

Expressing the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) **Vanguard**

For an Independent and Socialist Australia

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2022: For Australian Independence and Socialism – Against War and Fascism

Central Committee, CPA(M-L)
(1 January 2022)

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) greets its friends and supporters—here and internationally – on New Year's Day 2022.

Despite all the difficulties of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, our members have remained committed to the fight for anti-imperialist independence and socialism, engaging in activities across a broad range of issues. The deplorable AUKUS arrangement has provided a particular spur to a mass movement of opposition to Australian subservience to US imperialism.

China and the United States are global rivals, but their rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region is particularly acute. It is a region in which we are centrally located. China's expansion is conducted largely through its main area of strength, the economic area, whilst US imperialism pushes back politically and militarily. US agents of influence in Australian media and political circles sing in chorus of the "threat from an increasingly aggressive China" and talk up the prospects of war. Defence Minister Dutton, in particular, is effectively a national traitor with an acknowledged adherence to the US as a foreign power. The majority of Australians do not want war with China, yet Dutton pushes us in that direction so as to serve his US masters. The task of frustrating the war plans of US imperialism and its Australian servants is of growing importance.

Fascism presents threats to the democratic rights fought for and won in the great working class struggles of the past. Fascism does not need to enter



the stage wearing a crooked cross and a funny little moustache. Its characteristic is the use by the state of open repression in the place of the pretence that there is a democracy that works for the people. A 'liquorice allsorts' of right-wing groups has successfully mobilised around grievances associated with measures introduced to protect the population against Covid-19. Street thugs are a part of the armoury of fascism, but its big guns are in the corporate sector and its political parties. They constantly discuss ways to restrict and confine the struggles of the people. Legal restrictions on democratic rights are the essence of fascist measures that the people must mobilise to defeat.

A characteristic of capitalism is social division along class lines. In recent times, the gap between rich and poor has grown. The workers have been kept at stagnant levels of wages. Many have lost job security and its associated rights and have had to become "independent contractors" and gig workers. It compels people to find ways to organise and fight. New ways



of conducting class struggle emerge.

There is still the illusion that we can "learn to live with capitalism". Careers in the hierarchy of the union movement and the Labor Party are built on this illusion. We need to more vigorously champion the need to consign capitalism to the past, and to build support for the people's own society – socialism.

One of the lessons of Covid-19, emphasised by some of the epidemiologists, is the power and necessity of collective action. Vaccinations, mask-wearing, social distancing and other measures have been overwhelmingly embraced. People have acted out of justifiable self-interest tied to the selfless responsibility of doing the right thing by family and community. Big business has pushed its own interests, telling people to "learn to live with Covid-19".

Whether it is the pandemic or the politics of the class struggle, the power and necessity of collective action will undoubtedly guide us through the coming year. ■

Cost of A Roof Over Your Head "Through The Roof"!

Ned K. (9 December 2021)

If you are paying for a home, the cost is going "through the roof"! The Real Estate Institute of Australia's housing affordability figures for the September quarter 2021 reveal that the average family now spend 36.2% of household income on loan repayments, the highest level since the 2008 global financial crisis of capitalism.

In NSW the figure was even higher at 44.7%!

In the last 20 years ending June 2021, the average family income has increased by 112.8%. However, the size of the average mortgage increased by 284.7% and the average home loan repayments increased by 179.4%.

Average renting of a home has also increased during the same period. Twenty years ago, the average rental cost for a three-bedroom place was 22% of total family income. Now it is 26% of a tenant's family income.

The last two years of Covid-19 related stand downs and job losses have made the situation even more precarious.

Paying off a house or keeping up with rent payments make it even more courageous for workers who make a decision to take strike action to increase their family income or prevent the boss from further reducing income by changing rosters or trying to cut penalty rates or reduce regular overtime and use below award sub contract labour to do additional hours.



Hospital Workers Lead Struggle Against Privatisation



Ned K. (5 December 2021)

Hospital workers in SA have been waging a determined struggle against privatisation of services in the SA public health system.

In the last week of November about 400 support services workers from Flinders Medical Centre, Noarlunga Hospital and the Repatriation General Hospital went on a half day strike. These workers comprise one of the last groups of support services workers not yet privatised.

The workers held a rousing demonstration outside the main entrance of the hospital and received strong support from patients, members of the public and other hospital workers.

The demand on governments to provide affordable housing for working people, students and the elderly never goes away under capitalism. With the coming federal election, the affordability of housing issue is likely to be front and centre of mind of many voters. Aspiring politicians seeking another term in parliament or seeking a first term ignore the housing question at their own peril. ■

The strike is part of escalating actions by workers across the public health sector to prevent further privatisation and to preserve wage parity for workers already privatised and employed by multinational contractors.

Their struggle to defend and extend the public health system is also a part of the struggle for an independent public health system free from the clutches of multinational corporations. In SA large parts of the public health system have been privatised and handed to multinational companies Spotless (part of the Downer group) and ISS, the biggest facility services corporations in Europe and one of the largest in the world.

All the workers at the demonstration wore masks in recognition that they are also fighting an invisible enemy, Covid 19 in all its forms. The workers know that their struggle for job security and against privatisation and their struggle against Covid 19 as workers and citizens are linked.

Further privatisation means that more workers and patients will be exposed to short cuts for profits leading to greater risk of spread of the virus.

Their resilience over the last two years shows they are in it for the long haul and they will win! ■

Workers Struggles Intensify As ACTU Calls For New Industrial Laws

Ned K. (21 November 2021)

As inflation rises and more workers come out of lockdowns due to Covid, workers struggles are also on the rise.

* Public hospital support service workers in SA are escalating bans and strike action for secure jobs against the imploding Liberal Party Government.

* Country Road warehouse women workers in Victoria are taking strike action to win permanent rather than casual jobs and to win wage increases of up to \$10 per hour than bring their rates of pay up to the going rate paid to male warehouse workers.

* Toll Logistics workers across three states went on strike last week and won wage increases but equally as important, they forced Toll to agree to better redundancy/redeployment conditions and conversion of over one hundred casual jobs to full time permanent jobs

* MUA members continue to take industrial action to prevent the privatized sea port operators from further casualization of the waterfront

* Ambulance Officer/ Paramedics, Doctors and Nurses across multiple States continue to take various forms of action against the general crisis in public hospital systems

These and many more collective actions by workers against big capital and the latter's political parties in governments at State and Federal levels receive far less media attention

than the anti-vaccination, anti- Covid 19 restrictions "freedom" rallies.

However, the power of workers voices and actions are forcing the media of capital to seriously think about new ways to stem the tide of worker unrest about declining living standards and the widespread growth of different forms of insecure work.

So, we see on the front page of the *Australian* on Saturday 20 November the heading, "UNIONS SEEK MORE POWER FROM LABOR - Albanese to face pressure on IR Policy"

In the article Sally McManus, the ACTU Secretary, and Tim Kennedy, the Secretary of United Workers Union are both quoted. They both say in summary that the Fair Work Act was facilitating record profits for big business and that the enterprise specific bargaining system had collapsed. It was no longer "fit for purpose" and that the collective bargaining scheme in the Act was "beyond repair" and needed "root and branch review".

Thousands of workers would agree with this as they know that the enterprise bargaining system is not really collective bargaining between the class of owners of capital and workers because most Agreements isolate one group of workers from another and actually limit solidarity actions of workers within the same sector or industry and within supply chains.

What capital can see is that despite all its limitations, workers are finding

ways to struggle and more workers are using the limited "right" to take protected industrial action at a site level and co-ordinate this action with similar protected industrial action at another site owned by the same company or related company.

This is what happened in the recent Toll warehouse workers strikes last week.

Some more far-sighted sections of big business can see the writing on the wall and so they have some level of agreement with what McManus and Kennedy are saying.

So, the far-sighted capitalists will more than likely seek an agreement with the ALP if they win the federal election to amend collective bargaining laws that enable workers to claim for collective agreements at multi-employer, sector or industry levels as well as across supply chains.

They will rely on the ALP selling this to the ACTU as a "victory" and who knows they may even dress it up with a new name and scrap the name "Fair Work Act" and call it something like the "Secure Work Act".

The real struggle though will be about the ALP and ACTU supporting workers' demand to get rid of limitations on workers' right to take collective action at any time, not just in the extremely limited bargaining period, whether that be at a site level, sector or industry level or across a supply chain.

Interesting times ahead.

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Dutton – don't drag us into another unwinnable American war!

Nick G. (19 November 2021)

Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton is making increasingly provocative statements about “defending Taiwan”.

Several days ago, he said “It would be inconceivable that we wouldn't support the US in an action if the US chose to take that action.”

His comments came after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday said that the US and its allies would take unspecified “action” if China were to use force to alter the “status quo” over Taiwan.

What is this “status quo”?

The status quo is that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China.

The status quo is that it continues to use the name of the government which was defeated by the Communists in 1949 and which fled to Taiwan, the “Republic of China” (ROC), but it cannot participate in any major international event under that name.

The status quo is that China has, since the formation of the PRC in 1949, maintained that its goal is reunification with Taiwan Province, and that it will not rule out the use of force should the Taiwanese authorities try to achieve independence from the PRC.

The status quo is that both the US and Australia – and every other one of the vast majority of countries that have diplomatic relations with China – recognise that Taiwan is a part of the PRC.



The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is quite clear about this.

Its website says that with the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1972, “Australia's Joint Communiqué with the PRC recognised the Government of the PRC as China's sole legal government, and acknowledged the position of the PRC that Taiwan was a province of the PRC”.

It says that “the Australian Government does not recognise the ROC as a sovereign state and does not regard the authorities in Taiwan as having the status of a national government”.

Dutton and others of a like mind speak of Taiwan Province as if it were already a “sovereign state” with the “status of a national government”.

They are deliberately confusing the Australian people in order to prepare for war.

They are not being honest about what it would cost Australia to be involved in such an adventure.

Hu Xijin, editor of the Chinese state-run *Global Times* newspaper, said in response to Dutton, that “If Australian troops come to fight in the Taiwan Straits, it is unimaginable that

China won't carry out a heavy attack on them and the Australian military facilities that support them. So Australia better be prepared to sacrifice for Taiwan island and the US.”

He was referring to Australian military facilities on Australian soil.

If China sends troops to part of its own country, as could occur if the Taiwanese authorities declare independence, then that is an internal matter for China.

China did not threaten to go to war when the Howard government suspended the Racial Discrimination Act in 2007 and sent its troops to the Northern Territory to impose the Intervention on Aboriginal communities.

As deplorable as that was, it was an internal matter for the Australian people to deal with.

China is not the socialist country that it was in 1949.

It now has its own great power ambitions.

But the question of Taiwan is a matter for China.

It is not a matter over which the US, Australia, or any other country has the right to go to war with China.

Dutton and his ilk should stop claiming that Australia should be involved in war over Taiwan, or pretending that Australia and its US overlord could in any way prevent the Chinese from exercising that sovereignty over Taiwan Province which is recognised by his government and made clear on the DFAT website.■

Australia embedded in US Pacific Defence Initiative

Contributed. (24 December 2021)

The 2022 US increased defence budget has serious implications for Australia; increased regional military and security provision with the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) has increased the likelihood of war with China.

A recent announcement from the US military-industrial complex about their proposed military facilities based in Australia have serious implications

for diplomatic relations with China and also problematic relations with our regional neighbours.

The 2022 US defence budget allocation for \$768 billion is a five per cent increase over the previous year; it has included \$7.1 billion specifically for the PDI which amounts to a tripling of regional expenditure for the Indo-Pacific. As the US has increased diplomatic hostilities toward China, the Pentagon has undertaken a program which has included the

construction of new military facilities and the upgrading of existing ones.

In addition, the PDI will also include an advanced missile system based in Guam together with increased interoperability between the US and Taiwanese forces. Guam, in the west, exists on the same arc from Pine Gap to Diego Garcia in the east. US military facilities on both Guam and Diego Garcia have been upgraded in recent years for regional operations, with Darwin in northern Australia as the main support centre.

A significant part of the US defence budget, however, has been directed toward the military-industrial complex for dual-use equipment ostensibly used for industrial purposes although easily transferable to military capacity, if required. It is not difficult to find examples.

An announcement from LeoLabs, part of the US military-industrial complex, that they were beginning construction of two major space tracking sites in Australia, is, therefore, a worrying sign of the increased reliance by the Pentagon upon Australian-based facilities.

LeoLabs has recently undertaken the initial stages of constructing a new radar facility in West Australia to be accompanied by a further one in the Northern Territories which will operate in conjunction with existing and already operational facilities in New Zealand.

While stated publicity surrounding the facilities has tended to concentrate upon the tracking and surveillance of space debris, other information has specified that it will be used to monitor China's space and satellite programs. Amid its glitzy and connected web-sites, for example, LeoLabs is involved in the 'tracking, operating and communicating with assets in space'.

About seventy per cent of China's satellites are launched southwards, toward Australia, and facilities in WA will also to be used to monitor China's southern orbital routes around the South Pole and then north toward the US 'completely evading US missile defences'. It would appear the US has further missile shields already planned to protect the stated southern route in future defence budgets.

A statement issued by Canberra that 'Australia needed to develop additional ground-based sensors to track such threats, and work with the US and UK under AUKUS to develop space-based early warning systems', has already provided evidence of such future military planning and the US role for Australia.

The US has no place in its foreign policy provision for credible competitors to their traditional hegemonic positions.

Fears, therefore, already raised by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute that China's space program 'could soon rival that of the US', reveal increased likelihood of war. A statement issued by the Australian Department of Defence has, likewise, said that China 'looked to gain a significant military advantage', with the same outcome. It was accompanied

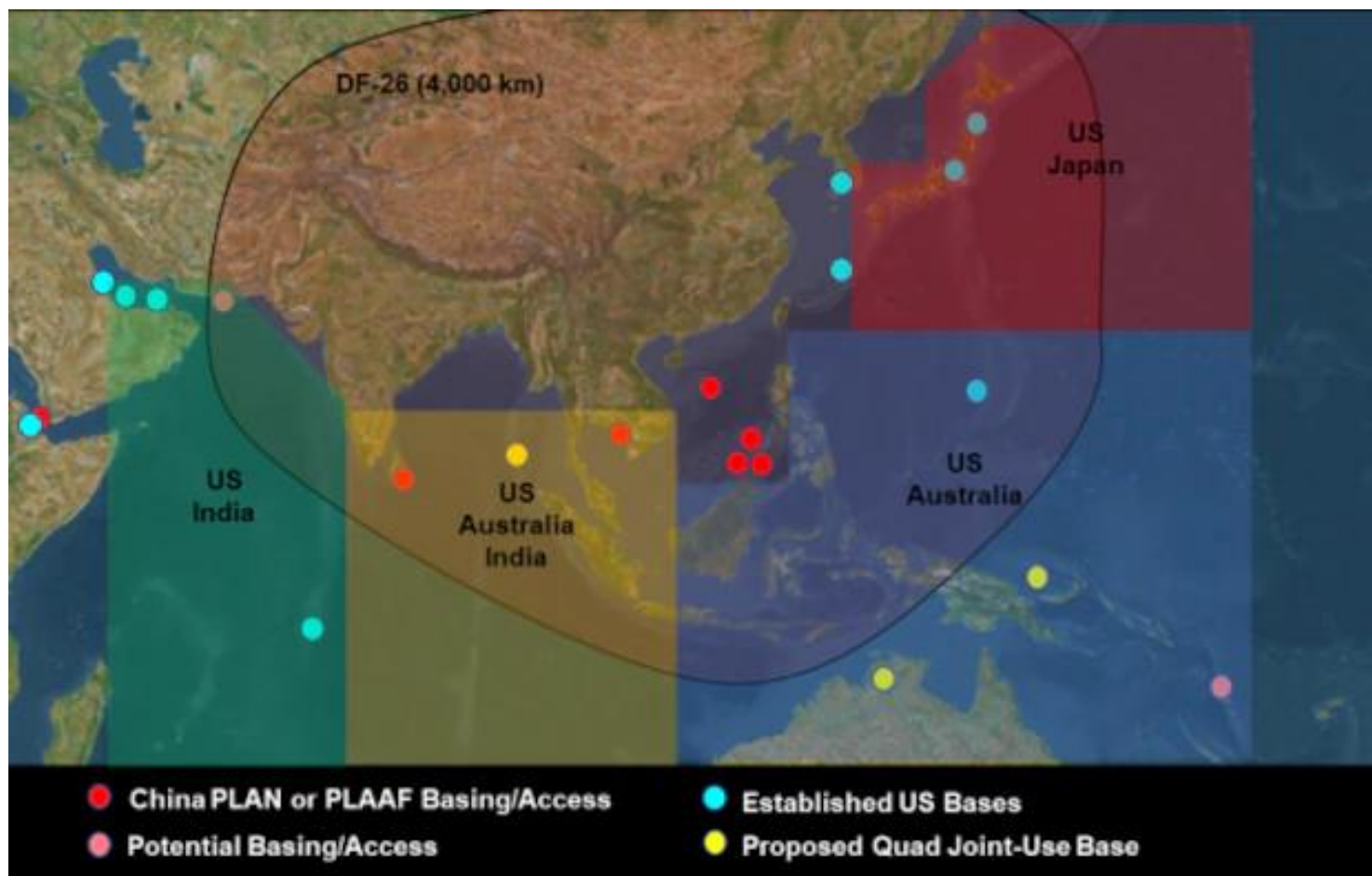
by a further statement issued by the Pentagon which said that 'China is on track to overtake the US as the number one power in space by the end of the decade'.

A statement from Canberra that Australia 'was committed to working with the US to help protect western assets in space', has left little to the imagination. Australia has long been regarded by the US as a compliant regional hub for the defence and security of 'US interests'.

Australia-US diplomatic links cannot be defined as a symbiotic relationship; Australia now faces the very real possibility of being drawn into a regional war between the US and China, with all which that entails.

Secondly, the stated range of the LeoLabs military facilities between Australia and China also stretch through sensitive parts of Asia with countries which have strong diplomatic links with China. They will, presumably, take a dim view of Australian-based US military facilities also monitoring their own defence and security provision, making diplomacy by Canberra toward our northern neighbours even more problematic.

We need an independent foreign policy! ■



US imperialism embeds the Northern Territory in its war plans

Contributed (27 November 2021)

Residents of Australia's Northern Territory might have noted publicity surrounding recent plans to upgrade military facilities. A great deal of it has been attributed to defence and security provision.

Australia's Northern Territory has a long history of being regarded as sensitive; it looks out across the South Pacific where regional tensions are intensifying. In recent times, military planning has included the transformation of Darwin as a support centre, linked to Diego Garcia and Guam as military and intelligence hubs for US-led regional operations.

The plan has an added significance as US-led Cold War diplomatic tensions with China continue to escalate; a recent statement from Canberra, for example, drew attention to the US adjusting its regional military planning according to which the Northern Territory 'could become the lynch-pin in the chain of US bases running from the Aleutians in the North Pacific to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean which support US strategy and military operations', in a direct reference to Island Chain Theory.

A recent study of the Northern Territory stated that 'our north is, in fact, the essential southern rampart of the Indo-Pacific ... with ... the Port of Darwin a central strategic question'.

In recent diplomatic jargon, the Northern Territory was noted as part of a military plan which will include 'the transformation of the Top End from a very convenient military training area for the ADF and its allies to a vital southern US defence anchor ... and ... an important defence springboard into the Indo-Pacific'.

While residents of the Northern Territory have become used to observing US troop rotations over the past decade, military plans now include enlarging the rotations to include 'the capability to train, sustain and co-ordinate allied and partner-nation military forces'.

Reference was also made to the



US Marines and Australia Army soldiers based in the Northern Territory – already numbering in the thousands, more US troops and military equipment are certain to be based on Australian soil in the near future as US imperialism intensifies its rivalry with China.

planned importance of the Northern Territory for armed forces and military personnel from France, Germany, the UK, Japan and India, all expressing an interest 'to get more mobile across the region'. Plans appear already under-way for those concerned to 'locate military units with their ADF counterparts in the Top End'.

The US lays great emphasis upon the strategic importance of Darwin Harbour; it is five times larger than Sydney Harbour, and deeper than San Francisco Bay and has, therefore, been assessed as 'uniquely placed to facilitate and support an enlarged regional alliance'.

References to Australian-hosted facilities being used to project military power and presence over the wider region are not difficult to find.

Emphasis has already been placed upon upgrading RAAF Tindal, just outside of Katherine, for use as a 'forward operating location for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions throughout the region'. The air-base hosts seven RAAF units which include five for combat and two for surveillance. Planning is already under-way for a significant upgrade. Early last year an announcement was made by Canberra for the base to have a \$1.1 billion upgrade which would include an extension to the runways and fuel storage to enable re-fuelling

facilities. The financial figure was later adjusted and raised to \$1.7 billion.

RAAF Tindal is already used extensively by the US military with their troop rotations. It also has an important part in battle plans for US-led real-war scenarios: during such a crisis the US envisages its outlying military facilities coming under attack with its forces 'scattered from bases in Japan, Guam and Hawaii ... although ... with Australian agreement ... significant numbers of these aircraft will be in northern Australia ... American strategy is to spread its forces ... making them as difficult a target as possible'.

In conclusion, planning to upgrade military facilities in the Northern Territories has little to do with Australian defence and security, it is directly linked to US-led directives to maintain and extend 'US interests' across the Indo-Pacific. A recent study also noted that due to the changing balance of forces the 'US faces the prospect of military defeat ... and there are growing signs they could draw the US into a war it could not win'.

We need an independent foreign policy before we are drawn into a US planned regional limited war which would clearly not be in Australia's best interests!

China's Foreign Direct Investment In Australia - Not All Going To Plan For Xi Jinping

Ned K. (29 December 2021)

China's foreign direct investment in Australia has undergone significant changes since the restoration of capitalism in China under Deng from the early 1980s.

In the early 1980s Chinese foreign direct investment was mainly in the iron ore and steel industries and mainly through Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). It was also part of promotion of diplomacy between the Hawke Government and the Communist Party of China (CPC).

In 1984 Hawke encouraged Chinese-Australian investment cooperation, visiting China and launching the Iron and Steel Initiative (ISI).

In response, China's economic diplomacy took a step up when Hu Yaobang came to Australia for a joint promotion of iron and steel industry investment in Australia. Chinese investment contributed to the re-activation of a blast furnace at Kwinana steel works.

In February 1986, the state-owned China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC) invested in the Alcoa Aluminum Smelter at Portland. In November 1987, China's state-owned Metallurgical Import and Export Corporation (now Sinosteel) and Rio Tinto jointly funded the Channar iron ore mine in the Pilbara.

In the 1990s, the Communist Party of China's overseas investment policy was accelerated with more encouragement for still mainly SOEs to "go out" and invest overseas with Australia of prime interest due to the large reserves of high-grade iron ore needed for China's expanding manufacturing industries and infrastructure programs.

However, according to a NSW based researcher, Haoyue Zu, it would be an over simplification to say that the increase in Chinese overseas direct investment in Australia was a controlled move by the Chinese state. Zu points out that since the "going out" policy, China's political system



became fragmented with various state and non-state interests.

In the 1990s, the CPC relaxed its overseas foreign direct investment policies in its rush for more natural resources that it needed for its industrial economic growth.

It encouraged private corporations in China to invest overseas as a well. However, the privately owned corporations and the increasing number of privatised SOEs started investing overseas to make a quick buck in industries that they fancied, rather than only investing in the more strategic areas of natural resources like iron ore, oil and gas.

In 2013, Chinese overseas direct investment in Australian real estate was much higher than Chinese overseas direct investment in the resource sector. Both privately owned Chinese corporations and SOEs invested more in the real estate sector than in resources in Australia.

According to researcher Zu, from 2013 Xi Jinping and the CPC made moves to centralise government to reduce the fragmentation of economic power. Ironically, the newly created bureaucracies designed to centralise government "resulted in bureaucratic overlaps and tensions" resulting in what Zu calls "disorderly" Chinese investment in Australia.

In the period 2013 to 2018, Chinese foreign investment in Australia diversified further into agribusiness, infrastructure and even health care, as well as continuing in commercial real estate, but declining in the resources sector.

By 2016, 49% of Chinese overseas direct investment in Australia was from privately owned corporations in China. the other 51% was from SOEs, but both private and SOE corporations invested heavily in real estate rather

than in mining, oil and gas which were of much more strategic value to the CPC.

In late 2016 the CPC set general guidelines to limit private Chinese overseas investment in real estate, tourism and entertainment, but encouraged it in oil, mining and infrastructures.

However Chinese overseas foreign direct investment in real estate in Australia continued to rise!

Then another twist! In 2018, the highest specific overseas foreign investment from China was in healthcare at 41.7% of the total investment. Next was in commercial real estate at 36.7% while oil, gas and energy comprised just 8% of the total.

Zu argues that the erratic investment patterns in speculative ventures by Chinese capitalists "has even effected China's economic development because it involved a net loss of foreign exchange, leading the Chinese government to introduce further regulations."

Zu's research shows that while the CPC administers a form of capitalism with higher control than western capitalist countries, the CPC and the Chinese government are not completely in control of economic life in China. Zu demonstrates in her research paper that the class of private corporations and even SOE directors and managers have enough soft power in China to be able to disregard CPC and government guidelines about where and when they invest overseas and from which industries overseas they make their profits.

Contradictions between the CPC leadership and the class of big capitalists in China involved in overseas investment have their origin in the economic base of the country. How this impacts on the Chinese working class and the Australian working class needs further analysis. ■

For further information on this topic, read "China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment In Australia" by Haoyue Zu in Journal of Australian Political Economy

Living with Covid: Words they dare not utter to keep Open for Business

John G. (18 December 2021)

Are measures against the spread of Covid-19, protections or restrictions?

In the stream of Covid-19 press conferences and media reports how many times do you hear politicians, bureaucrats and journalists talk of harsh restrictions imposed or of easing restrictions.

You don't hear them speak about protections from the disease, or removing protections against the disease.

Strong protections or severe restrictions. The way they talk about it presses people's buttons.

Removing restrictions equals good, bringing in restrictions equals bad. On the other hand, if they spoke about removing protections bad, bringing in protections good.

The Working Class has long fought for protections from dangers

Think about guards on machinery in workplaces. Routinely the guards restrict operators from putting their hands into dangerous parts of machinery, or for hair, hands or clothing being caught up in a mechanism, removing a hazard to the operators or other people in the workplace. They protect the workers.

In early machinery, guards were not used. One doctor gave a frightening report quoted in a British Parliamentary enquiry about the consequences in cotton and wool mills combing the fibres to remove dirt and burrs etc; "The serious accidents at the scutching mills are of the most fearful nature. In many cases a quarter of the body is torn from the trunk, and either involves death, or a future of wretched incapacity and suffering." Dr. W. White, the certifying surgeon for factories at Downpatrick, in his official report, dated the 15th December, 1865. These accidents were virtually completely avoidable and brought to an end when guards were fitted. That is what led to guards and other safety measures on such machines.

In hospital ICUs staff wear plastic aprons, masks face shields and gloves, not to restrict themselves but to protect themselves and their patients. Hospital visitors and staff in lower risk areas now wear masks for the same reason,

protection. But politicians and journalists caught up in the language of opening up for business, refer to the same measures as restrictions. They are restrictions in a sense just as guards on dangerous machines are, but from the workers point of view they are protections.

Guards can be a bit of a nuisance, as in machines that repeatedly clog up, but they are generally necessary protections. For militant workers any attempt to have the protections removed is anathema, intolerable. Some impatient and short-sighted workers complain at times about how guards restrict their output, which can under some piece-work style pay systems reduce their pay or stop them getting away from the job early. Those impulses are anti-worker. Militants stand for protecting the workers. "Open for business, get the job done and sweep away anything which tends to slow down production" stands against looking after the workers.

We have seen over 5 million deaths worldwide, over 800,000 deaths in the US, 150,000 deaths in the UK let alone the many millions more left suffering from ongoing health conditions resulting from Covid-19. Protections against the disease are necessary and warranted. Disruptions to daily life should be limited to those necessary and protecting people in a way proportionate to the risks.

Use Guards against the spread and impact of Covid-19

Vaccinations are a key protection, reducing severity and transmission of the disease. Are there risks? Yes. However, the risks from the jab are worth it compared to the risks from the disease.

In another twist, the UK experience demonstrates vaccinations don't completely stop transmission nor it having severe consequences including death. International experience shows while the disease is rampant in any country, new variants will emerge, some posing new and greater risks. Some hold a prospect of new but lesser risks and impacts. The degrees are not yet certain in regard to Omicron, but it is causing death and serious illness in some who get it. Its very infectious nature means the rate of people getting it is high, relative to other variants.

Vaccinations haven't removed the need for other protections. The medical experts highlight mask wearing, limiting occasions where people come into close contact with unvaccinated people, and limiting close contact with anyone in enclosed spaces, both for their protection and to restrict the transmission of disease to others.

Prior to widespread vaccinations, restrictions on movement, on social events, on gathering at all were imposed in lockdowns. At times they were generally warranted,



Australia has seen large ongoing mobilisations of people opposed to protections against the Covid 19. With the removal of almost all protections against the disease, at the end of 2021 Australia had the fastest growing rate of Covid infections in the world

proportionate, to protect the people and pull up the spread of the disease. It disrupted people's social connections and networks, disrupted political activity and protests, disrupted family life for extended families, had large numbers of people locked out of work while many worked from home.

The authorities couldn't help themselves sometimes militarising their imposition, turning to oppressive policing, failing to organise provision of necessities and paying no account to local cultural character until people reacted strongly, demanding the state back off, that community leaders be listened to, and that people's needs were met.

When you look at what happened in the US, Brazil and the UK compared to in Australia, lockdowns, lock outs and other actions generally worked and held up or stopped the spread of disease while large swathes of the people were unvaccinated. They were resented for the disruption to family, social and work life, and the losses they caused to people and business they involved. Protecting people from the spread of the disease generally required them, forcing them on us.

The experiences of Queensland, SA, Northern Territory and WA stopped the spread fairly completely. Internally their family, social, work and political life resumed quite unimpeded by restricted movement after relatively short lockdowns. In

contrast, NSW leaders tended to remove protections as soon as they discerned some limitation of the disease's hold, freeing up a renewed spread of the disease. Victorians found themselves victims of NSW lack of protections, and lack of enforcement of protections in some areas, particularly in residential aged care and nursing homes.

Pace of removing protections needs caution, not let Covid rip

Now high levels of adult vaccinations have been achieved, restricting but not ending the disease's ability to spread. With highly infectious variants about, young kids unvaccinated, and infection of and transmission by the vaccinated allowing spread of the disease, discussion needs to be about what level of protections is proportionate to the risks still stalking the community.

Instead, when talking about keeping or removing protections, politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and others speak of taking away restrictions, adopting the reactionary right's slogan of "winning back freedoms", freedoms for the virus to wreak its havoc. They abandon the medical approach of defences, protections against spreading illness through disease transmission, the mechanism driving the pandemic. The only freedom they are really opening up is the freedom for Covid to spread.

Leave talk of "restrictions" to the reactionaries. Uphold protection of the people.

Restrictions are restriction of transmission of Covid-19. Like machine guards, they protect the people around them.

The difference in language is really quite powerful. The words themselves press a case, evoke particular responses.

Protect the people, hold back the spread

There is a divergence between the Open for Business let-Covid-rip advocates and those responding to the medical cautions with maintaining protections like mask wearing indoors and keeping unvaccinated people away from the disease and the vulnerable.

Is it protection or is it restriction? The working class fought for protections against being ripped limb from limb by machinery. In the pandemic, it is necessary to stand for the protection of the people from this deadly disease.

Stand up for protection. Don't tolerate the language of "opening up" and "freedom". This is the language of big business. It stands for opening up to Covid-19, for freedom for Covid to spread while business is unrestricted.

Stand for the language of protecting the people, of removing protections cautiously, of restricting the spread of Covid. ■

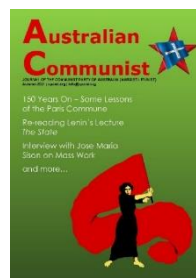
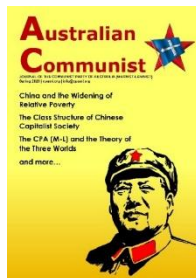
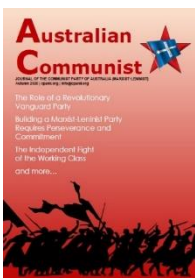
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Stop US gas exploration in the Australian desert!

Nick G. (16 October 2021)

The US imperialist fossil fuel company Tri-Star has been exploring for coal seam gas and oil in the Munga Thirri/Simpson Desert.

The company is based in Houston and has its Australian office in Brisbane. It boasts on its website that it has a “diverse oil, gas and minerals portfolio across Australia and across the world”. It has four leases to do seismic testing in the desert for coal seam gas (CSG). The leases are valid until 2025.

The Munga-Thirri / Simpson Desert sits within the Lake Eyre Basin, alongside Queensland Channel Country and Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre, which is on the Important Wetlands in Australia list and an Important Bird Area (IBA). It's one of the last great desert wilderness areas left in the world, and sits on top of the Great Artesian Basin, one of the largest inland freshwater drainage areas in the world. The desert encompasses an area more than twice the size of Tasmania.

The Munga-Thirri / Simpson Desert is rich in First Nations history, spanning many thousands of years. The South Australian section is the traditional lands of the Wangkangurru/Yarluyandi people. Other groups include Aranda and Arrernte, who all maintain a strong connection with Country.

Their stories are interconnected with the landscape, such as stories of mikiri (or freshwater soaks) in the claypans, swamps and small salt lakes that enabled the traditional owners to travel through the country using these for secondary sources of food and water. Rock carvings and places of cultural significance occur throughout the desert region.

The Wilderness Society was able to push back the first two fossil fuel companies that had bought the original leases. They made it clear the community would not stand for mining in one of the most intact desert ecosystems the world has left.



Tri-Star's Munga-Thirri Simpson Basin Project is located approximately 840km north of Adelaide on the South Australia, Northern Territory border. Numerous exploration campaigns have been completed in the area since the early 1960s targeting conventional opportunities within the Poolowanna and Peera Peera Formations. The Poolowanna 1 well-flowed oil to surface on test as well as a small amount of condensate confirming the presence of multiple petroleum systems. Tri-Star is still currently reviewing the acreage to determine its exploration plans.

Following protests by the Wilderness Society, the Friends of the Simpson Desert and others, Tri-Star granted a temporary suspension of their licences from 5 June 2021 to 4 June 2022. However, it currently still has plans to seek approval for exploration activity. The South Australian government announced its proposal to create the Munga-Thirri / Simpson Desert National Park, the largest national park in Australia, in May 2021. However, the park will be jointly proclaimed for conservation and mining, which the Wilderness Society's Peter Owen calls a “tragic oxymoron”.

Owen, who was instrumental in organising the successful broad community opposition to oil exploration in the Great Australian Bight, says that the exploration phase in a desert environment “can be even more destructive” than the production stage.

“To find gas, companies often bulldoze grid patterns across massive areas.

“How do you bulldoze the Simpson's sand dunes without messing up its delicate ecology? It could fundamentally change the flow

of water that brings wetlands like Eyre to life.”

If Tristar proceeds to do seismic testing in the desert for coal seam gas (CSG), and if they find gas, they will then extract the gas by fracking, a process that has known significant environmental consequences. The other concern is a proposal to build a 900km (approximately) pipeline across the desert to transport gas to a facility for processing and distribution to market.

The answer to reducing coal industry emissions is not, as Scummo would have us believe, to switch to gas.

And certainly not at the risk of doing damage to the Munga Thirri/Simpson Desert.

Capitalism's destructive war on the environment must be defeated.

No to Tri-Star's destructive plans. ■

Beware of Vampires!

Duncan B. (17 December 2021)

Vampires are on the loose, but it's not our blood they're after. It's another fluid equally as precious. They are after our water, or more particularly, the profits they can make from Australia's open and deregulated water market.

Vanguard previously discussed the Australian water market in an article ‘Sold Down The River’ in October this year. Lately, a US registered company, Aqua Ceres has been seeking investors willing to put at least \$500,000 each into Australian water entitlement purchases. They want to raise \$193 million to buy about 25,000 megalitres of high-reliability water entitlement within two years. They are gambling on the expectation that climate change and increasing horticultural demand will drive water entitlement prices up, allowing them to make enormous profits.

Aqua Ceres points out that “water is the most critical of earth's natural resources”, and it's “a natural hedge against climate change.” They state that “investing with Aqua Ceres enables investors to invest in water directly without direct exposure to many of the usual operational and production risks associated with farm

ownership.”

The Aqua Ceres Australian Water Offshore Fund is incorporated in the Cayman Islands. They have set up what they call a “Cayman mini master structure”, which will allow both non-US and US tax-exempt investors to direct their funds through a Cayman Islands feeder fund. The whole thing is starting to smell like a dead Murray River carp!

To cap it off, one of the Australian directors of Aqua Ceres was a director of the Australian subsidiary of a US company which was in trouble with the NSW Government in 2015 over that company's actions in ploughing Aboriginal burial mounds and clearing native vegetation on a property in western NSW.

Water users predict that the actions of Aqua Ceres could cause massive disruption in the water market and drive up the price of permanent high-security water to a point where it would be unsustainable for irrigators, including even the large-scale almond growers.

It is reported that other US companies are also looking to get into the Australian water market. They want to exploit looming supply-demand imbalance of Australian irrigation water. Small irrigators, farm workers, country people and all of us who are consumers are suffering due to foreign control of our water. We need to unite and drive a wooden stake through the hearts of the water vampires! ■

Dirty Deal in the Top End

Duncan B. (4 December 2021)

A dirty deal has been cooked up between the Northern Territory Government and a company called Fortune Agribusiness. This company owns Singleton Station, a 294,000 hectare farm 120 km south of Tennant Creek in the NT.

Fortune wants to develop 3500 hectares of this land for intensive irrigated horticulture, growing fruit, vegetables and other crops. 70% of the produce would be exported to Asia, particularly China. The NT Government has awarded Fortune the biggest ground water extraction licence in NT history. The licence means that for 30 years, Fortune will be able to extract 40,000 megalitres of water per year for free from an ancient aquifer in the arid interior of the NT.

Traditional owners and environmentalists in the Northern Territory protested about the deal but were unable to stop the NT Government granting the water licence to Fortune. Traditional owners said that the water needed to stay for the animals, trees, bush tucker and bush medicine. Environmentalists fear the project will cause irreversible environmental damage.

The traditional owners and environmentalists forced the

Government to hold a review of the Fortune development but, surprise!, surprise!, the development has been approved subject to certain conditions.

Opponents of the Fortune development are continuing the fight. The Arid Lands Environment Centre is raising funds for a possible judicial review.

The NT Government changed the rules regarding water extraction which prohibited damage by new developments to groundwater-dependent ecosystems, after Fortune complained that the rule would prevent them from going ahead with their plans. After negotiations with Fortune the Environment Department changed the rules so that 30% environment damage to ecosystems was OK!

Fortune Agribusiness is an Australian investment company but it has links to Ostar, a Chinese-language media company, based in Melbourne. Ostar runs a network of radio stations and newspapers.

It was founded by Jiang Zhaoqing, (also known as Tommy Jiang), who migrated to Australia in 1991. Unfortunately, Ostar recently went bankrupt and is in liquidation, owing \$560 million to creditors, including \$55 million to the Tax Office. The effect of Ostar's bankruptcy on Fortune's plans is unknown at present.

While there are deals like the Fortune deal still happening, total Chinese investment in Australia has declined significantly recently. In 2020, Chinese investment in Australia was \$2.5 billion, compared with \$3.4 billion the previous year. Agriculture receives about 4% of this investment. Chinese investment in Australia peaked at \$17.5 billion in 2008, falling to \$15 billion in 2016. Reflecting this fall in overall Chinese investment in Australia, Chinese investment in Australian agriculture is also falling.

Chinese companies are selling some of their properties in Australia, including the troubled Van Dairies in Tasmania, which has sold off some of its farms to Australian companies. A lot of Chinese investment is going to agricultural projects in South America and Africa. ■



CPA (M-L) greets the anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines



*Central Committee, CPA(M-L)
(26 December 2021)*

The following message was sent on the occasion of the 53rd Anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines:

Comradely greetings and congratulations to the CPP from the CPA (M-L).

The CPP is recognised as leading the struggles of the Philippine people against foreign imperialism, bureaucrat capitalism and feudalism.

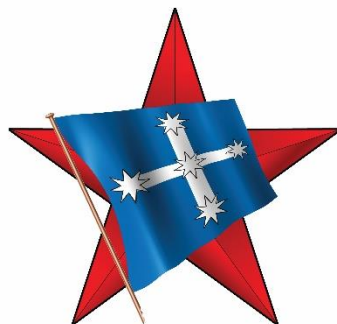
Its tireless work in building the united front through the NDFP has brought together all sectors of Philippine society struggling against exploitation and political repression – the workers, peasants, Indigenous peoples, healthcare and educational workers, faith workers, professionals, – and with extensive support from the many forced by poverty or repression to move to other countries.

Wherever struggle takes place, in the countryside, in factories and workshops, in villages, or on the streets, it is fierce and protracted and the victories are hard-earned.

We honour the martyrs, the imprisoned, the suffering of their families and comrades – all have fought courageously for a better life for the people against the murderous Duterte regime with its US imperialist backers and our own Australian running-dog government.

We are confident that the near future will bring greater victories for the CPP, strengthening the united front and advancing the Philippines revolution. ■

CPA (M-L) welcomes successful holding of ICOR 4th World Conference



*Central Committee, CPA (M-L)
(24 November 2021)*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) congratulates the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organisations (ICOR) on the successful conclusion of its 4th World Conference held in October.

Our Party is an affiliate of ICOR. We were unable to attend the Conference because of Covid-19 travel restrictions.

A significant number of parties and organisations did, however, overcome restrictions and personally participated in the proceedings, held in Europe.

Delegates from 26 countries, all in all 31 delegations, took part in this Conference.

ICOR currently has 62 member organizations from 46 countries on all five continents. The good news reached the Conference that “Chinese Communists (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist)” have applied for membership in ICOR.

In addition to reviewing the past work of ICOR, delegates also had discussions on a number of important current issues and took decisions in relation to them.

Of particular relevance to our region was discussion of the development of the contradictions between the imperialist powers China and the USA and the intensified danger of war, which is developing more and more.



Discussion of the struggle of women included preparations for the Third World Women's Conference of Grassroots Women which will take place in Tunisia in 2022. The World Conference underlined the importance of the surging struggles of the masses of women, the driving forces of which are female workers and young women. It strengthened ICOR's resolve to develop the revolutionary women's policy and promotion of women to a higher level.

ICOR also recognised the need to win the youth for socialism. The affiliates to ICOR Africa are planning an African youth conference in Nairobi in 2023.

ICOR promotes international working-class coordination, and is currently preparing for the 3rd International Miners' Conference in 2023, and for the World Peasants' Conference in 2023.

A whole host of resolutions and statements in support of people's struggles across the world were passed.

With the rising tide of repression against the working class and its organisations, ICOR noted that it is in the focus of international secret services. The organisation of its work occurs while strictly paying attention to security.

The CPA (M-L) greets all other affiliated parties and organisations in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and will strive to further strengthen the Australian revolutionary movement so as to build international unity against capitalism, imperialism and fascism. ■