a result, these workers remain exposed to risks from heat and extreme weather.

Overall, India has about 70 million construction workers and 16.5 million street vendors.

Every summer, millions of Indians in informal work lose incomes to extreme heat, as ISignal reported in February 2026. They work slower, take unpaid sick days, or stop work entirely when temperatures become unbearable. They have no paid leave, no air-conditioned workplaces, and no financial buffer.

FOOD-DELIVERY WORKERS GO HUNGRY

India's gig and platform economy has grown at an extraordinary speed. NITI Aayog, the government's policy think tank, estimated in a 2022 report that the gig workforce would stand at around 10 million in 2024/25 and more than double to 23.5 million by 2029/30.

Food delivery, dominated by quick-commerce platforms Swiggy and Zomato, is one of the sector's largest segments, part of an online market valued at over $43 billion in 2024 and growing at more than 20% a year.

Riders are classified as "delivery partners," not employees, a distinction that has kept them outside Indian labour law.

They receive no fixed salary, no paid leave, no medical coverage and no meal allowance.

Earnings depend on the number of deliveries completed and on ratings determined by rider punctuality and customer acceptance rates.

An idle half hour, whether spent eating lunch or waiting out a delay, can lower a rider's standing on the platform's algorithm and jeopardise future assignments.



Food delivery to work places. Photo: Joe Zachs – wikimedia.org (CC BY 2.0)

A single meal ordered through a delivery app in a city like Delhi frequently costs more than a rider earns for an hour's work. Delivery drivers who eat whilst working often resort to cheap takeaways, whilst the pressure to remain available during peak hours can disrupt their regular eating patterns.

A 2025 study of 425 app-based food-delivery riders in Tamil Nadu found that 66.8 % reported skipping meals whilst on duty, whilst 63.3 % complained of dehydration.

Trade Union Record All India Trade Union Congress



Jordan: Fresh water national priority

Ensuring fresh water for Jordan's population is a national priority on which Amman does not intend to make any compromises, Jordanian King Abdullah II said.

"Water security is a national priority on which there can be no compromises or concessions. We will not allow [quenching] the thirst of our citizens to depend on any circumstances," Abdullah II said in a speech at the opening of a regular session of the country's parliament.

The king instructed the government to continue implementing strategic water supply projects and to develop preventive measures to protect the country's water resources, ensure their sustainable use, and preserve them for future generations.

Jordan is among the countries with the most acute fresh water deficit in the world. According to

www.cpa.org.au

Europe: Supermarkets fridges hacked

Temperature increases have been reported in the cooling systems of dozens of stores across the continent, weeks after a similar attack in France caused fires and food losses.

Overnight temperature spikes were recorded in stores in Belgium, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Sweden. Retailers and authorities pointed to alleged cyberattacks that underscored the vulnerability of systems that once largely operated mechanically.

The head of Sweden's national cybersecurity centre, John Billow, confirmed to the Reuters news agency that the centre is responding to multiple incidents affecting store cooling systems.

"We have in recent weeks ... identified that we have quite a lot of exposed operational technology devices in Sweden that we have been clear about the necessity to update or patch," he said.

The cyberattack on refrigeration systems at hundreds of supermarkets in France raised the temperatures of fridges and freezers to as high as 50°Celsius spoiling food and causing fires at several stores.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the attacks in France or elsewhere.

European states have blamed Moscow for a growing number of incidents affecting infrastructure, including via cyberattacks, in recent months. Russia has repeatedly denied involvement in any sabotage or hybrid warfare operations.

European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen said the attacks were "a deliberate attempt to disrupt EU food supplies and undermine public confidence.

"These incidents show that cyberattacks can disrupt services, affect businesses and directly affect citizens' daily lives," a European Commission spokesperson said, stressing the importance of strengthening cybersecurity across the bloc.

A spokesperson for The Centre for Cybersecurity Belgium told *Al Jazeera* that the rising number of cyberattack incidents, especially those resulting from the targeted use of AI, is an evolving trend.

However, they added, "we may never be able to identify ... who is behind this attack."

The attacks, which appeared to target internet-linked refrigeration systems, raised the temperature of fridges and freezers to as high as 50°Celsius at more than 500 shops and supermarkets across the France.

France's cybersecurity agency has advised companies operating affected freezer models to immediately disconnect them from the internet – or restrict access to them – and to perform software updates.

Millions of euros worth of food were spoilt, according to retailers. In some cases, the raised temperatures sparked fires or melted equipment.

Speaking to *Al Jazeera*, tech and cybersecurity analyst Steven Lachance said smart appliances connected to the internet will always be vulnerable as hackers seize on security lapses to log in to the systems remotely and trigger malicious features.

"It's the new reality of having these connected equipment," Lachance said, pointing out that attacks could evolve to target medical or energy systems.

"This should come as a global wake-up call .... Throughout society, we have connected infrastructure that is live on the internet, and that can be hacked. It's a new reality, and we absolutely need national and international measures to prevent those attacks; otherwise, it's just going to keep happening," he warned.

Acknowledgements to *Al Jazeera*

France: Angry protests continue

France is bracing for another day of demonstrations as trade unions and student groups prepare to take to the streets, while the Yellow Vests movement plans a separate rally in central Paris despite a ban imposed by authorities.

The protests follow weeks of youth-led unrest and nationwide strikes that brought hundreds of thousands of workers into the streets over the rising cost of living, adding to pressure on President Emmanuel Macron's government.

The demonstrations are unfolding less than six months before France elects a new president, with the far right leading in opinion polls ahead of the vote to replace Macron.

Student groups and trade unions have called for an authorised march through central Paris "against the high cost of living and in support of young people."

The Yellow Vests movement, however, has refused to join the march and instead called for a separate gathering at Place de la Concorde, near the National Assembly and the presidential palace, despite the authorities' prohibition.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said 70,000 police officers and security personnel would be deployed across France to maintain security.

"If there are any rioters or looters ... we'll be ready and waiting for them," he said.

Although demonstrations have largely remained peaceful, clashes with police and incidents of vandalism have occurred on their sidelines.

The Yellow Vests movement, which staged nationwide protests eight years ago against Macron's government over planned fuel-tax increases, has called on supporters to proceed with its banned demonstration.

"We are calling for mass disobedience," Benjamin Ball, a member of the movement's coordinating committee, said.

Authorities are seeking to prevent a repeat of the rioting and looting that accompanied the 17 October demonstrations.

However, the police response has faced criticism over allegations of excessive force against demonstrators, prompting dozens of internal investigations into alleged police brutality.

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu was due to meet representatives of trade unions and employers' organisations on 9 November to discuss wages and purchasing power.

"The only thing that will bring the protests to an end is a response to the demands that have been put forward for several weeks by workers, civil servants, young people and pensioners," an inter-union coalition said.

The unions are demanding an increase in the minimum wage, which has not received a discretionary boost since 2012, alongside across-the-board wage increases, tax reforms, and improved learning conditions for young people.

Al Mayadeen (Edited for space)

Something to say?
Write to the Editor!
editor@cpa.org.au

Global Briefs

TURKEY: The Turkish parliament has ratified the Mecca Defence Pact, an agreement concluded between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The bill was approved by 279 lawmakers, 169 voted against it and there were no abstentions. Under the terms of the Mecca Defence Pact, an attack on any of the three signatory nations is considered an attack on all three.

PARAGUAY: The Paraguayan Senate officially voted to remove Santiago Pena, Paraguay's president who was immediately arrested by the police. According to local media, the arrest order was signed by prosecutors from the economic crimes and anti-corruption division, as well as a representative from a specialised unit focused on cybercrime and money laundering. The directive was sent to the National Police Command for implementation. The failure of Ueno bank, linked to Peno's business interests, left around three million users unable to withdraw their money. The country's population is 6.4 million people, so the bank's collapse has impacted practically half the population.

THE NETHERLANDS: Protesters in Amsterdam stormed the site of a proposed Microsoft data centre. Several hundred activists occupied the construction site, responding to a call for a two-day protest across Europe against data centres. "We don't want it to be built. Nobody needs it," one of the protesters said. "The only thing this will be used for is AI slop. AI warfare, data surveillance and committing genocide. We don't want that." Dutch police said they detained 150-200 people for trespassing during the protest. Data centres face resistance around the world due to the massive amount of energy and water they use. There is a lack of public consultation and the environmental impact is often ignored. Dozens of civil society and grassroots groups will be joining the "Stop Dirty Data Centres" events in 15 European countries, including Ireland, Poland, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, France, and the UK, organisers said.

ISRAEL: Donald Trump announced on 3 November that the United States would end its annual funding of nearly $4 billion for Israel by the end of this year. According to Trump, the decision had been agreed upon with Netanyahu several months earlier. Netanyahu's office framed Trump's statement on ending the aid as a transition from aid to partnership. "The transition from aid to partnership by Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump demonstrates the strength and sophistication of bilateral relations, as well as their ability to adapt and remain strong over time," the statement said. The US and Israel signed a memorandum of understanding on security cooperation in 2016. According to the document, the total amount of US aid to Israel was to reach $38 billion over the period from late 2018 to 2028. Israel received $3.3 billion annually, plus an additional $500 million for missile defence. (Amounts in US $)

PNG: Taiwan announced the closure of its representative office in Papua New Guinea and the decision to stop buying Liquified Natural Gas (LNG). PNG has formal diplomatic relations with China, but it has allowed Taiwan to have a representative office in the capital. Some time ago PNG decided to end Taiwan's presence in the country. Taiwan has formal diplomatic ties with only three Pacific Islands nations: Palau, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands. It also has a representative office in Fiji. Just 12 countries have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

China and Oman sign strategic agreements

Wang Qi

China and Oman agreed to deepen their strategic partnership during a landmark summit in Beijing, where President Xi Jinping and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said signed cooperation agreements spanning supply chains, digital finance and green energy.

The meeting marks the first state visit by an Omani monarch since the two nations established diplomatic relations 48 years ago. That half-century gap gives the encounter the weight of a genuine milestone in the consolidation of a political and economic alliance.

During the protocol talks, both leaders witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation instruments.

Xi called for reinforced mutual trust and broader exchanges in high technology, artificial intelligence and industrial investment. The aim, he said, is to energise commerce between the two sides and lift the relationship beyond its traditional energy focus.

They agreed to align the Belt and Road Initiative with "Oman Vision 2040" and sealed the pact with a local currency swap plus 14 agreements, deepening cooperation across energy, technology, and regional security after a historic summit in Beijing.

The financial architecture behind the partnership shifted as well. The Central Bank of Oman and the People's Bank of China signed a local currency swap agreement, a mechanism that allows the two economies to settle trade directly without routing every transaction through a third currency.

The accord also covers space cooperation and support for technology startups.

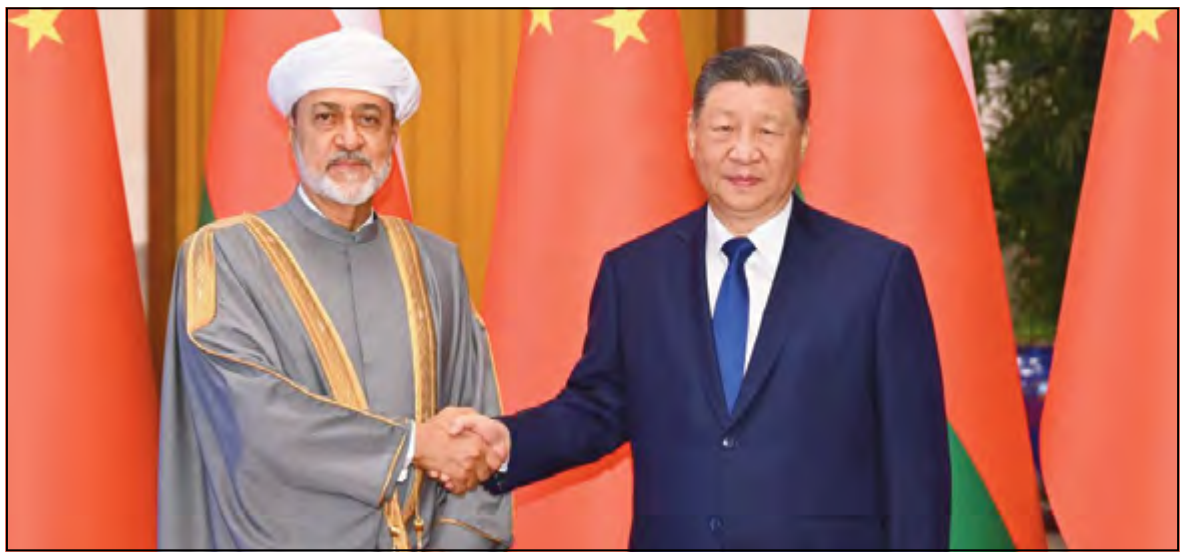
China's BeiDou Satellite Navigation System appears in the joint framework as a concrete area of application. Beijing has promoted the system as an alternative to foreign navigation networks, and its inclusion signals Oman's willingness to adopt Chinese technical standards in key infrastructure.

The renewable energy component extends to storage, a field where the two sides see room for joint industrial investment. Solar and wind generation, coupled with storage capacity, would help Oman diversify an economy long dependent on hydrocarbons.

Oman Vision 2040 aims to reduce reliance on oil revenue, and the Belt and Road alignment offers capital, technology, and connectivity to accelerate that transition.

The Omani delegation also stressed the opportunities for joint investment in infrastructure, tourism, education, and comprehensive health.

The visit also carried a clear geopolitical message. Xi stated that the Persian Gulf and Middle East should not become stages for confrontation between major global powers.



Chinese President Xi Jinping with Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said of Oman. (Xinhua/Li Xiang)

The warning carries weight at a moment when regional rivalries have drawn outside actors deeper into the Gulf.

Haitham praised Beijing's leadership in the peaceful resolution of international disputes. He ratified his government's readiness to consolidate commercial and cultural ties with the Asian country, signalling that Muscat intends to keep China as a central partner.

Both governments called for a peaceful resolution and a comprehensive ceasefire between United States and Iran, urging a return to dialogue and negotiations on the nuclear issue, underscoring the need to settle regional conflicts through diplomatic channels.

They demanded restoration of safe and normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Both sides committed to working in coordination within the Gulf Cooperation Council to preserve the truce in the zone.

For Oman, the agreements offer a route toward economic diversification and deeper integration with Asian markets. For China, the sultanate provides a stable foothold on a waterway essential to world energy supply. The declaration gives both sides a roadmap that extends well beyond trade.

Energy, technology, and regional security now sit together on a single agenda. What began as a first visit has produced a roadmap for a much broader engagement. The agreements signed in Beijing will shape trade, investment and diplomacy between the two nations for years to come.

Global Times (edited for reasons of space)

Israel: Israeli president instructs Netanyahu's rival to form government

Israeli President Isaac Herzog has announced that he will task opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot with forming the country's next government, dealing a major political setback to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following last month's inconclusive parliamentary elections.

Herzog informed both Eisenkot and Netanyahu of his decision on 7 November.

The former military chief, who heads the centrist Yashar party, will have 28 days to assemble a coalition, with a possible two-week extension.

During consultations earlier last week Eisenkot secured the backing of 67 lawmakers in the 120-seat Knesset, compared to just 46 who recommended Netanyahu. However, the endorsements do not guarantee that he can assemble a functioning government.

Netanyahu's Likud emerged as the largest single party in the 27 October election, but his right-wing and religious bloc secured only 53 seats, falling short of the 61 required for a parliamentary majority.

Eisenkot's four-party opposition alliance won just 48 seats, leaving the two Arab-led parties, which together control a record 19 seats, holding the balance of power.

Eisenkot has ruled out including the Arab parties in his government, while several of his allies have opposed even relying on their outside support. Another possibility involves an agreement with ultra-Orthodox parties traditionally allied with Netanyahu, although disagreements over exemptions from military service remain a major obstacle.

The ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, which holds seven seats, notably declined to endorse Netanyahu during the presidential consultations and has signalled openness to negotiations with Eisenkot.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, called for a broad national unity government that would include his existing coalition partners, claiming that such an alliance would "permanently remove the nuclear threat from Iran."

He also warned that a government dependent on Arab parties, whom he accused of supporting Hamas, would threaten Israel's survival.

Eisenkot's Yashar party rejected the appeal, accusing Netanyahu of dividing Israeli society and inviting Likud to abandon its alliance with "*extremists*" and join a unity government under Eisenkot's leadership.

The political deadlock follows a bitter election campaign overshadowed by the US-Israeli war on Iran, Israel's military operations across the region, and divisions over Netanyahu's leadership.

Netanyahu campaigned on promises to resume the offensive against Tehran and overthrow its government, while Eisenkot questioned the need for another military campaign and accused Netanyahu of failing to achieve his previous war objectives.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has held the office for more than 19 years across three separate stints. His repeated failures to assemble governing coalitions previously contributed to a prolonged political crisis that saw Israel hold five parliamentary elections between 2019 and 2022.

If Eisenkot fails to assemble a majority within the allotted period, Herzog could give another candidate, potentially Netanyahu, an opportunity to form a government. A prolonged stalemate could ultimately force Israel into another election.

RT English

Gaza emergency amid flooding tents

Gaza's Civil Defence announced a state of maximum emergency on 6 November to respond to the effects of heavy rainfall across the Strip and handle distress calls from displaced families affected by the weather.

The agency said all areas of the Gaza Strip were facing a new humanitarian disaster as the first major rainstorm of the season hit the territory. Heavy rainfall flooded dozens of displacement camps, shelters, and entire residential areas, with water levels reaching one and a half meters in some locations.

Civil Defence said its emergency rooms had received 2,166 distress calls since the beginning of the storm, including requests from residents, displacement camp administrations, shelter centres, and families whose homes had previously been damaged by Israeli bombardment.

Rescue teams, working alongside municipalities and relevant authorities across Gaza's governorates, managed to respond to only 218 of those calls. For the remaining cases, Civil Defence provided families with guidance on dealing with flooding, citing its inability to handle the overwhelming volume of requests.

The agency warned that the first rainstorm had exposed the scale of the humanitarian disaster facing Gaza's population and signalled the possibility of further emergencies, particularly as meteorological forecasts predict heavy rainfall and storms throughout the winter season.

Civil Defence renewed its appeal to governments worldwide, stressing that "there is no room to overlook the harsh humanitarian conditions endured by residents in the Strip." It called for effective pressure on Israel to allow the entry of rescue equipment and machinery needed to respond to winter-related emergencies.

The agency also demanded the immediate delivery of tents, plastic tarpaulins, and prefabricated housing units to provide shelter for displaced families. It called for fuel supplies to support rescue operations, which increase significantly during the winter months.

It further urged the countries guaranteeing the Gaza ceasefire and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza to fulfill their responsibilities and intervene urgently to protect residents facing winter conditions without basic means of shelter.

The Government Media Office reported that rainfall flooded approximately 70,000 displacement tents within just 12 hours of the first storm of the season, with preliminary losses estimated at US$3 million (AU$4.4m).

Al Mayadeen

A visit to China

Vinnie Molina

Following the invitation of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, CASS, some 84 delegates from 40 countries attended the 16th World Socialism Forum in Beijing along with events in two other provinces.

The event's topic was Marxist party building. Delegates made contributions and shared their thoughts on party building based on their own experiences. Those delegates were from parties who are in government and also those who are not in government.

The leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), has been an example of leadership for the Chinese people since its inception. The CPC, making the interest of the Chinese people primary has been able to build a strong society prioritising people's benefit.

One of those achievements has seen hundreds of millions of people lifted out of poverty and extreme poverty in a very short period of time; this is unprecedented. While imperialism forges wars in Palestine, Lebanon, Venezuela, Iran, Yemen and elsewhere, China builds for the future in peace.

The CPC under the leadership of comrade Xi Jinping has dedicated time to the important questions of governance, self-reform, and happiness for the people. At the same time the People's Republic of China shares its development with other developing countries on poverty alleviation and the building of a shared community for humankind.

Its advances in economic and social spheres are impressive and deserve to be studied deeply.

Three CPA delegates attended the forum and made contributions on the importance of party building, sharing their local experiences.



Vinnie Molina with the Gen Sec of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka.

The visits to other provinces included in the program were equally valuable; we were welcomed by the School of Marxism at both Hefei and Anhui universities. There we had the opportunity to exchange with scholars and students. There were also visits to local museums, squares and workplaces to learn directly about the revolution and its red culture.

A highlight was the visit to the BYD plant in Hefei which is one of the biggest of its kind. More than 50,000 workers, men and women, are employed contributing to the many skilled areas within the plant.

The discussion on how to build a party capable to lead and whose decisions are supported by the people was thought provoking. There is much to consider and these opportunities to share experiences with a society on the path of building socialism and with other Communist and Workers' Parties from capitalist countries such as Australia is a rich and rewarding experience.

Some of the valuable takeaways are that governance and rejuvenation are important matters to study by Marxist parties both in government or seeking to govern; attention has to be paid to cadre education and we must develop and continue developing all cadre from recent recruits to long-term members. This is the hard work that must be done to ensure the lifelong making of communist values that prepare leaders to serve the people.

The event coincided with the 109th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party. That was the first time it was demonstrated to workers that they can be masters of their own destiny.

Workers of all countries unite!

Mass strikes across Germany

More than 413,000 workers across Germany's crisis-hit industrial sector have taken part in strikes and rallies demanding higher pay and job security. IG Metall, Germany's largest union, reported more than 2,800 actions nationwide since 1 November, hitting carmakers, engineering companies, metal producers, and suppliers after three rounds of wage talks failed to produce a deal.

IG Metall is demanding a 5% pay rise over 12 months for 3.7 million workers, higher apprentice wages, job guarantees, and profit-sharing at profitable companies. Employers have offered a one-off payment in 2027 and a 1.3% raise starting in July 2028 – which the union says amounts to a pay cut in real terms.

Germany's once-mighty industrial sector has been hit hard by soaring energy costs following the loss of cheap Russian oil and gas, weak investment, US tariffs, and fierce competition from China. Factories are closing, production is moving abroad, and industrial giants including Volkswagen, Bosch, and Mercedes-Benz are cutting thousands of jobs.

In July, the Federation of German Industries (BDI) called the situation critical, warning that around 15,000 industrial jobs disappear every month, with 177,000 manufacturing positions lost over the previous year.

Years of economic stagnation and persistently high energy costs have further weakened Germany's competitiveness, particularly in energy-intensive industries. Although industrial output edged up in September, it fell 0.4% in the third quarter, and energy-intensive production remained 1.9% below its level at the same time last year.

The strikes coincide with wider protests across Europe over stagnant wages, rising living costs, strained public services, and rising military spending. Some demonstrations have turned violent, including in France and Italy, where clashes with police, arson, and looting have led to mass arrests.

RT English (edited for space)

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Half the Sky

Death of a feminist spook

Kristina Hall

With the death of American feminist Gloria Steinem this year, Western feminist voices could be heard lamenting her passing and her supposed iconic status in leading the charge for gender equality. But there didn't seem to be any discussion or questioning of her role as a CIA agent, or how her form of feminism really addressed the struggles of working-class women.

Steinem, as an icon of bourgeois feminism, understood the struggle of women as a gender equality issue and not of class. Steinem was unapologetic for her role in the CIA, describing the organisation as "liberal, non-violent and honourable." She was shaped by the CIA to steer the feminist movement away from discussing class, and address the struggles of women in relation to a bourgeois concept of social change under the banner of American democracy.

Other voices at the time, such as The Redstockings and African American feminists had a different view. They argued that gender liberation without economic liberation was a half-measure and only served the women of the elite: they argued for a Marxist-Leninist based perspective.

Steinem was recruited into the CIA during the late 1950s. She founded the Independent Research Service (IRS) which was a front backed by the CIA. The IRS functioned as a counter-messaging organisation that sent delegates to the international youth festivals, facilitated and held by the Soviet Union. At the time their role was to counter Soviet communism and promote an American style of democracy.

How could Steinem be seen as a feminist icon for the struggle of women? Steinem had no prior record of working in any women's groups, any feminist publications or history of organising working-class women. In a short time, she became the face of American feminism, co-founded *Ms Magazine* in 1972 and the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

Her brand of feminism revolved around women having access to institutions, reproductive rights and professional advancement within the existing capitalist structure. Of course, these are important issues but why just half measures?

The answer to this can be found in the criticisms and investigation by the feminist group The Redstockings. This group was founded in 1969 and emerged out of the Women's Liberation movement in the US and are still active today. One of their core beliefs is that the oppression of women is connected to the patriarchal structures of capitalism and imperialism. A view of feminism that differed from Steinem's.

The Redstockings were critical of Steinem's publication *Ms*; they claimed it was set up as a parallel means of diverting the struggle of women into a more acceptable liberal framework. They investigated Steinem and found CIA links to funding and support for the publication *Ms* as well as her directorship of the IRS.

At the time there was a growing bent within the feminist movement that was anti-capitalist and more focussed on class inequality. Steinem's role, with CIA backing, was to steer this feminist energy away from the class struggle, so as not to challenge inequalities that would affect control of wealth by the bourgeois class. The findings by The Redstockings were circulated amongst various feminist groups. The Redstockings had identified and demonstrated through their investigation that bourgeois feminism is more about suppressing a working-class feminist critique.

Steinem's platform in the '70s and '80s did bring changes, professional advancement, challenging the 'glass ceiling' and individual achievement for women. What was also produced was a feminism that was acceptable to capitalist culture that didn't buck the status quo or challenge the real issues of low wages, lack of benefits or poor working conditions that are faced by many working-class women. Feminism hijacked and packaged to serve the interests of capital.

An agenda for the new US Congress

CJ Atkins

Democrats are on track for roughly 258 seats in the House, their widest margin since 1993, and they flipped Senate seats in states like Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, and Texas that party strategists had all but written off a year ago.

The message behind those numbers is plain: People are tired of paying more for everything while billionaires, oil companies, and the President's own stock portfolio do better than ever.

Gas averaged US$4.23 a gallon the week before the election, and the war on Iran has added an extra $1,184 in fuel costs to the average household's budget since February. Millions have lost health coverage since Republicans let Obamacare subsidies expire and pushed through nearly US$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts.

Voters connected the dots, so the new Democratic majority has a mandate and a responsibility to use its power.

There will be a strong pull toward investigations. Incoming Oversight Committee chair Robert Garcia sent the White House a two-word message on election night: "Lawyer up."

The Trump family's corrupt business deals, the President's oil stocks, and the conduct of the war all deserve scrutiny. Congress should use its subpoena power to hold those responsible to account. But a Congress that spends two years doing little besides holding hearings will waste this moment.

Working families voted because rent, groceries, prescriptions, and childcare are eating their pay packets. They voted because they want to see an end to the mass deportations and the racist attacks on civil rights, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. They voted because they want to see an end to war.

When 2028 arrives, Democrats must have more to point to than a stack of committee reports.

WORKING-CLASS MANDATE

Trump has already promised to become "Mr Veto." Congress should make him use it, again and again, on bills working people want.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus's New Affordability Agenda calls for doubling overtime pay, capping childcare costs at 7% of family income, guaranteed paid vacation, and a crackdown on corporate price gouging.

Incoming House Speaker Hakeem Jeffries has pledged early votes on restoring Affordable Care Act subsidies, reversing the Medicaid cuts, and ending Trump's tariffs. Those should come first, followed by a living wage and a real tax on billionaires to help pay for it all.

Medicare for All belongs on the agenda, too. Abdul El-Sayed, a physician, made it the centrepiece of his campaign and just won Michigan's Senate seat, becoming the first Muslim senator in US history. Trump would veto it, and the votes for an override aren't there, but that is no reason to stay quiet.

Guaranteed health care for all won't win next year, but the ground for winning it after the 2028 elections has to be prepared now.

Labour law reform also belongs near the top of the list.

Michigan showed what a "labour-led people's coalition" really looks like in practice. The United Auto Workers (UAW) was early out of the gate with its endorsement of El-Sayed, and its members pounded the pavement for him in places like Wayne County. The UAW knocked on over 100,000 doors and made half-a-million phone calls to get out the vote.

The results are proof of UAW's effort. As one observer put it, "In every district where there is an auto plant, Abdul smoked it."

An attempt to force a vote on the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act failed by one vote in the outgoing House. With the new majority, there are no more excuses. Pass it through both chambers and send it to the White House. Let Trump explain to workers why they shouldn't have the right to organise.

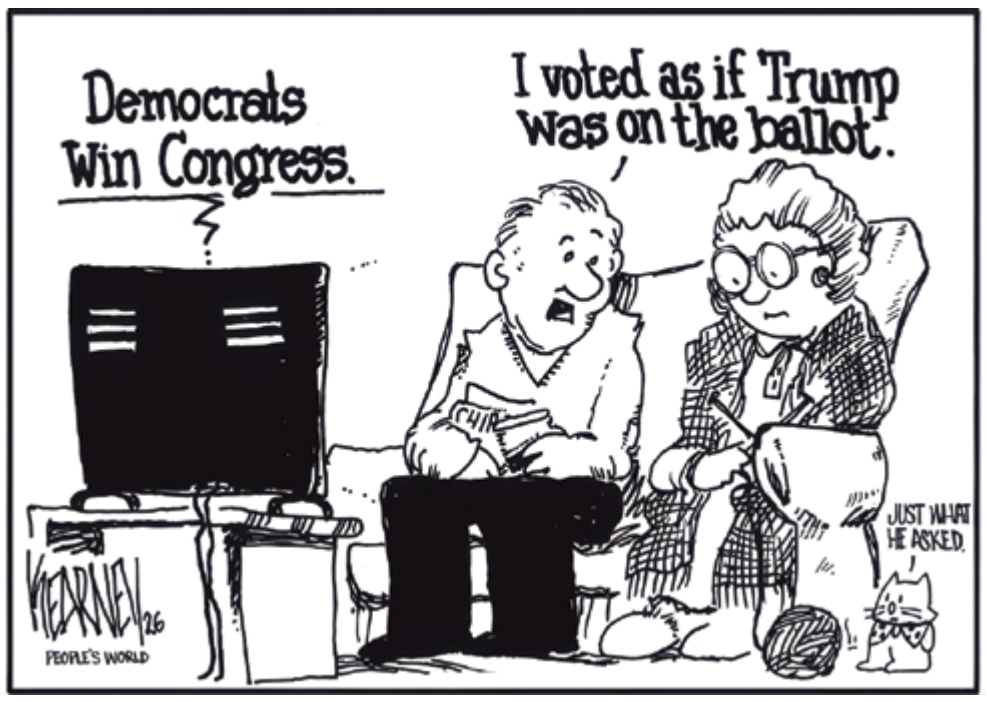
DEFEND EVERYONE'S RIGHTS

It's time to also terminate MAGA's crusade against diversity, equity, and inclusion. Strip away the slogans, and the attack on DEI is a blatant effort to roll back decades of civil rights gains for Black, Latino, Asian American, and women workers.

The mid-term election results show that most people aren't going along with MAGA's racist, bigoted agenda, and Congress should use its hearings and its funding bills to reverse it.

Democrats can't override vetoes, but the control of money will be key. Every appropriations bill, every supplemental request, and next year's expected debt ceiling fight gives them leverage.

That includes putting a stop-payment order on the deportation machine. Over the past two years Republicans poured roughly



US$240 billion into ICE and Border Patrol. Immigrant rights advocates are right to demand that this money be clawed back.

The same goes for the wars. Seventy per cent of the country opposes Trump's assault on Iran. Congress should refuse all funding for it and pass war powers resolutions that force an end to the fighting. That money belongs in schools, health care, and housing. Ditto for the money that's still being sent to fund the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

And the same budget tools apply to Cuba. Congress can force a vote to end the oil blockade that has left hospitals in the dark and use spending bills to bar funds for enforcing it or for any military action against the island.

None of this will happen just because Democrats hold the gavels. Corporate donors and centrist think tanks are already lobbying to keep the new majority "reasonable," which usually means timid.

The unions, community organisations, and volunteers who knocked on doors and drove turnout to record midterm levels need to stay mobilised and hold the people they elected to their promises. If the Democratic Party starts drifting to the right, it would squander the possibilities that are opening for progress.

MAGA tried a red scare as its closing argument, and it fell flat. Trump and his allies spent months branding Democrats as communists in disguise and casting the president as the last line of defence against the spectre of communism.

Plenty of Americans, it turns out, are more frightened by their grocery bills than by the word socialism, and a growing number are concluding that it might not be such a bad idea. The "socialist moment" has been building for years, and the election results showed it's picking up speed.

Democratic Party leaders should also look at who is coming up behind them. NBC News exit poll found that 33% of voters aged 18 to 29 call themselves "democratic socialists." These are people who came of age with crushing student debt, rents they can't afford, and jobs with no security.

The centrist, corporate-friendly politics that defined the Democratic Party for decades has little to offer them. If the party wants to keep these voters in 2028 and beyond, it needs to show them it is listening.

Blocking Trump is the floor, the bare minimum to expect from the new Congress. The bigger task is showing working people, in concrete terms, what a government on their side would look like, and building toward a 2028 sweep that can enact it. That is what is to be done.

People's World (Edited for space)

Plenty of Americans, it turns out, are more frightened by their grocery bills than by the word socialism.

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