

CAPITALISM

One in eight in poverty

Anna Pha

Living standards for the majority of Australians continue to fall while the gap between the wealthy and middle to low-income workers widens. The Reserve Bank of Australia has successfully driven millions of workers and their families into recession, impoverished them, with successive interest rate hikes while big business flourished paying next to no tax on profits.

We have a two-tier society when it comes to health services, education, housing, putting food on the table, paying power bills, or keeping your house cool in record high temperatures. Millions of people are being forced to make choices between everyday essentials.

Not only do we have the working poor, but we are now witnessing the working homeless. Having a job is no longer a guarantee of having a roof over your head. Economists say real wages rose last year, but not for all workers, especially those on low incomes.

The Consumer Price Index has risen by 17 per cent over the last five years. Only the highest paid and most militant organised workers can claim their wages kept up.

“The living standards of people on low incomes have taken a huge hit over the past year. Real household income, employment, and housing construction are in a nosedive while rents soar,” Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) CEO Sandra Goldie said.

“For people already unemployed, it is impossible to survive on \$54 a day. It’s wrong for a nation as wealthy as Australia to condemn 872,000 people relying on JobSeeker to abject poverty.” JobSeeker is a punitive system. CentreLink staff cuts have not been fully restored. Phones go unanswered. The system is almost impossible to navigate, especially for the homeless, people with disability, and Indigenous Australians.

One in eight Australians live below the poverty line, while taxes in this country are the ninth-lowest in the OECD. A disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are living in poverty, many in ‘third world’ conditions. Income support payments must be raised and the tax concessions for the rich and large corporations be



Photo: Marco Verch foto.wuestenigel.com – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0 Deed)

removed. The recently amended tax cuts for the rich still promote inequality.

HOUSING

Billions of dollars in government revenue are forgone by tax concessions to property owners. The Tax Expenditures and Insights Statements published by the Department of Treasury and Finance detail various property tax concessions. These only tell half the story.

Per Capita reports: “The share of total federal housing expenditure going to property investors rose from 16.5 per cent in 1993-94 to 61.4 per cent in 2021-22.

“Investor tax concessions have grown from \$1.5 billion in 2000 to an estimated \$18 billion in 2024, effectively operating as a shadow housing policy with a significant impact on the market.

“In 2023-2024, federal investor tax breaks will be worth more than ten times

the amount spent by the Federal government on social housing and homelessness services through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.”

State and federal governments have wound back public housing to its lowest level for decades and sold off the land to developers to make a mint

Rents are unregulated. Housing prices are unregulated. Housing has been commodified and has become unaffordable.

CLIMATE CHANGE

“There are about 1.8 million low-income households in Australia who cannot afford to escape extreme temperatures because they’re stuck in inefficient homes that are expensive to warm or cool,” ACOSS Climate & Energy Program Director Kellie Caught said.

A survey conducted by ACOSS in partnership with First Nations Clean Energy

Network of 1,007 people across Australia found 80 per cent of people were living in homes that are too hot in summer. It is set to get hotter. For those sleeping rough, there is no relief.

Eighty per cent said high temperatures in the home made them unwell and 14 per cent had sought medical attention for heat stress. That figure was 25 per cent for First Nations respondents. Most affected were those with chronic illness and or living with disability.

“In the May budget, the government must invest further in energy efficiency, electrification and rooftop solar across all low-income housing types, incentivise minimum energy efficiency rental standards, and raise the rate of JobSeeker and related payments,” Goldie said.

Continued on page 2

Not only do we have the working poor, but we are now witnessing the working homeless.

6



Interview with Cuban Ambassador

12



Paths to Palestinian statehood

The Guardian now has a podcast

Search for "Communist Guardian Podcast" or use the QR code



Guardian

Issue 2091

18 March 2024

Nuke the distractions

Opposition leader Peter Dutton has been in the news again. He says we should have nuclear to bolster our efforts to reduce carbon emissions. He's called nuclear "safe," as well as "feasible and proven," adding that "small modular reactors, (SMRs) can be plonked onto coal-fired power plants."

Dutton is either seriously deluded, or (more likely) doesn't mean this. Nuclear would be exorbitantly expensive, and the safety can't be taken for granted. Just ask the people of Fukushima. Small Modular Reactors *sound* good, but the only working one in the US has just been shut down after massive cost blowouts and delivering far less power than promised. It might be 30 years before working SMRs are available. So when Dutton says that new nuclear technologies "can be plugged into existing grids and work immediately," he is lying, unless 'immediately' means three decades.

As for the cost, the nuclear power Dutton is after would cost the nation at least \$367 billion, about the same as the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines. Dutton isn't about to ditch AUKUS, and he won't say where we should get our \$367 billion from, or where the reactors should go.

If this gives you déjà vu, that's because we've been through this charade many times. John Howard called for a "rational debate" on nuclear power in 2006. Since then, Dutton had eleven years in power. The government he was in did nothing about the nuclear wonderland Dutton is suddenly so keen on. They received a number of expert reports telling them that nuclear would be too expensive and unsafe.

What the Liberal/National Coalition *did* do was to actively campaign against lowering carbon emissions. They're still doing it.

All lucky PM Albanese has to do is stand next to Peter Dutton to make himself look like a rational person who cares about real-world solutions to the ongoing Climate Crisis.

Albanese has more in common with Dutton than he lets on. True, Labor doesn't call for nuclear they know will never be built but Albanese marches to the tune of fossil fuel extraction donors just as efficiently as the Coalition. The ALP takes credit for increases in renewables while waving through new fossil fuel projects at a frantic pace. They are better than the Coalition, but the climate emergency is about physics. The atmosphere doesn't give you any points for being not as bad as Dutton. All that matters is how much extra carbon we put into the atmosphere. Labor is making that worse.

Time is running out on the climate emergency. Temperature records are only being broken in one direction.

Australia needs to ignore Dutton's distractions, and hold Albanese to account. The *Guardian* has been reporting on Labor's inadequacy for some time. We will keep doing that. If you appreciate our efforts, support them.

www.cpa.org.au

CPA greeting to the 90th anniversary of the Iraqi Communist Party

Read Fahmy
General Secretary
Iraqi Communist Party

Dear Comrade,
The Communist Party of Australia conveys its warm greetings to the members and leadership of the Iraqi Communist Party on the 90th anniversary of its foundation.

The Iraqi Communist Party played a prominent role in the struggle to defend the rights of the working class, peasants, and marginalised groups in the nation. Your Party also played an important role in the struggle for national

independence against British colonialism from the foundation in 1934 until the 14 July 1958, revolution.

Ninety years of struggle, and your party is still defending the rights of the oppressed classes in difficult and extremely complex circumstances.

Your anniversary happens at a time where, we are witnessing hundreds of thousands of people around the world taking part in street rallies in solidarity with the Palestinian people demanding a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, the end of the occupation and an independent Palestinian state.

The CPA wishes the ICP every

success on the 90th anniversary of its foundation and we extend our congratulations to the party leadership, members, and supporters of the Iraqi Communist Party.

We are looking forward to strengthening the fraternal relations between the Communist Party of Australia and the Iraqi Communist Party based on international solidarity, the struggle for peace, and Socialism.

In working class solidarity,
Vinnie Molina
International Department
Communist Party
of Australia, CPA
8 March 2024

CAPITALISM

One in eight in poverty

Continued from page 1

COST OF TAX CONCESSIONS

The government foregoes \$28.35 billion on earnings from superannuation funds because of the 15 per cent concessional tax rate and another \$21.30 billion in taxation of on employer contributions. In many low-income cases the 15 per cent concessional tax rate is higher than the rate they would have paid. The system is distorted, maximising benefits for the wealthy.

The total amount on super tax concessions is fast approaching the cost of the age pension.

The 50 per cent tax concession on capital gains tax where an asset has been held for at least 12 months costs the government \$19.05 billion. Another costly loss to the budget which benefits the wealthy.

POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS

In the decades leading up to the 1970s many progressive reforms were carried out by governments. The public sector was built up. There were state banks and state insurance companies. Utilities were publicly owned. Public works departments built public housing, schools, hospitals, and other essential infrastructure. Public transport was owned, run, and subsidised by the public purse. Public was not a dirty word.

The age pension was on the path to becoming universal. The Whitlam government reforms included Medibank, a then-universally accessible bulk billing medical scheme. This has been dismantled, and the rapacious, profit-driven private developers have moved in with its replacement, Medicare, in crisis.

When the neoliberals took over in the 1980s, they embarked on a program of deregulation and privatisation. Almost anything that could be privatised has been, including critical government services. Private, for-profit corporations such as Sero and Price Waterhouse perform the work of public servants. Thousands of public servants were sacked, their work outsourced at a far higher cost to the taxpayer.

The result is windfall private profits for the few and increasing impoverishment of workers and their families.

This situation is not unique to Australia but is evident in other wealthy countries, perhaps most strikingly in the USA.

The economic crisis facing millions of people in Australia, across Europe, the UK, and northern America is seeing the rise of extreme right, anti-worker, nationalist, and fascistic political forces who are winning growing support with populist propaganda that targets the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Hard-won democratic rights have been eroded over those decades of neoliberalism. The task of taking collective action to defeat the neoliberals and reverse their policies is urgent. The state has critical to providing services that put people first.

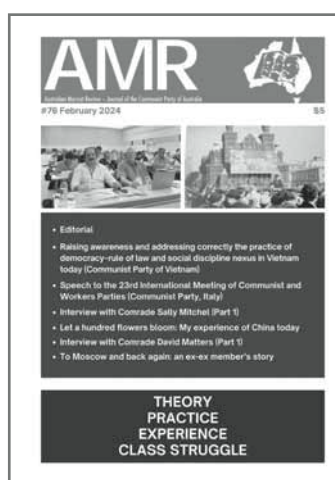
This can only be done by mass united action and the election of a people's government that puts people before profits. It's called socialism.

POLICY

In the meantime, the government must be pressured to end poverty now:

- Increase JobSeeker payments and other social security payments to above the poverty line.
- Commence a massive public housing building program
- Control rent increases
- Establish a national public bank with a social charter that provides affordable loans
- End tax concessions on the wealthy and fossil fuel projects
- Cancel the \$368 billion nuclear submarine program and military spending on US war preparations
- Nationalise energy companies
- Legislate the unfettered right for trade unions to take industrial action to be able to fight for their rights, higher wages, better working conditions and the above policies.

"In a country as wealthy as Australia, poverty is a choice – our government's choice. The solutions are clear. It's time now to act," Goldie said. ✪



Australian Marxist Review

Journal of the Communist Party of Australia

3 issues
are
\$25

including
postage within
Australia

**NEW ISSUE
NOW ON SALE**

#76 February 2024

02 9699 8844

shop@cpa.org.au cpa.org.au
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Timber Creek Propaganda

Denis Doherty

Timber Creek is little more than a pit stop in the Northern Territory. It is in the spotlight because it is next to Bradshaw, a huge military training base which is one of the largest live firing bases in the world.

The township is on the Victoria River which has recently seriously flooded.

Timber Creek township is at the centre of the military buildup in the Northern Territory and the ABC has used its TV program *Backroads* and its News App to argue that the military and the Aboriginal people can engage in cross-cultural exchange to everyone's benefit.

Backroads starts with Kristy O'Brien travelling in an American Osprey plane with US Marines. She looks the part of the embedded (compromised) journalist with the military.

O'Brien is the wife of the former NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner who welcomed the US marines as a boon to the Territory and necessary for "defence."

The program shows the local Indigenous people warmly welcoming US and Australian military. They hold welcoming ceremonies, explain various dreaming sites and show soldiers how to weave.

Bradshaw's commander seriously explains how he listens when indigenous elders reveal where the sacred sites are. The Australian Army then fires at the rest of the area, using tank rounds, missiles and more live fire.

Apparently the deal is that the traditional owners can visit their sacred sites on a restricted number of days each year and they can welcome the Australian and US soldiers and talk to them about traditional customs.

But wait, there's more good news: Bradshaw has needs and Indigenous people have set up businesses to supply the military with grading roads, hauling supplies and other services.

Some money was flowing to the Indigenous community for community facilities and for

tertiary education programs. But there was no suggestion that this money was their due and part of the rent/compensation for taking their land.

It seems a pity that the only way an Indigenous town can earn money is through assisting the military with their largely negative and damaging activities.

No hard questions were asked. Did the indigenous community know that they could become a target in a US-led war with China?

Did they know that US servicemen have an appalling record of abuse of host nations' people?

Did they know that their traditional land cannot be used again because the ammunition is toxic and will poison the creeks and rivers, and kill wildlife? Have they been told that unexploded ordinance remains a threat for decades?

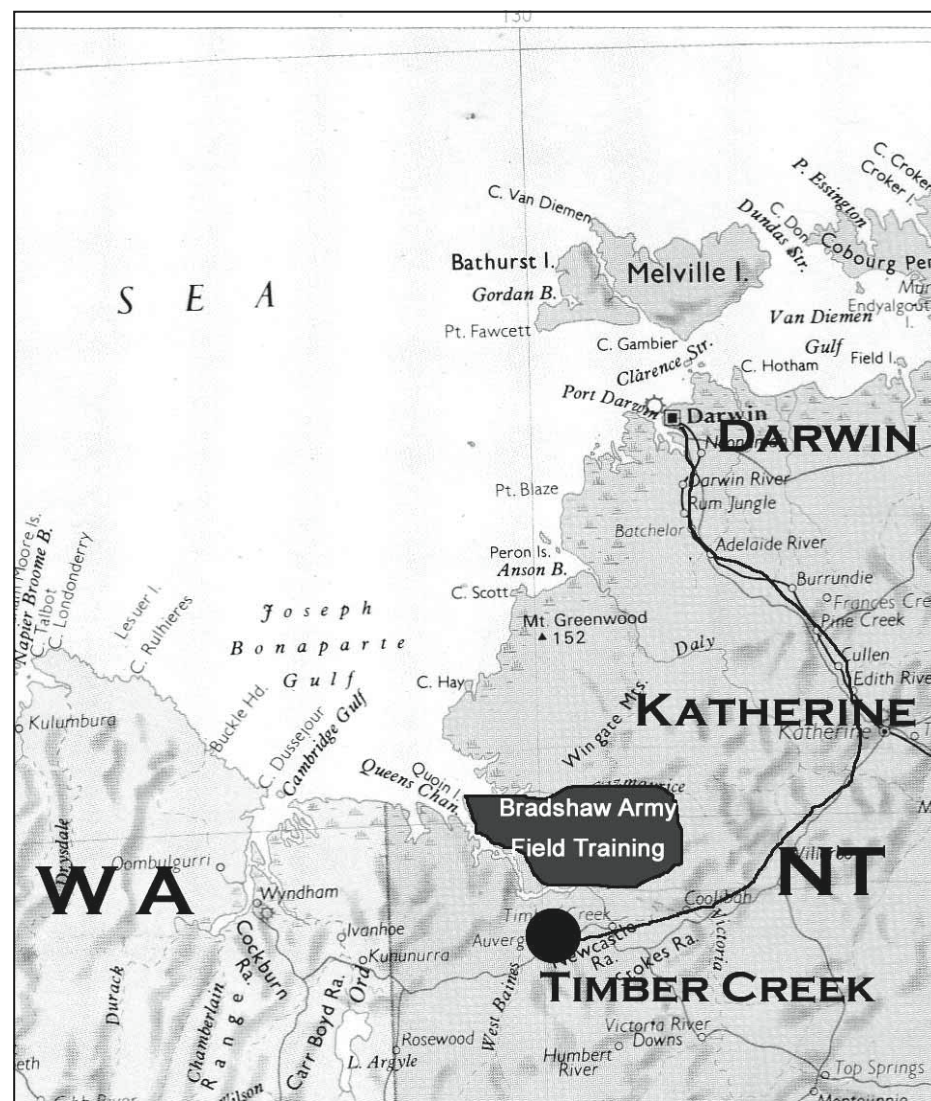
The US military personnel interviewed were a gormless young man who admitted he didn't know there were indigenous people in Australia, and a friendly US Navy nurse who was interested in different healing methods around the world.

None of the US Marines interviewed were the "if it stands, knock it over, if it moves, kill it" variety. We got a sanitised version. US Marines in the NT usually go on a charm offensive and do odd jobs like painting school seats or bus shelters, all with maximum media exposure.

Shortly after the *Backroads* program, Timber Creek was hit by massive floods from Cyclone Kirily and was cut off from supplies. People described being left to starve by the NT government and pastoralists were complaining about the lack of help to restore their fences.

Where were the brave military boys and girls? Why didn't they help?

Maybe all is not well in the paradise called Timber Creek. ☹



ASEAN-Australia Special Summit Deputy sheriff fails to deliver

Anna Pha

The four-day ASEAN-Australia Special Summit held in Melbourne from 4-6 March, ended with the Australian government failing to gain consensus around its aggressive stand towards China and Russia, and its position on Gaza. Australia received a well-deserved diplomatic slap in the face.

The meeting took place against a background of increased interest in and importance of the region for world trade and sea routes, and US imperialism's increasing aggression. Australia failed to undermine the neutrality of ASEAN.

Acting as the US deputy sheriff, the government attempted to pit ASEAN against China and have it move into the US orbit. As ASEAN decisions are based on consensus, the divisions within ASEAN and with Australia's draft saw a much more neutral outcome.

The Summit was a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Australia relations. The Association of South East Asian Nations has 10 members – Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Timor-Leste also participated.

The views of ASEAN's members towards China, Russia, and Israel are diverse. The Philippines and Singapore line up with

Australia on the question of China, whereas countries such as Cambodia and Laos are close to China. Singapore has indicated its preparedness to host AUKUS nuclear submarines. Malaysia and Indonesia with predominantly Muslim populations, strongly support the Palestinian people.

ASEAN countries have a total population of 600 million people. In 2023, ASEAN was China's largest export market with an annual value reaching AU\$790 billion, surpassing the US which had been its largest in 2022.

One of Australia's main aims at the Summit was to increase private business opportunities with ASEAN countries. It announced the allocation of AU\$2 billion for a new South-East Asia Investment Financing Facility for trade and investment for infrastructure and development of renewable energy.

STATEMENT

A number of Australia's proposals were deleted or watered down in the text of the Melbourne Declaration, as the final statement was called.

An original draft from Australia, hypocritically said, "We remain concerned about serious incidents in the area ... that have the potential to erode trust and confidence, increase tensions and undermine peace, security, and stability in the region."

Tensions in the South China Seas are being increased by Australia, the US, and the Philippines with military fly-overs and the presence of warships in the area.

Australia's proposals to include "leaders are committed to maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait" and urging against "the threat of force or coercion" were also deleted from the final text.

Instead, the final text referred to recognition of the South China Sea as "a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity." It went on to say, "We encourage all countries to avoid any unilateral actions that endanger peace, security and stability in the region."

Australia also failed to have included the demand that China and the Philippines abide by a "legally binding" 2016 arbitration ruling – which found in favour of the Philippines' territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Nor did Australia's attempts to include the "complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine" by Russia gain support. Instead, the statement mentioned previous United Nations resolutions deploring "in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine."

WONG

Foreign Minister Penny Wong trotted out the now well-worn attempts to characterise support for Palestinians as antisemitic.

"Some are intent on reproducing hatred and social conflict here – pushing absolutist agendas ahead of respect for peaceful disagreement that healthy democracy demands."

"We are a pluralist country, allowing for many different viewpoints, where we are united by respect for each other's humanity and for each other's right to live in peace."

MALAYSIA

Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim responded to a question from ABC journalist Stephen

Dziedzic about previous comments he had made about the China-phobia of the West. He said Malaysia has an open trading policy to encourage investments overseas from foreign countries.

"But we are [an] independent nation, we are fiercely independent. We do not want to be dictated [to] by any force. So, [while] we remain an important friend to the United States or Europe and here in Australia, they should not preclude us from being friendly to one of our important neighbours, precisely China. If they have problems with China, they should not impose it upon us. We do not have a problem with China. So, that's why I referred to the issue of China-phobia in the West."

Anwar did not hold back in expressing his country's independence when delivering the Gareth Evans Oration at Australian National University while in Australia either.

"Unfortunately, the gut-wrenching tragedy that continues to unfold in the Gaza Strip has laid bare the self-serving nature of the much valued, much vaunted rules-based order," Anwar said.

"The responses by the West to human suffering defies it. Why, for example, has the West been so vociferous, vehement, and unequivocal in the condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, while remaining utterly silent on the relentless bloodletting inflicted on women and children in Gaza?"

Anwar said as long as countries in the Indo-Pacific remain "neutral" and "non-aligned" regarding the US and China, "well, I don't foresee that much of a problem".

"Our response to the rise of China will be a critical determinant on whether our region will be characterised by detente or discord," Anwar said.

Judging by the stance and actions of the US's deputy sheriff, the region is headed towards discord and war. ☹

Support the *Guardian*
by donating to Press Fund

Vale Mick O'Shea, shearer, union leader, Dubbo local

It is with deep sorrow and profound respect that the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) announces the passing of Michael Joseph O'Shea, affectionately known as Mick O'Shea, on 29 February 2024.

Born on 22 October 1933, Mick was a stalwart member of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) for an incredible 75 years, leaving an indelible mark on the labour movement and the communities he served.

Mick became a shearer in Coonamble at the age of 15 after the death of his father forced him from school to the shearing sheds to provide for his mother Lilian and sisters Noreen, Patricia, and little brother Brian.

A proud shearer, Mick embodied the hardworking spirit of the Australian country worker as he travelled across NSW, shearing sheep and building a reputation for dedication and skill.

Mick's journey with the AWU began in 1947, at the age of 16, and he dedicated his life to the union, becoming an organiser from 1974 to 1993 and later serving as the AWU NSW Branch Secretary from 1993 to 1996.

His commitment to the cause was unwavering, and he played a key role in protecting and enhancing the

strength of the union across the Central West, leaving a legacy that will be remembered for generations.

His impact on the labour movement extended beyond his official roles, as he actively participated in supporting quality Labor candidates and played a pivotal role in the formation of Country Labor in Dubbo.

Mick's dedication to improving the lives of working people was a life's passion.

His family remembers the countless days he spent travelling across the state, resolving disputes, and tirelessly working to support families and communities from Broken Hill to Cobar, from Mudgee to Parkes.

Mick's ability to resolve conflicts with humour and compassion became legendary, his style was to talk through issues, not inflame situations.

One of Mick's significant contributions to the AWU's history was during the Wide Comb dispute while he served as the assistant secretary.

After retiring in 1996, Mick continued his commitment to service, volunteering at St. Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army, driven by his deep faith and dedication to helping others.

Australian Workers Union ✨

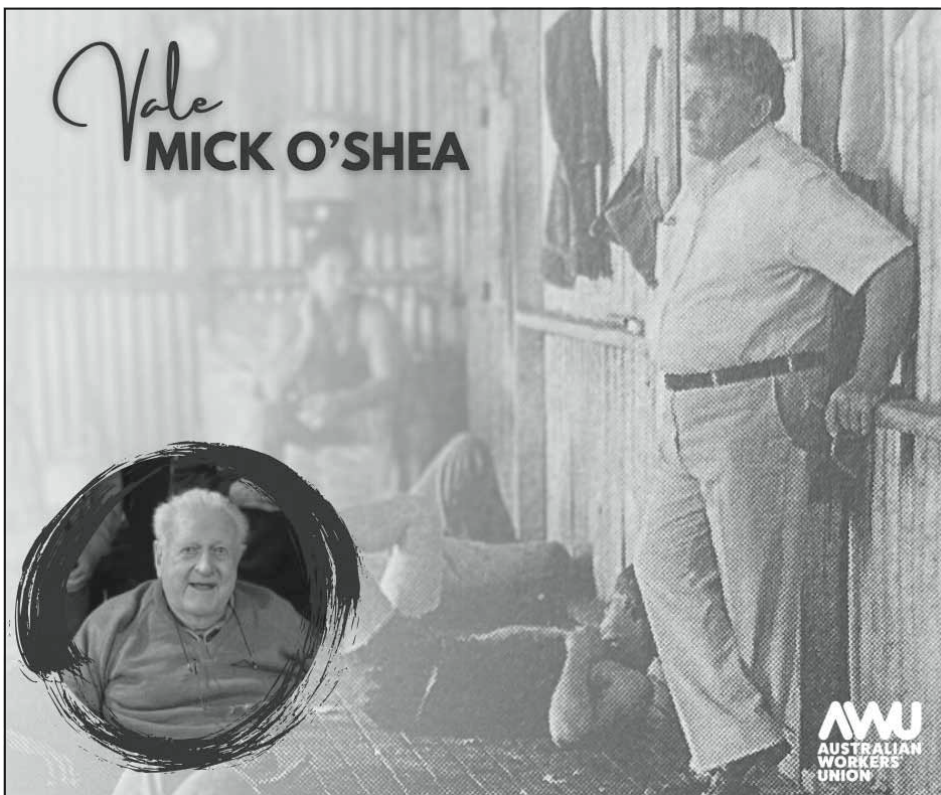


Image: Australian Workers' Union (AWU) via their facebook page.

Workers' lives at risk over asbestos secrecy

Unions have urged energy giant Esso to come clean on its plans to safely remove deadly asbestos from retired oil and gas platforms in the Bass Strait.

The Building Industry Group of Unions (BIG), which includes the CFMEU, AMWU, PPTEU and ETU (Construction, manufacturing, plumbing, and electrical unions), is fighting for the full decommissioning of all platforms and associated equipment.

Esso has refused to detail asbestos removal plans for the rigs, which contain high levels of the deadly material.

Esso, which is due to start decommissioning up to 12 Bass Strait platforms from 2027, also refused to provide unions with the contractors shortlisted to deal with the asbestos.

The company said it would

only provide the list after the contract had been awarded.

Separately, All Seas – a company with a track record of attempting to bring in foreign labour to work on Australian ships – has been awarded the contract for the heavy lift component of the decommissioning.

CFMEU National Secretary Christy Cain said unions would not settle for anything less than the highest safety standards and full remediation of the seabed.

"We have had enough deaths due to asbestos and related diseases over the years and we as a union will do everything we possibly can to ensure this project is safe for not just our workforce, but all workers," he said.

"Every year 4,000 people die of asbestos-related diseases. We will have zero tolerance for any employer including Esso and All

Seas that wants to cut corners on these jobs.

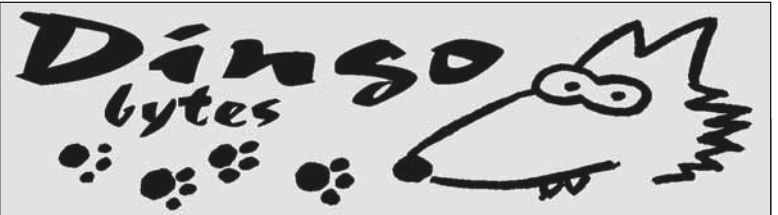
"This mob should be held to account on their lack of transparency, and should work with the union to ensure the safety of workers on the job is paramount.

"Esso is failing its obligation to be open and transparent about the process, which is appalling given these platforms are full of asbestos.

"The company must urgently provide detailed information about the asbestos removal including where it's located and how much there is so we don't risk workers dying from horrific diseases.

"We need absolute confidence the asbestos removal contractor is a reputable operator with the highest safety standards."

CFMEU ✨



As the body count in Gaza and the West Bank continues to rise after hitting 30,000, Richard Marles and Penny Wong claim that Australia is not sending weapons to Israel, arguing that their hands are clean. The truth is, as the Michael West report has revealed, that Australia exports military goods to Israel. The government even runs the risk of being prosecuted for war crimes. This country has sent more than \$10 million in arms and ammunition to Israel since 2019. Greens Senator David Shoebridge put it bluntly: "Wong's own department says in their published data that we have sent more than \$10 million in arms and ammunition to Israel in the last five years."

Wong has accused Shoebridge of contributing to "disinformation and misinformation," but that's what she's doing when she flatly denies sending weapons to Israel. Wong is relying on a very narrow definition of 'weapons' used by the UN, the Register of Conventional Arms. They only count whole weapons and don't include weapons parts. So Wong is right, in that sense.

But modern military weapons aren't simple items like bricks or pieces of timber. They consist of lots of different parts, also maintenance contracts and services. As West says, every F-35 bomber contains some Australian parts. More than 70 Australian companies help the F-35 program out with parts and services. Wong's words are no comfort to the victims of Israeli genocide.

As heat gets worse, it's no surprise to hear that disadvantaged people, and particularly Indigenous Australians are disproportionately affected. A survey from ACOSS, the Australian Council of Social Service, has found that 80 per cent of disadvantaged people are living in homes that get too hot in summer. Of those people, 72 per cent of First Nations respondents have trouble cooling their homes.

A lot of people had a laugh when Barnaby Joyce, our former deputy-PM, was found drunk on his back in a Canberra street, shouting obscenities into his phone. With some it added to Joyce's image as a lovable larrikin, instead of the private school-educated silvertail he really is. Others have worried if Barnaby is alright. Over at the *National Indigenous Times*, Reece Hartley has asked a good question; what if Barnaby had been Black? Joyce would probably have wound up in the back of a paddy wagon at the very least. "The behaviour of an Indigenous person under the influence is criminalised, whereas the same behaviour by a non-Indigenous Australian, especially a high-ranking politician, is considered within the context of privacy, care, and concern for his welfare," says Hartley.

Parasite of the Week: Leah Weckert, CEO of Coles. Weckert must have loved all the focus on Woolworths CEO Brad Banducci, who stormed out of an interview only to shuffle back on again. It made her look calm and reasonable. On the same program, Weckert was confronted by Coles' pretence that its wine brands are produced by little wineries in the Barossa. Her answer, that the fake brands "resonate with our consumers" meaning that fooling customers is something that works for Coles, so they're going to keep doing it – is a capitalist classic. They do it because they can.

Offshore gas 'Fundamental power imbalance' Save our Songlines



Raelene Cooper. Photo credit: Amelia Searson, Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Mardudhunera woman, Federal Court victor and former Chair of the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, Raelene Cooper, has released her submission to the Federal government's Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (OPGGS) regulatory review of offshore gas approvals instigated by the Federal Resources Minister Madeleine King in Perth and sets out Woodside's history with Murujuga traditional custodians.

This review into federal offshore regulator NOPSEMA's requirements for environmental approvals and consultation with traditional custodians followed an extensive lobbying campaign from the gas industry, which was sparked by Cooper's victory over Woodside in the Federal Court in September last year that forced a stop to their seismic blasting off the Pilbara coast.

A week after Cooper's Federal Court victory, gas giant Santos wrote to Minister King urging immediate reform of consultation requirements to prevent "ongoing delays" to environmental approvals, initiating an escalating pressure campaign from the gas industry and its lobbyists to weaken regulatory requirements for consultation with relevant people including traditional custodians.

Last month, while the Minister's own review into NOPSEMA regulations is still ongoing with submissions extended until 8 March, Minister Madeleine King introduced amendments to sideline Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek and the Act to fast-track approvals of gas projects, which Cooper described as yet another attempt to avoid consulting Aboriginal people.

In her attached submission to the OPGGS review, Mardudhunera woman and former Chair of the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation Cooper sets out the history of her people's consultation with Woodside over decades of development of their Burrup Hub gas project on top of sacred Murujuga rock art and songlines.

"I would like to tell the story of what consultation looks like when a huge powerful resource company, backed by the state government, has no consideration for people or cultural heritage, has no consideration for its impacts on families and communities," Cooper states.

"There has been a lot of talk from Woodside and other oil and gas companies recently about consultation with Aboriginal people, and cultural heritage holding back their projects, causing delays and costs."

"For decades these companies have been ignoring us or paying lip service to our rights and interests. Now that we have been able to assert those rights in a court, they are claiming that what few rights we have should be taken away, withdrawn. This is the way these companies have always behaved, I am not at all surprised that they continue to behave this way."

"Within my lifetime I have seen my cultural heritage desecrated and destroyed by Woodside and other companies on the Burrup. This is done with the support and assistance of governments who believe that my culture, and its World Heritage status is worth nothing against the corporate interests of multinational gas companies like Woodside."

"The government is seeking to reform regulations that are already too weak to protect us. Consultation by Woodside is conducted in a fundamental power imbalance. Information is withheld, so that custodians and community never have a proper understanding of the impacts on our heritage and cannot undertake the appropriate cultural processes to make decisions."

"This is a story that has been unfolding for the best part of my adult life, as I have watched while Woodside gradually destroyed the place that is so sacred to me and my family. It is a story about the ongoing arrogance of a company, and refusal to acknowledge or consult my people in meaningful ways that respect our rights and culture."

"I was there when my mother, a respected Elder in our community, watched and cried as Woodside bulldozers destroyed hundreds of rock carvings to build its dirty gas plants. I was there when the WA government and their lawyers brought a 'Compulsory Acquisition Order' to take the lands of the Burrup for Woodside to use and destroy however they wished. And I was there when the government delayed the World Heritage process for years to ensure industry was not impacted by its protections while our universal heritage values were degraded and destroyed."

Save Our Songlines ★

PEACE NOTES

Space Notes

Hannah Middleton

There is so much going on, militarily and commercially, in space that it is impossible to cover it all. Here are a few snippets.

Bruce Gagnon from the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space writes: "There has long been an attempt by the nuclear industry to move their deadly toxic project into space. The industry drools when it considers the profits by linking the atomic age with the space race. Early on, the Pentagon developed nuclear devices to power military satellites. Accidents happened during those days. Then in the 1980-1990's NASA put deadly plutonium-238 on interplanetary space missions to provide on-board power sources. The Galileo, Ulysses, and Cassini missions were loaded with pu-238. The NASA rovers currently driving around Mars taking soil samples for future mining operations are powered by plutonium-238. In addition the mission is about developing space nuclear power for weapons."

The office of Space Commerce will perform an astrodynamics evaluation of the tools SpaceX uses to manage more than 5,000 Starlink broadband satellites as part of the no-exchange-of-funds agreement. SpaceX uses an automated system to perform manoeuvres to avoid potential close approaches with other space objects.

China's reports that it plans to launch the Chang'e-6 lunar far side sample return mission around May this year. Chang'e-7 and Chang'e-8, launching around 2026 and 2028 respectively, will explore lunar resources at the lunar south pole and verify the in-situ utilisation of these resources. These missions will be the basis for establishing the International Lunar Research Station in collaboration with international partners.

Northrop Grumman is developing the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) that will track objects in the geosynchronous orbit, protecting US, and allied satellites. DARC is a global network of three advanced ground-based sensors to be operated in collaboration with AUKUS alliance partners, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

Earth's magnetic field is crucial for navigation and protection from solar storms. A new study suggests that satellite megaconstellations could be tampering with our planet's magnetism by depositing a shell of conductive material in the upper atmosphere.

A RAND study has found US commitments to space collaboration are hampered by clumsy execution. At least four Department of Defence organisations oversee space outreach to allies, each pushing different priorities and creating a complex web of classified disclosure rules that inhibit information sharing.

The US is prioritising increasing co-operation with its allies including Australia because Washington, with US\$35 trillion in debt, cannot afford to pay for all its space warfare programs.

The Space Force's Commercial Satellite Communications Office (CSCO) is buying Low Earth orbit satellite internet and is reported to be interested in small geostationary satellites and direct satellite-to-device links. CSCO manages satcom contracts worth about \$7 billion. The Space Force also is buying new government-owned communications satellites.

The US Space Force has awarded US\$66 million contracts each to Lockheed Martin and Boeing to design a new narrowband communications satellite that will expand the Mobile User Objective System (MUOS), a network of satellites used by the US military to transmit voice and data communications. The Space Force is expected to select one of the companies in 2025 to manufacture two flight-ready spacecraft.

Starlab Space, a joint venture of Voyager Space and Airbus Defence and Space, has announced an agreement with SpaceX to launch its commercial Starlab station on a single Starship launch.

NASA paid Intuitive Machines US\$118 million to design, build and fly the first private spacecraft to land on the moon. The lander, 'Odysseus', broke a leg at touchdown before falling over, and was expected to lose power and go silent.

For NASA's upcoming Artemis program, getting power to lunar bases is a top priority. The agency therefore created its Fission Surface Power Project to develop a small nuclear fission reactor to generate electricity on the lunar surface. Commercial companies Lockheed Martin, Westinghouse, and IX were each given US\$5 million contracts to develop fission reactor designs. A combination of solar and nuclear installations are planned to supply the electricity needs of habitats and science labs. NASA expects delivery of a system for use on the moon in the early 2030s.

DANCE FOR CUBA

LATIN NIGHT

FEAT. LATIN BAND CANDELA

23 MARCH 2024

FREMANTLE WORKER'S SOCIAL & LEISURE CLUB

36 ELLEN STREET, FREMANTLE

BAR OPENS 6PM (STRICTLY NO BYO)

MEALS FROM 6 TO 7:30PM

MUSIC FROM 8PM

GENERAL ENTRY \$20

MEMBERS \$15

INFO: 08 9480 5510

EMAIL: ACTSPRETH@GMAIL.COM

Exclusive Interview

Cuban Ambassador Tanieris Dieguez La O

A Carruthers

AC: Ambassador, the US blockade of Cuba has had devastating effects on the lives of ordinary Cubans. What are some of the struggles Cuban people have been facing in the last few months?

As you rightly say, the blockade has had a significant impact on all spheres of social life of the Cuban people. The policy of harassment and suffocation generates great problems for the economy and directly impacts on the development of the Cuban people, in their daily lives.

The policy of hostility of Donald Trump's government against Cuba introduced unprecedented measures, extremely detailed. All spheres of our society and the daily life of citizens suffered the impact, accentuated in a very significant way by the pandemic.

More than 240 measures were recorded. Most of them constituted actions to tighten the blockade with the aim of economically suffocating the country, subverting the internal order, creating a situation of ungovernability and overthrowing the Revolution.

The following measures were particularly restrictive:

- The inclusion of Cuba on the State Department's list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism.
- The possibility of action in US courts for lawsuits brought under Title 3 of the Helms-Burton Act.
- Sanctions or threats of sanctions against shipping companies, carriers, insurers or reinsurers involved in the supply of fuel to Cuba.
- The attack on international medical cooperation provided by our country.
- The creation of a list of restricted entities and accommodations. Among them are the remittance processing companies in Cuba, and the overwhelming majority of Cuban hotels.
- The prohibition of exporting to Cuba any product produced in any country if that product has 10 per cent or more US components.

MP Sharon Claydon's motion on Cuba mentions that the US blockade has had a severe impact on investment and trade. Cuba has ingenuity in so many crucial areas like agriculture, biotechnology, scientific research, cancer research. How important is the financial and commercial aspect of the blockade?

I would particularly like to mention the inclusion of Cuba in the State Department's list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism, which has had serious consequences mainly in the financial and banking sector. Just to mention one example, between January 2021 and February 2022, for example, 642 actions of foreign banks refusing to provide services to the country were reported; Cuban diplomatic missions in the world have lost their relationship with the banks that traditionally provided them with services, which affects the operation of these and the consulates, and the payment of Cuba's financial obligations to several international and regional organisations has been affected.

The impact of the Blockade is so far-reaching because it is not limited to prohibiting bilateral trade between the two countries. It aims to and succeeds in damaging Cuba's economic and commercial relations in any corner of the planet, often bypassing the



Cuban Ambassador Tanieris Dieguez La O with Andrew Irving.

sovereign prerogatives of other countries. It prohibits the export to Cuba of any product or technology that has a certain percentage of US components. It threatens the banks of any country, intimidates commercial companies, and takes coercive measures against businessmen and even against large companies from any part of the world.

It thus generates enormous obstacles for the development of the country, raises the costs of all economic operations, whether public or non-state, builds walls, pressures third parties, persecutes our international transactions, establishes fences. The aim is to isolate Cuba internationally, from the political, commercial, banking and financial points of view. The idea is to disconnect Cuba from a world dominated by the US.

That is why actions such as those that took place in the Australian Parliament are of great importance, because they show that Cuba is not alone, that in every corner of the world there are people who love us and who oppose this policy that is not only obsolete and failed, but cruel and inhumane.

The "Yes, I Can" (Yo si puedo) Cuban literacy program has been doing wonders. It's yet another initiative that shows how Cuba contributes to world progress. The program has been especially helpful for Indigenous people. How do you view the struggle of Indigenous people in this country?

Cuba has been collaborating for more than a decade with Australia's indigenous peoples. The Cuban method "Yo si puedo," which is also the pride of the Cuban school of pedagogy, is used successfully in the territories of the indigenous peoples. The Australian foundation "Literacy for Life" has been our partner in order to carry out our collaboration.

The literacy of the indigenous peoples of Australia through this method has not only had an impact on education, but also on social issues, with better levels of access to work, lower crime rates, and better overall participation in social and cultural life.

This is one more example of what Cuba has done and is doing despite the blockade. we do not give what only what we can spare, but we share what we have with the peoples of the world. This is part of our principles and our culture.

The Cuban people are a generous people, who have resisted despite the difficulties created by the blockade. That is why we must ask ourselves what Cuba could do if the blockade did not exist, how much more we could help the most disadvantaged in the world. The examples of our doctors in moments of extreme complexity in very difficult scenarios are an expression of that generosity of the Cuban people in the fight against Ebola in Africa, in the fight against Covid more recently.

What's one thing about Cuban culture and Cuban tradition that people should know more about?

Cuba is a beautiful country. A magical island in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. We have not only beautiful beaches, nature tourism, amazing places to visit and learn, we have a very significant culture.

Several Cuban places have been declared World Heritage by UNESCO. We have creative cities like Santiago and Havana, and also Trinidad.

Cuban music is recognised all over the world and we have artists of the highest level, the bolero for example, with a lot of tradition behind it. There is also the dance, the national ballet of Cuba is a paradigmatic institution of Cuban culture, ranked among

the best in the world. It is not only the musical and dance expressions that distinguish us.

Last year the knowledge of the Cuban rum makers was declared an item of the intangible heritage of humanity, like the French Parthnon.

Above all Cuba has a sacred patrimony in its people, in the warmth and hospitality of the Cubans, the kindness, and the affection that we offer is also part of our traditions.

We in the Communist Party of Australia have long supported the Cuban revolution and Cuba's socialist orientation. What can we do to further support the Cuban struggle?

All efforts around the world are important. On behalf of the Cuban people, I would like to thank the Communist Party of Australia for its support over the years.

We are commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Southern Cross Brigade this year in conjunction with the 35th anniversary of bilateral relations between Cuba and Australia. It's a good time continue the work and strengthen relations between our peoples.

For Cuba the work of the Australia Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS) and the CPA is of utmost importance. We have received support in all areas, not only from the political point of view, but also help to our hospitals, to our children, to local projects in areas such as the Ciénaga de Zapata and we are grateful for all these gestures because we know that they are made with great effort and affection.

We must continue to debunk the misinformation against Cuba. I think we can do more in the international mobilisation, not only from the political point of view but also economically. We must continue to denounce the blockade, its impact on the development of the Cuban people and other people. ✖

"we share what we have with the peoples of the world"

Biden's program: Economic populism at home, imperialism abroad

Mark Gruenberg

Washington – President Joe Biden's last State of the Union address before the 2024 elections laid out an agenda of sharp contrasts, with economic populism dominating domestic policy and Cold War confrontation and militarism defining his international strategy.

At home, Biden pledged to impose higher taxes on billionaires and price-gouging corporations, make prescriptions cheaper for Americans on Medicare, and defend democracy and abortion rights from Trump and the GOP.

Derailing this otherwise liberal-progressive program, however, was an approach to immigration that outflanks Republicans on the right, a foreign policy of Cold War confrontation with China and Russia, and a promise of further support for Israel's war against Palestinians.

Public anger over the latter issue disrupted Biden's speech before it even began: A large sit-in protest by ceasefire demonstrators blocked Pennsylvania Avenue, forcing Biden's motorcade to drive an alternate route from the White House to the Capitol.

He slammed Trump as a threat to the rights and freedoms Americans now take for granted. Throughout, on their side of the House chamber, glum-looking Republicans sat on their hands, often looking down.

Biden's criticism of misogynist, 91-count-indicted, and twice-impeached Trump focused on the Republican's instigation and encouragement of 6 January 2021, invasion, insurrection, and attempted coup d'état attempt at the US Capitol.

He sought to warn the country about Trump's increasingly belligerent and erratic statements. Atop them: Trump's promise to be a dictator "on day one" if he takes office again next 20 January. Nobody – neither Biden nor Trump's MAGA legions – believe Trump would stop there.

PROGRESSIVE ECONOMICS

On a host of domestic issues, Biden put forward progressive proposals and plans he said he had for the future. He reminded viewers that he inherited a raging pandemic and high joblessness from Trump and that the coronavirus has been curbed while joblessness is at a 50-year low.

He also cited a list of legislative accomplishments from his first two years in office to battle the virus and the ensuing depression, all enacted by a narrowly Democratic Congress. He then rattled off the pro-worker executive orders he'd issued during the last year after MAGA took control of the House and lawmaking came to a virtual halt.

Biden also proposed a variety of ideas

for lawmakers to consider this year and for his second term, if he beats Trump this year. Restoring and strengthening the Voting Rights Act led his list.

Others included raising the federal minimum wage from its present \$7.25 an hour and passage of the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, labor's top legislative priority, to make unionising easier. Biden also wants to raise the corporate income tax rate to 28 per cent and institute a 25 per cent minimum tax on millionaires. He also wants to give public school teachers a raise. He didn't say how or how much.

Biden condemned banks and credit card companies and vowed to lead a battle to end the "junk fees" they impose on everyone. Democrats again cheered as the Republicans looked down and sat on their hands. He also got an enthusiastic response to his call for curbs on mortgage rates and rents and called for subsidies to help people pay those rising costs.

COLD WAR AND MILITARISM ABROAD

On the foreign policy portfolio, Biden continued the Cold War approach of ramping up fear about other nations and their alleged threats to US democracy.

"We're standing up against China," Biden declared. Listing the countries he's

supposedly brought on board in the alliance to 'contain' China – "India, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Pacific islands" – Biden said that his agenda of penalties and trade restrictions have put the US "in a stronger position to win the conflict of the 21st century against China."

China, for its part, continues to say it seeks peaceful co-existence and cooperation with the US, not confrontation or war. It opposes the militarisation of East Asia.

When it comes to Europe, Biden said the US needs additional billions of dollars to bolster "democracy" in Ukraine, which is fighting Russia. The \$60 billion in additional money he wants for the war in Ukraine that is being held up in Congress must be approved immediately, he said.

Most of the money will not go directly to Ukraine, however. The US military would send its old weapons to Ukraine and the "aid" money approved by Congress would then be used to buy new weapons. That puts funds directly into the pockets of US armaments makers who have raked in huge profits thanks to the war in Ukraine, and of course, it subtracts from meeting human needs in the US.

People's World (edited for reasons of space) ✱

Streaming Review: *Dopesick*

FJK

If a good series needs a villain, *Dopesick*, now streaming on SBS On Demand, has it, in the form of the Sacklers. This family owns Purdue Pharma, without whom the USA's opioid crisis might well not have happened. More than 400,000 people have died since Purdue introduced OxyContin in 1996. The company's executives knew they were selling a substance far more addictive than their marketing claimed ("only 1 per cent get addicted" was the false refrain).

Dopesick follows the fortunes of a decent, kind doctor (Michael Keaton) who becomes involved with the drug, a young mineworker (Betsy Mallum) who is increasingly degraded through her addiction, a naive young salesperson (Will Poulter) who slowly works out how much damage his product is doing, and Rosario Dawson as a determined prosecutor who works out early what's going on and pursues Purdue.

There is also a likeable trio of assistant attorneys who are

investigating the company over its dodgy marketing. That 'only 1 per cent' claim turns out to have been based on a letter to the editor of a medical journal which Purdue misrepresented as an authoritative study. The show is carefully made and well-acted, especially for fans of Michael Keaton who plays a similar role to the one he had in *Spotlight* as a troubled but decent late-middle-aged professional.

Villains-wise, *Dopesick* over-eggs the pudding by depicting Richard Sackler as not only responsible for the strategy of lying about OxyContin's addictive qualities and pushing ever higher doses on badly-educated people, but also as a deeply odd person, distant, and autocratic. Michael Stuhlbarg does a great job, but his performance slaps the audience across the face with the message that Richard Sackler's oddness and evil is the prime mover behind the opioid crisis, leaving us with the comforting thought that if only powerful corporations weren't headed by evil creeps, the whole system would work fine.

Perhaps this is too harsh, as the corruptibility of the USA's health

system is given quite an airing in this show. It's a system in which Ronald Reagan gutted the agency supervising the safety of medications, leaving about 34 people to supervise some 30 thousand medications, and where Purdue found it easy to corrupt the enfeebled Food and Drug Administration, and deceptively market their drug to doctors. It's also a class-based story: the company wrote off stories of addiction for a long time because everyone knows what poor hillbillies are like. Meanwhile the Sacklers have their meetings in galleries they've funded, full of expensive art. In addition to paying a \$600 million US fine which still leaves them seriously wealthy, a consequence of the opioid crisis has been that some galleries have refused to take the Sackler's money.

This could all happen here, the combination of a government that doesn't care and corporations victimising the poor is always with us. Speaking of weak government regulation and addictions, an irony for Australian viewers is that the price of watching *Dopesick* is a tsunami of uninterrupted ads for gambling apps. ✱



Caricom calls for speeding up Haiti's political transition

Members of the regional bloc had been pushing for months for the establishment of a transitional government in Haiti as protests called for Ariel Henry's resignation. The meeting was attended by the governments of the United States, France, Mexico, and Canada, in addition to the United Nations.

The Caribbean Community (Caricom) urged in Kingston, Jamaica's capital, to accelerate the political transition in Haiti towards a solution to the escalating violence in the Caribbean country.

The position was expressed at the end of an emergency meeting behind closed doors of Caribbean leaders in search of a solution to the Haitian crisis. Members of the regional

bloc had been pushing for months for the establishment of a transitional government in Haiti as protests called for Ariel Henry's resignation. The meeting was attended by the governments of the United States, France, Mexico, and Canada, in addition to the United Nations.

For his part, the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, announced the availability of an additional 133 million dollars to finance the deployment of a multinational force in Haiti and for humanitarian aid.

The President of Guyana and President

of Caricom, Mohamed Irfaan Ali, acknowledged after the meeting the deep concern of the partners in the region about the turning point in Haiti.

He expressed confidence in strong and decisive action to stem the tide of lawlessness and hopelessness in Haitian territory. Irfaan Ali acknowledged that they were "deeply distressed that it is already too late for too many who have lost too much to criminal gangs."

The Guyanese president was also optimistic about the possibility of finding a

solution to the political crisis in Haiti, but with a long-term vision of development in that nation.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry did not attend the meeting, as he remains in Puerto Rico. He is facing increasing pressure to either resign or agree to a transitional council in a country that has held no elections since 2016.

Telesur ✱

The Chinese Peoples Consultative Conference and the Australian media

David Matters

Many Australians seem to accept without question the bias of the Australian media. A very subtle form of brainwashing goes on every day.

The first thing we hear in reporting on the proceedings of the Peoples Conference is the use of the term “rubber stamp.” The discussion about the economy of China and all other things about the political processes in China are framed so as to continue the subterfuge and maintain the ignorance of the Australian people. This is part of the fraud being pushed to convince Australians that it is okay to spend excessive amounts on preparing for a conflict with China.

The reality of China is very different to the autocratic image that these pundits portray.

China has eliminated absolute poverty and has made huge strides on the environment. Over a billion Chinese people have a life that their parents and grandparents could only dream of.

The legacy of a people's China is the result of the Chinese people reaching an historic step forward to a multi-party democratic system that is part of the development of socialism in China. The Chinese people are making their own history.

This Consultative Conference is a huge step forward in the development of China. Since embracing the opening up, the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people towards clear goals. The current goals of high quality production which takes in the environmental costs will be an achievement for a developed socialist country.

The Chinese have been able to grab hold of the globalisation of the world economy and link their destiny with this deepening process. The introduction of the technological revolution has gone along with overcoming the negative features of the industrial revolution, and a drive to capture and harness urbanisation and to reduce its negative effects.

The creation of a social welfare system has increased the involvement of the people in creating their own destiny. All of this is possible because China has a socialist system led with a people's democracy.



14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Beijing, March 2024. Photo: Xinhua/Li He

An honest comparison with Australia would reveal that we have a growing crisis of homelessness. Workers with jobs and young families are forced to rough it. In Brisbane, Musgrave Park is the site of a homeless camp for those who are victims of the Reserve Bank's efforts to create unemployment and homelessness. I am sure such camps exist in all cities. Thousands live in single rooms or have returned to parental homes. This is the progress made by our capitalist system.

The parties that try to reform capital find themselves tied to the state monopoly

system that has dictated failure on necessary reforms to deal with climate change.

War-making policies are extending inflation, and our government is heavily involved in worsening the security and safety of our citizens through promoting war industries.

When our Australian media call China “autocratic,” what can they say when the density of democratic organisations such as trade unions in Australia is as low as 12.5 per cent overall. In China the unions have grown in membership to around 47 per cent and are still growing.

Two of the topics discussed at the People's

Conference are legislation to protect workers from unpaid overtime, and the introduction of right to disconnect from the workplace, a law that was such a problem for the employing class here.

Mass media bigotry now extends to stopping a real discussion of these issues. Our biased news outlets call dissenters “cheerleaders” or “puppets.”

The best thing that could happen is for more Australians to see for themselves the reality that is modern China. ☆

Portugal: On the results of the 2024 Legislative Elections

Statement by Paulo Raimundo, Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) General Secretary

March 11, 2024

In this election campaign, in this journey for a better life, we affirmed the CDU – the [Unitary Democratic] Coalition encompassing the Portuguese Communist Party, the Ecologist Party ‘the Greens,’ the Democratic Intervention Association, and many other democrats and citizens with no party affiliation – as a force of honesty, dignity and confidence.

We salute the CDU activists who made of this election campaign a notable moment in defending the interests of the workers and the people and the values of April [Revolution].

A special reference to the many young people who took part in this CDU campaign and lent it the joy, energy and creativity that are typical of youth.

A word of thanks to all of them for their commitment, which goes far beyond this election.

The result obtained by AD [Democratic Alliance – right wing coalition] in these elections is a negative factor in terms of addressing

and solving the problems confronting the workers and the people. It facilitates the path of regression, the attacks on rights and the favours to big business that have always marked the action of PSD [Social Democratic Party] and CDS [People's Party; a Christian Democratic Party]. It increases the serious risks of democratic impoverishment, which are already latent in various dimensions of national life.

In a context in which the discussion and outcome of possible agreements, whether with IL [Liberal Initiative – right wing] or Chega [far right], will fill the media debates, we would like to stress from the outset that this discussion must not conceal what the AD project, and specifically the PSD and CDS programs, represent in themselves. They are a project to attack workers' rights and worsen people's living conditions, wages and pensions, to degrade public services, for privatisations and the attempted destruction of the state's social functions to benefit private business in areas such as healthcare, education, social protection or housing.

These goals, which correspond to the agenda of big capital, are

aimed at attacking the democratic regime, the institutions and the Constitution itself.

The result now obtained by AD is inseparable from the choices made by the PS government. The promotion of the right-wing policy over the past few years, and in particular its imposition by the PS absolute majority, generated injustices and legitimate discontentment and dissatisfaction with growing difficulties for the workers and the people. It favoured the demagogic discourse, in particular that of Chega. The absence of responses to crucial problems was used to cover up the past actions of PSD and CDS and their plans to now resume them.

The CDU's result, with a reduction in its parliamentary representation and a percentage below that of two years ago, is a negative development. But it is, nonetheless, an expression of resistance, all the more important and significant given that its construction had to face a prolonged environment marked by hostility and denigration, by a constant falsification of PCP positions, in order to feed anti-communist prejudice and

narrow its potential growth, by the promotion of reactionary forces and conceptions and by a fabricated dispute between two candidates for prime minister, seeking to narrow the choice to similar options and to conceal alternative solutions and policies.

The workers and the people can count on the CDU to be as courageous as ever, to defend their rights, to confront the interests of the economic groups and multinationals, and to affirm the values of April and what they represent for a progressive and sovereign Portugal. We salute all those who placed their trust in, and voted for, CDU. Those who have always voted for CDU and know that they have never had reason to regret it. Those who at some point stopped voting for CDU and are now returning. Those who have for the first time trusted CDU with their vote.

To all of them, and to the Portuguese people, we are here to say the same that we said during the election campaign.

The workers and the people can count on the CDU's initiative and activity to provide answers and solutions to their problems.

Wages, pensions, housing, healthcare, children's and parents' rights, women's rights, youth rights, the environment and nature conservation, Peace, will be some of the commitments that we will take from the election campaign to the Assembly of the Republic.

As will our initiative and intervention to confront the right-wing policies and its promoters from the outset, to fight reactionary projects, to defend freedom and democracy.

Initiative and intervention to promote the necessary convergence, to give shape to the alternative policy, affirming our own political project, determined by clear options to break with right-wing policies, confronting the interests of big capital, defending national sovereignty, once again raising the values, achievements and rights that April brought with it.

Initiative and intervention to advance the struggle of the workers and the people, which today, as always, is a decisive factor of resistance, transformation and progress.

This force of April is here, for whatever may come our way, with its permanent courage, to confront, build and move forward. ☆

Countries resume funding of the UN agency aiding the Palestinians

The Swedish government has said that it would resume funding the United Nations aid agency supporting Palestinians.

Its decision comes weeks after more than a dozen countries halted hundreds of millions of dollars of support in response to Israeli allegations against the organisation and follows similar moves by the European Union and Canada.

Sweden's U-turn came as a ship bearing tons of humanitarian aid was preparing to leave Cyprus for Gaza after international donors launched a sea corridor to supply the besieged territory, facing widespread hunger after five months of war.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides told reporters late on Saturday that the ship would depart within the next 24 hours.

The UN agency had warned that without funding being restored, the already desperate situation for the two million Palestinians in Gaza would deteriorate even further.

"The humanitarian situation in Gaza is devastating and the needs are acute," Sweden's development minister Johan Forssell said, adding that UNRWA had agreed to increased transparency and stricter controls.

Sweden said it will give UNRWA half of the \$38 million (£30m, AU\$58m) funding it promised for this year, with more to come.

Israel had accused 12 of UNRWA's thousands of employees of participating in the 7 October Hamas

attacks on Israel, during which 1,139 people were killed and around 250 others taken hostage.

Countries, including the United States, quickly suspended funding to UNRWA worth about AU\$680 million, almost half its budget for the year.

While the UN has launched investigations, Israel has failed to provide any evidence for its accusations.

Meanwhile, as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan was set to begin, hungry Gaza residents scrambled for packages of food supplies dropped by US and Jordanian military planes – an utterly inadequate method of delivery, according to humanitarian groups. Mal-functioning parachutes have led to the airlift killing five Gaza civilians.

People dashed through devastated Gaza City neighbourhoods as the aid descended. "I have orphans, I want to feed them!" one woman cried.

"The issue of aid is brutal and no one accepts it," said another resident, Momen Mahra, claiming that most airdropped aid falls into the sea. "We want better methods."

The US – the most prolific supplier of arms to Israeli forces – said that its planes airdropped more than 41,000 "meal equivalents" and 23,000 bottles of water into northern Gaza.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said at least 30,878 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli action since the war began.

Morning Star ☼

CP of Greece Statement

Yemen exercise: a war operation for the interests of Greek capital

Since 3 March the frigate *Hydra* has been sailing in the dangerous waters of the Red Sea.

Its participation in the European and Euro-Atlantic naval mission confirms that the bourgeoisie does not hesitate to involve the people in military adventures, even to lead them into war, in order to defend its interests and those of its US-NATO allies.

Its own interests are hidden behind the "national interest" which the government and the other parties shamelessly invoke in order to justify the operation.

The other parties, especially SYRIZA and PASOK, have not said a word about this dangerous and unacceptable war operation. And how could they say anything, since the course of the frigate and of the Greek involvement in the war as a whole is determined by the interests of the bourgeoisie,

the US-NATO-EU, which they all serve with their policies.

The operation in the Red Sea defends the interests of the ship-owners who control the largest fleet in the world in terms of maritime transportation and shipping.

The port of Piraeus is the first European stop for the majority of merchant ships passing through Suez. Without the canal, the port will lose its value as a gateway from Asia to European markets.

This goes against the plans of the Greek monopolies, governments, and their parties to turn Greece into a transport and energy hub.

In the wider area of the Red Sea, from the entrance to the Persian Gulf to the east coast of Africa, there is a build-up of military forces from all the imperialist camps, each aiming to secure its own interests against its competitors.

By participating in the

imperialist plans and war operations, our people become the perpetrators against other peoples in the region, with whom they share the same interests, and at the same time the victims of the imperialist plans of NATO's opponents.

Therefore, today it is necessary to link even more decisively the struggle against the military involvement with the conflict against the plans of the bourgeoisie and the policies of the parties that serve its profits and interests, leading the people into dangerous paths.

It is necessary to strongly dispute the dominant anti-popular policy, which not only deprives the people of their basic needs, but will not hesitate to turn them into canon fodder for the imperialists once again, as competition is intensifying worldwide and in our neighbourhood.

Communist Party of Greece (KKE) ☼

US Republicans leave workers in the heat

You'd think that now is a time when outside workers need more, rather than less heat protection. Heat-related deaths have increased in the South Western states of the USA, and climate change means things are only going to get worse.

In the USA there are no federal rules that protect outdoor workers from heat. It's up to states. Some states have protections; California, Oregon, and Washington. In other states employers make the decisions.

After a campaign in Florida's Miami Dade county to get a heat protection ordinance passed, Florida Republicans, acting for industry groups, passed a bill to remove local governments' authority to adopt heat standards, such as guaranteed shade and rest

breaks, for workers. The bill awaits final approval in the Florida State House before heading to Gov. Ron DeSantis. If signed into law, it will take effect 1 July.

The Florida bill bans local ordinances giving workers water and shade breaks. It bans required heat-exposure training programs, protections for employees who report heat exposure issues and record-keeping requirements.

Texas has passed a similar bill which limits local governments from establishing ordinances for mandatory water and shade breaks for outdoor workers.

Outdoor workers in the USA are at a 35 times greater risk of death from heat than the rest of the population. ☼



Global Briefs

YEMEN: Massive protests for Palestine continue across Yemen. Friday rallies attract millions of participants who march for Gaza. Last Friday was no exception – demonstrators carried banners condemning Israel and its western allies, and proudly proclaimed their solidarity with Palestine by displaying Palestinian flags.

GREECE: Protesters have hurled fireworks and petrol bombs at police outside the Parliament building. Thousands of people turned out for yet another demonstration against plans to introduce privately-run universities. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd – several people were hurt and received medical help from volunteer medics.

FRANCE: The right to abortion has been inscribed in the French Constitution. At a special public ceremony the Justice Minister used a 19th century printing press to seal the amendment in the document, making abortion a fundamental right for French women.

CANADA: A monument to the Waffen-SS Galicia Division has been dismantled in the Canadian town of Oakville in Ontario. The monument to the Ukrainian Nazi WW2 collaborators was installed at the Ukrainian cemetery in 1988 despite protests from local activists and journalists. Ukrainian President Zelensky's visit to Canada in September 2023 and an invitation of the former Nazi to meet and greet him in the Canadian Parliament had caused an international condemnation for treating a war criminal as a heroic freedom fighter.

RUSSIA: Russian security agency (FSB) has foiled an attack on a Moscow synagogue by Islamic State (IS) terrorists. "On the territory of the Kaluga region, a stop was put to the activity of Wilayat Khorassan, a cell of the Afghan branch of the international terrorist organisation Islamic State, which is banned in Russia, whose members were planning to commit a terrorist attack against one of the Jewish religious institutions in Moscow," the FSB said in a statement. "During the operation to detain them, the terrorists put up armed resistance to Russian FSB staff and as a result were neutralised by return fire."

NIGERIA: Nigeria is exploring the possibility of joining BRICS, the country's Foreign Minister Yusuf Tuggar said. The minister visited Russia in March and reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to strengthening diplomatic and economic relations with Russia. Nigeria appreciated Russia's support for the country's efforts to develop its industrial base, with Russia willing to facilitate the completion of construction of the Ajaokuta steel plant and the restart of Rusal's aluminium smelting plant in Nigeria.

USA: US President Joe Biden gave his State of the Union Address last week. The White House intended to use this opportunity to create a powerful visual image directed against Putin – mentioned in the speech, of course. The plan was to invite Mrs Zelensky, the Ukrainian president's wife and Yulia Navalny, the widow of 'Putin's critic' Alexy Navalny to sit next to Jill Biden during the speech. It would have made such a lovely picture but something went wrong. Both women declined the invitation. Mrs Zelensky would not sit next to a Russian and Mrs Navalny cited exhaustion as an excuse.

cpa.org.au/shop

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

email: editor@cpa.org.au



Barbarism and Capitalism

While proofreading a page for our comrades who produce the *Guardian*, I noted something that I feel should be clarified for all comrades regarding the relationship between capitalism and fascism.

Often, public discourse or dialogue regarding fascism refers to it as something deep in the past or as a political state that occurs when a political party identifying as fascist gains power, or even when a right-wing political leader pushes the boundary of their legal authority (like in the case of Donald Trump).

But, as Communists, we must remember that under capitalism, fascism is not an either/or state. As previous comrades like George Jackson and R. Palme Dutt have noted, fascism results from decaying capitalism. Fascism results from the forces of capital exerting their authority on the people to maintain their hold on power when the

conditions of life under capitalism decay to such an extent that people begin to see the inequality inherent in the system.

In our current moment, we are increasingly seeing a decline in living standards and the suppression of free speech and action protesting these declining standards and imperialist actions taken by governments here in Australia and globally. To me, the authoritarian actions of all governments under capitalism to oppress workers and people demonstrate that all capitalist governments are fascist. All that is required for them to show their true face are circumstances of stress that challenge the authority of capital.

Therefore, we should never believe any claims capitalist governments make about Human Rights, freedom, dignity, or the equality of people. They are lies designed to lull us into complacency, to obscure actions that are unjust as 'hard decisions,' and to keep the people too weak and isolated to challenge their conditions. All capitalist governments are fascist. All that changes is the amount of force used to maintain their authority. When people are weak, they use less. When people are strong or growing in strength as they currently are – that is when we will see, and should be prepared for; escalating violence and oppression.

Thomas Wakefield

China's National People's Congress and the path to socialism

Dear Editor,
The annual session of China's National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) has just been held in Beijing. The tragi-comic spectacle of bourgeois economists, pundits and analysts poring over the runes to see signs of China's imminent collapse is always with us. There are dates and times on the calendar when these same 'experts' become more than usually engaged. The 'Two Sessions' as the Beijing meetings are commonly called become one of those moments when Western economists desperately search for weakness.

Stephen Bartholomeusz, writing in *The Age*, and *Sydney Morning Herald*, knows the script well. He described the event as "China's moment to face its demons," and insinuated that the Chinese economy, its political system and all that the West has come to loathe is about to implode. This none-too-splendid obsession intensifies around the time of the NPC. Each year the sages and seers prophesy doom and each year passes with

China's economy, and political system intact.

Bartholomeusz is concerned at 'the myriad economic problems' that supposedly plague China. He would be better advised to worry more about America's, or Australia's myriad problems and crises. We would be better advised to encourage our government to 'face its demons' of a stagnant economy and recession. Instead, Bartholomeusz anguishes at Xi Jinping's "ideological aversion to handing cash out to households, preferring to rely on state-directed investments in industrial activity to drive economic activity." At the core of his concern is the word 'ideology.'

China is telling the world, in no uncertain terms, that its march towards socialism is not negotiable. The worry for bourgeois economists is just what continued economic growth, and socialist development mean for capitalism's apologists. Socialism's growth in a strong economy, pitted against capitalism's decline and a shrinking global economy, keeps people like Bartholomeusz awake at night.

One simple phrase epitomises the difference in approach between the Marxist Xi and the global capitalist economic 'experts' who would advise him. He has infuriated Western economists by repeating that 'housing is for living, not speculation.' In Australia the reverse is tragically the case. We

Looking for the truth?

Want a paper you can trust?

Which is on your side?

Special Guardian Subscription Offer

10 issues for \$10

See subscription form page 11

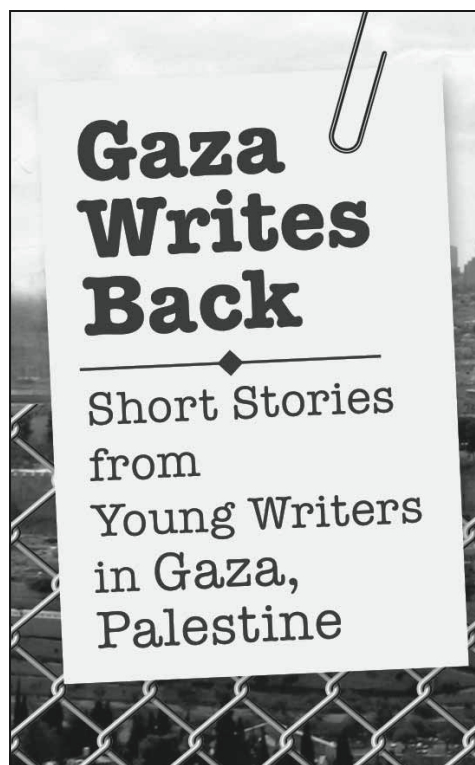
can all see the results. Housing is unaffordable. Rental properties are out of the reach of so many. The price of home ownership is all but impossible for young families. Those with mortgages stare down the prospect of default. Socialism or capitalism. It's a choice that becomes easier to make with every passing day.

It is precisely that socialism is looking more like an option, that drives the frenzy against China.

In solidarity,

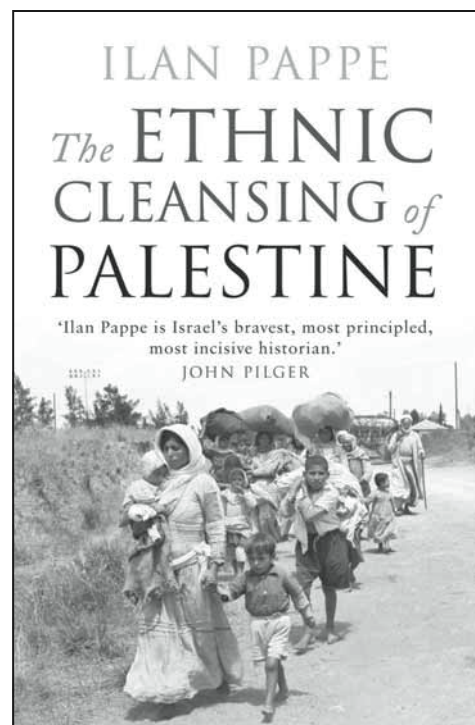
William Briggs

WORTH READING/WORTH WATCHING



Gaza Writes Back, Refaat Alareer
(editor/contributor)

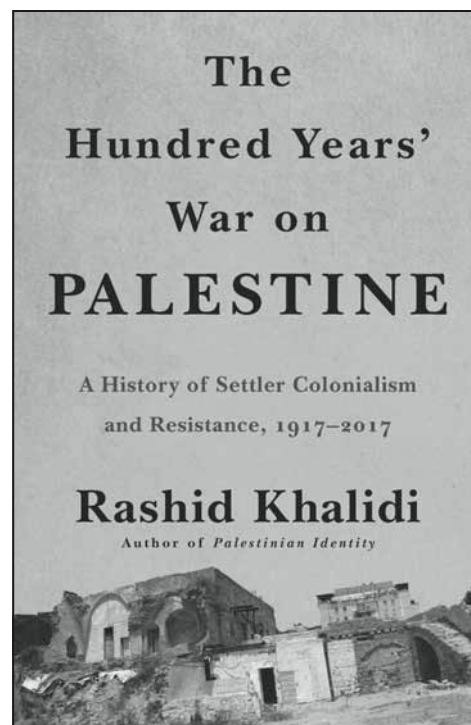
This is a beautifully edited collection of Gazan short stories written by young people. The text is necessarily politically charged – the retellings of both history and of the present are wrapped in struggle. Displacement and apartheid colour every page. The stories vacillate between hopeful and horrifying, but the love for the land, family and learning are constants. If you want a glimpse into the 'reality' of Gazan existence, this is a great place to start.



The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine
Ilan Pappé

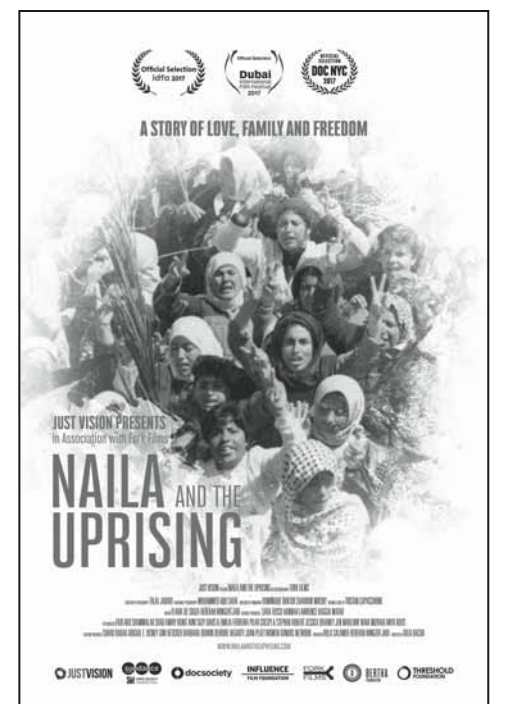
Pappé was the first historian to document the 1948 ethnic cleansing, and the goal of the Zionists to remove all Palestinians from their land, to make way for a Jewish-only state, destroying villages after villages, with massacres after massacres (finalising their goal today in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem!). Everybody should read this book, a classic of historical scholarship, a detailed, documented record of the true story of that crime, deleted from memory by Israeli government propaganda since 1948, in Israel and the world.

A relatively concise history of (primarily) the Nakba, or 'catastrophe,' as Palestinians call their ongoing dispossession since 1948. Incredibly relevant in understanding today. The anecdote of the Palestinian village "gift from god" being turned into an Israeli rubbish dump was a striking lowlight. A must-read.



The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance, 1917-2017
Khalidi Rashid

In 1917, Lord Balfour declared that the great powers were committed to Zionism, "and Zionism, whether right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in ancient, deeply rooted traditions, contemporary needs, and hopes for the future that have a more far-reaching and profound importance than aspirations and prejudices." One hundred years later, Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This book is an account of the resistance that has been waged in that time, drawing on Rashid Al-Khalidi's family and personal memories, and seeking to place the conflict within its international colonial framework.



Naila and the Uprising

"This is what the Occupation is all about: Jews live under Israeli civilian justice, Arabs are second-class citizens in their own land."

The backdrop is the First Intifada of the late 1980s. Using animation and archival footage, *Naila and the Uprising* tells the story of a young woman in Gaza who, faced with a choice between love, family, and freedom, chooses all three, joining a clandestine network of women in a movement that forces the world to recognise the Palestinian right to self-determination. Available on justvision.org and Vimeo

Global warming to unearth nuclear waste

Ariana Tibon was at the University of Hawaii in 2017 when she saw the photo online: a black-and-white picture of a man holding a baby. The caption said: “Nelson Anjain getting his baby monitored on 2 March 1954, by an AEC (Atomic Energy Commission) RadSafe team member on Rongelap two days after ‘Bravo.’”

Tibon had never seen the man before. But she recognised the name as her great-grandfather’s. At the time, he was living on Rongelap in the Marshall Islands when the US conducted Castle Bravo, the largest of 67 nuclear weapon tests there during the Cold War. The tests displaced and sickened Indigenous people, poisoned fish, upended traditional food practices, and caused cancers and other negative health repercussions that continue to reverberate today.

A recent federal report by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) examines what’s left of that nuclear contamination, not only in the Pacific but also in Greenland and Spain. The authors conclude that climate change could disturb nuclear waste left in Greenland and the Marshall Islands. “Rising sea levels could spread contamination in RMI, and conflicting risk assessments cause residents to distrust radiological information from the US Department of Energy,” the report says.

In Greenland, chemical pollution and radioactive liquid are frozen in ice sheets, left over from a nuclear power plant on a US military research base where scientists studied the potential to install nuclear missiles. The report didn’t specify how or where nuclear contamination could migrate in the Pacific or Greenland, or what, if any, health risks that might pose to people living nearby. However, the authors did note that in Greenland, frozen waste could be exposed by 2100.

“The possibility to influence the environment is there, which could further affect the food chain and further affect the people living in the area as well,” said Hjalmar Dahl, president of Inuit Circumpolar Council Greenland. The country is about 90 per cent Inuit. “I think it is important that the Greenland and US governments have to communicate on this worrying issue and prepare what to do about it.”

The authors of the GAO study wrote that Greenland and Denmark haven’t proposed any cleanup plans, but also cited studies that say much of the

nuclear waste has already decayed and will be diluted by melting ice. However, those studies do note that chemical waste such as polychlorinated biphenyls, man-made chemicals better known as PCBs that are carcinogenic, “may be the most consequential waste at Camp Century.”

The report summarises disagreements between Marshall Islands officials and the US Department of Energy regarding the risks posed by US nuclear waste. The GAO recommends that the agency adopt a communications strategy for conveying information about the potential for pollution to the Marshallese people.

Nathan Anderson, a director at the Government Accountability Office, said that the United States’ responsibilities in the Marshall Islands “are defined by specific federal statutes and international agreements.” He noted that the government of the Marshall Islands previously agreed to settle claims related to damages from US nuclear testing.

“It is the long-standing position of the US government that, pursuant to that agreement, the Republic of the Marshall Islands bears full responsibility for its lands, including those used for the nuclear testing program.”

To Tibon, who is back home in the Marshall Islands and is currently chair of the National Nuclear Commission, the fact that the report’s only recommendation is a new communications strategy is mystifying. She’s not sure how that would help the Marshallese people.

“What we need now is action and implementation on environmental remediation. We don’t need a communication strategy,” she said. “If they know that it’s contaminated, why wasn’t the recommendation for next steps on environmental remediation, or what’s possible to return these lands to safe and habitable conditions for these communities?”

The Biden administration recently agreed to fund a new museum to commemorate those affected by nuclear testing as well as climate change initiatives in the Marshall Islands, but the initiatives have repeatedly failed to garner support from Congress, even though they’re part of an ongoing treaty with the Marshall Islands and a broader national security effort to shore up goodwill in the Pacific.

Grist.org, courtesy People’s World



(equal) Pay Day overdue

Anna Pha

Men’s pay packets continue to outstrip those of women. Figures based on median income data released by The Australia Institute (TAI) on International Women’s Day revealed that overall, women earn \$1.01 million less over their working lives than men,

The gender pay gap has a serious impact on retirement as women pay \$136,600 less in superannuation over their working lives. Men have higher average salaries than women in 95 per cent of all occupations, including those where women dominate the workforce. For example, women account for 99 per cent of all midwives, and yet are paid on average 19 per cent less.

Another report released by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) in February reveals the gender pay gap for the median base wage for private companies with 100 or more employees. The base wage or salary does not include overtime payments, allowances, superannuation, and leave entitlements. Women are more likely to be casual employees and not receive these payments. They’re also less likely to do overtime in many industries. The data understates the gender pay gap.

The WGEA’s report, however, is revealing. For example, the construction industry has the largest gender pay gap at 25.2 per cent. This is a male-dominated industry, with women more likely to be doing lower paid work such as directing traffic or office work. At the other end of the scale is accommodation and food services with a gap of 1.2 per cent. This is not surprising as it is one of the lowest paid sectors, with many students and casual visa workers.

When the gender pay gap is looked at in terms of total income the data is more telling. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released last month show a gap of \$469.60 per week. This reflects discrimination, a highly segregated workforce, and the fact that only 43 per cent of women work full time compared with 67 per cent of men. There are also barriers to women entering the workforce or working full-time such as lack of access to affordable early childhood education and care or responsibilities as unpaid carers.

What could change this? There are steps that would make a difference. The immediate introduction of equal pay for work of equal value, something we think we have, but don’t. Free universal access to early childhood education and care would make a big difference to women’s ability to earn more, as would employment of more workers in the community sector, and an increase in the length of paid parental leave. Abolishing tertiary education fees and running women’s access programs would give women more opportunities to go for higher-paid work. There should be no casual or labour hire employment for ongoing work.

There is another pay gap which is larger than the gender pay gap. Part-time union members earn 41 per cent more (an extra \$117 per week) than non-union part-timers. Casual union members earn 24.5 per cent more (an extra \$86 per week) than non-union casuals. Overall union members earn 26 per cent more than non-members.

So join your trade union, and join the fight for women’s rights and economic independence!



Subscription to

The Guardian

☐ 12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc/ \$150 solidarity) ☐ 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc/ \$80 solidarity)

☐ Special offer: 10 issues for \$10 (new subscriptions only)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by ☐ Cheque ☐ Money order (Payable to "Guardian Publications")

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au Or send to:

Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

or by credit card: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa *\$20 minimum on cards

Card# _____

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

Signature: _____

The Guardian

Editorial Office

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor:

Floyd Kermode

Published by

Guardian Publications Australia Ltd

74 Buckingham St,

Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by

Spotpress Newspapers

The Print Centre, corner Hume Highway

and Muir Road, Chullora, NSW

Responsibility for electoral comment

is taken by T Pearson,

74 Buckingham St,

Surry Hills, 2010

Permanent ceasefire and political resolution Paths to Palestinian statehood

A Carruthers

Israel continues to ignore entreaties from countries around the world, and international bodies. Its plans for Rafah are still going ahead despite increasing multilateral resistance. The UN has warned that an assault on Rafah, now crammed with over 1.5 million people during Ramadan, would "incur massive loss of life and would heighten the risk of further atrocity crimes." It could also ignite full-scale war across the Middle East. As of 8 March, International Women's Day, over 9,000 Palestinian women have died in Gaza.

US AIRLIFTS ARE POLITICAL THEATRE

The United States is speaking with two tongues; it's arming Israel all the while claiming to offer aid. As previous *Guardian* reports have noted, the financing role of the US is so vast that any attempt to soften the narrative must be taken as elaborate political theatre. *Haaretz* news, has called the recent US airlifts of aid to Gaza a "strategic weapon." The airlifts are blatant Western propaganda. The US has no strategy to end the atrocities, and in fact such humanitarian aid may even be used as justification to prolong the conflict and postpone a resolution.

The airlifts are also posing a danger to people on the ground. Careless airdrops have resulted in Palestinian deaths. Israel, the Western imperialists and the corporate media need to stop trying to pull the wool over everyone's eyes by these tokenistic gestures. Israel must get out of Gaza, and stop the genocide. The US needs to stop the billions of dollars flowing to Israel's military. Much of this is because the US and the West know, as neo-imperialists always do, that the propaganda war is no less important than war with hard weaponry. Given the scale

of these atrocities, and how much has been televised, they are trying harder than ever to win the propaganda war. The "floating dock" up to 1,000 US troops are to build is another part of that war, and of little to no use to desperate Palestinians.

That Israel is a proxy for US imperialism could not be more clear, with US forces stationed off the coast of Gaza.

AUSTRALIA'S CONTINUING CULPABILITY

Australia is still one of the most culpable nations on earth as regards the unfolding genocide. Albanese, Dutton, and Wong have been referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by Birchgrove Legal, citing the Rome Statute of 1998 and citing four points:

1. Australia's freezing of aid to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)
2. the provision of military aid to Israel that could have been used in the alleged commission of genocide and crimes against humanity
3. permitting Australians to travel to Israel to take part in attacks in Gaza
4. providing "unequivocal political support" for Israel's actions in Gaza.

Nicaragua has also instituted proceedings against Germany at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for providing military and financial support to Israel, defunding UNRWA, and "facilitating" genocide. Nicaragua joins a growing chorus of countries in the global majority that are exposing the role of the West in the genocide and taking actions against it.

Labor leadership won't stop kowtowing to imperialism. It's time Australian governments adopted an independent foreign policy. Only alternative political movements, dissenting civil society groups, and parties like ours, can bring back some humanity and solidarity to our political system.



PERMANENT CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL RESOLUTION

Marxism-Leninism examines conflicts from a dialectical perspective. The construction of a Palestinian state will involve multiple, sometimes contradictory forces all finding unity under a central aim – full sovereignty. It will emerge in stages and phases, not overnight.

Recent talks in Russia look promising. In late February, two-day talks in Moscow brought together major political forces in Palestine, pushing for unity so they might establish a new government within the Palestinian Authority.

It's worth emphasising that political forces such as the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) are not monolithic. The PLO is composed of many different political movements and groups that have different positions, including Arab nationalists and communists. It's a representative body to a large extent of the Palestinian people, and can become even more representative if given the chance to govern.

We must think about the consequences of this genocide from the other end, from the side of the resistance and the long-term prospects for a Palestinian state governed by Palestinians. Very little discussion is had about internal political and organisational forces in Palestine. For good reason: in times of war, other things matter more, like a permanent ceasefire, humanitarian aid, international solidarity, or making sense of all the various geopolitical forces at play.

Recognition of a Palestinian state will mean recognition of a government, and a government will have to be formed somehow and in some way through existing political forces.

The building of a Palestinian state requires permanent ceasefire and a political resolution. It means attempting to build a state under occupation in apartheid conditions. It means going beyond the Oslo Accords

and establishing a diplomatic solution that grants full, not partial sovereignty to Palestine and grants it a state, a government, a governing body and a governing structure.

Achieving a two-state solution requires both multilateral support from the international community, and internal unity of progressive forces.

RECOGNISE PALESTINE

Palestine recognition, and a Palestinian state – these are fundamentals. Netanyahu's downfall is inevitable. And when that happens, the long-term problems will still have to be solved. How can we win support for a Palestinian state? How will the state be governed? How will it develop, secure its borders, function economically? How will it overcome apartheid? How will perpetrators of this genocide be brought to justice?

The bottom line is: the Palestinian people will not accept occupation or governance by foreign forces. No Western power, and no external forces whatsoever, have any right to meddle in the internal affairs of Palestine, Yemen or any Arab country for that matter. The West and Israel should have no say in it most of all because their interference and destructive, imperialistic mindset has set the conditions for generations upon generations of misery in the first place.

ACT NOW:

- Network with unions, civil society groups, human rights, faith and health organisations to raise awareness of genocide
- Lobby for ceasefire and recognition of a Palestinian state
- Educate colleagues and friends about the 1948 Nakba and the history of ethnic cleansing in Palestine
- Write to or call Labor MPs, and encourage Labor rank-and-file to dissent from their Party's pro-genocide policy position. ✳

China supports Palestine UN membership

China supports Palestine in becoming a full member of the United Nations, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

Noting that the failure to end the humanitarian disaster caused by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict today in the 21st century is a tragedy for humanity and a disgrace for civilisation, Wang called on the international community to act to give priority to an immediate ceasefire.

The foreign minister said the Palestinian people have the right to live in the world, calling for the release of all those held captive.

Restoring justice to the Palestinian people and fully implementing the two-state solution is the only way to break the vicious circle of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, Wang said.

"We support Palestine's full membership in the UN, and urge certain UN Security Council member to stop laying obstacles to that end," Wang said, adding that China calls for a more broad-based, more authoritative, and more effective international peace conference to work out a timetable and road map for the two-state solution.

Xinhua



Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au

cpa@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

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

General Secretary

Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President

Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

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

Canberra

Darwin

Melbourne

NSW State Comm

Perth

Qld State Comm

SA State Comm

Tasmania

act@cpa.org.au PO Box 35 Dickson ACT 2602

Vinnie Molina darwin@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872

Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au
Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053

Christian Goopy nsw@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0421 113 343
PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906

0499 476 540 qld@cpa.org.au

sa@cpa.org.au 0411 805 356 PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014

Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550

