

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

For an Independent and Socialist Australia

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Neither the U.S. nor China – Independence for Australia!



Danny O. (28 June 2020)

Australia is trapped between two conflicting imperialist powers. On one side, subservience to the United States politically, militarily and economically in our role as regional representative of the interests of US imperialism. On the other, reliance on China as our biggest trading partner, a major export market for raw commodities, and the main supplier of manufactured goods in the global supply chain.

The global capitalist crisis intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic has sharply revealed this fault line between the two economic giants on which Australia sits.

Flamed by right-wing talking heads and mouth pieces for US imperialism in the Australian main stream media like the Murdoch press, anti-China sentiment and racism has sky rocketed since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Spewing from the mouths of the majority section of the ruling class aligned with the US in its inter-imperialist rivalry with the newly

rising power, regrettably, this sentiment has seeped into sections of the working class.

Taking over?

Talk is rife with claims of China “taking over” the country by buying up large swaths of farm land and buying out Australian businesses. The finger is incorrectly pointed at China for the gutting of Australia’s own manufacturing industry, rather than the multinational corporations which moved production there following the logic of capitalism, which seeks to maximise its profit and exploit workers as cheaply as possible.

A look at the statistics and the bigger picture tells a different story.

While it is true Chinese investment in Australia has increased significantly in recent years, it still only accounts for 2 percent (5.7 percent if Hong Kong is included) of the total level of foreign investment in the country. On the other hand, US investment accounts for 26 percent of the total, and the UK 18 percent.

It is not Chinese troops and bases that sit on Australian soil, but

American ones with a permanent rotation of US Marines through Darwin. US military installations dot the country, the most significant being Pine Gap near Alice Springs. Billions of dollars of tax-payer money is being spent on upgrading military facilities to further support the US’s drive to war against China.

The influence of the US lobby on Australia’s politicians means there are only ever very few voices in the halls of parliament that dare to question the subservience of Australia and its foreign policy to the geopolitical and economic interests of US imperialism.

It is not China that is taking over. Australia has long been taken over – by the US.

For revolutionary anti-imperialist independence, not racist nationalism

The current crisis is highlighting in multiple ways the vulnerability of the Australian economy with its high foreign reliance, lack of significant local manufacturing industry, and subservience to the whims of multinational corporations and the governments they control.

Although it often comes across in racist and ignorant language that only benefits the bosses in dividing us, underlying the anti-China sentiment that some working class people are expressing is the desire for Australia to be independent and self-reliant. They want to see local industry and permanent jobs. They want a country in which they can see a bright future for themselves and their children.

There has long been a strong opposition to foreign investment among the people that feeds into the stream of struggle for Australian independence. But we cannot allow this opposition and struggle to be based on racism and xenophobia or narrow reactionary nationalism. We shouldn't oppose foreign investment just because it comes from a country whose people speak a different language or aren't white.

Communists must listen to the people, even if we don't agree with everything they say. We mustn't write them off and dismiss them out of hand because they haven't yet fully understood the whole situation. We must patiently and consistently explain the facts and show them the bigger picture.

The current crisis of capitalism is intensifying the rivalry and the drive to war between the imperialist powers. Australia's subservience to US imperialism limits our independence and will inevitably draw us into imperialist war.

The Australian ruling class has no desire to break from US imperialism and cannot lead us to the independent Australia we need to avoid such a disaster. It will require the masses led by the working class to take power into their own hands and run the country to serve the interests of the people. It requires a struggle for revolutionary anti-imperialist independence from all big power domination of Australia, laying the foundations for socialism.

In the struggle between the US and China, we do not choose one over the other, but oppose both. However, we recognise it is against US imperialism that the main blow must be struck if working people are ever to take power into their own hands in this country. ■

Northern Territory pushed closer to real war scenario

Contributed (5 June 2020)

Residents of the Northern Territory should be in no doubt what the US-led wave of militarism across the Indo-Pacific means for their state and well-being. The NT is being pushed into a front-line position for real war scenarios across the region.

A recent report, from a senior Australian government official, has clarified just how close the country has been drawn into US-led regional military planning, with specific reference to the Northern Territory.

Developments, elsewhere, have also contributed to rising diplomatic tensions.

The Trump administration has announced the intention to revamp a major economic forum to deal with the global economy, with moves specifically designed to contain and encircle China.

The report, from Shaun Drabsch, Chief Executive of the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation for the NT in a Defence Special Report supplement for the *Australian* in late May, provided a chilling glimpse of US-led military planning for the wider Indo-Pacific region. There was little ambiguity about the Pentagon plan: the northern part of Australia, strategically-placed and facing toward the South China Seas, was ear-marked to become 'the defence and national forward operating base for Australia'.

The main thrust of the report is about military superiority in the 2020-50 period, with the rise of China set to eclipse the US as the world's biggest economy within the next decade. It has been regarded as a threat to traditional US hegemonic positions across the region.

Written in a concise and factual style, the report provided a clear illustration of the massive military build-up planned by the US to maintain superiority in the face of having to deal with China as a competitor.

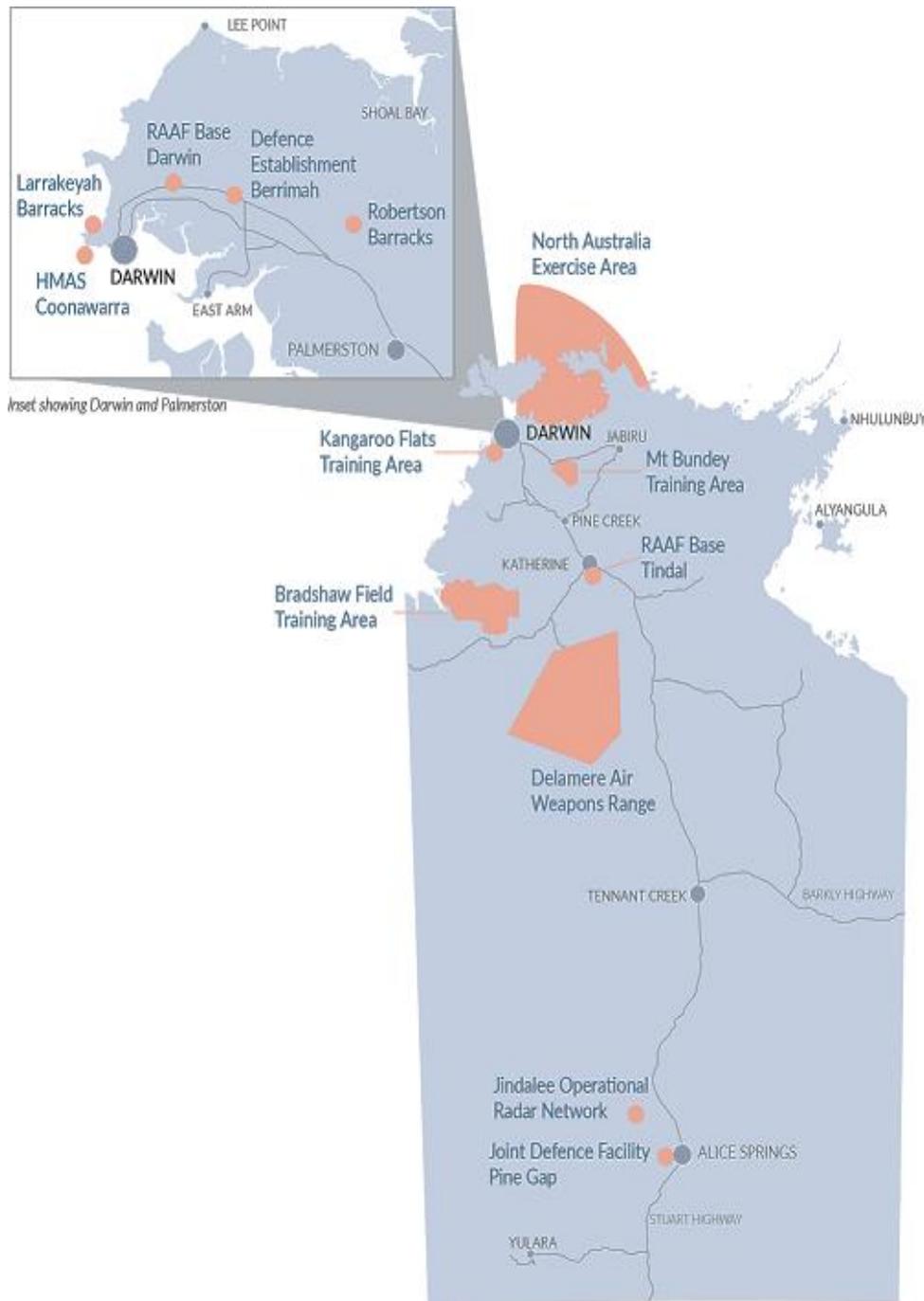
References are, therefore, provided of Australian Defence Force (ADF) 'investments in future war-fighting capabilities', which will include Joint Strike Fighter planes together with 72 F-35A Lighting II aircraft and MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial systems and manned P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and anti-submarine aircraft. Other references to unmanned platforms include the Loyal Wingman drone system and the ORCA Extra Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicle.

The NT is already littered with numerous military facilities including Pine Gap, which is hosted by Australia for a massive US intelligence-gathering base linked to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. RAAF Darwin, likewise, has four surveillance and response units working in conjunction with four combat support units. It is no coincidence the base, 8 kms outside of Darwin, is also used for US troop rotations.

Other military facilities in the NT include four army bases, two further RAAF bases and a naval base. Each base tends to have specific responsibilities, in peacetime and for combat. The number of military facilities would now appear planned for expansion with reference in the report to the proposed Indo-Pacific Deterrence Initiative (IPDI) which would include additional US troops being rotated through Darwin.

Reference was also made in the report to the 'prepositioning of equipment, increased missile defence capabilities and new intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets', together with 'more and new training ranges'.

The report also included reference to the new US-led regional telecommunications network linking the US with Guam, the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Darwin set to be operational in 2022. It is intended to provide the US with real-time communications for 'fast, secure, high-



The Northern Territory is dotted with military facilities. Their use in the service of US imperialist interests draws Australia ever closer to the potential for war

band-width data ... a prerequisite for virtually all modern defence and intelligence platforms'. Satellite communications have the problem of split-second transmission times which cause problems for military planners and remote control of combat in war-zones.

The fact the new telecommunications network has been routed through Guam is not coincidental: the Micronesian landmass hosts numerous sensitive US facilities. It also rests upon an arc from Pine Gap to Diego Garcia which swings across the Indo-Pacific region.

Both Guam and Diego Garcia have also been upgraded in recent years to act as military hubs, while Darwin Harbour in the Northern Territory has become a support centre for operations. The significance of Guam has also been established with the 2018 US-led Malabar military exercise which was held nearby and included Japan as a regional operation.

Whether the new telecommunications network is actually routed through any of the US military facilities has yet to be established. It would, however, be remarkable if the US intelligence

services have overlooked such opportunities.

The US-led military and security considerations have been linked to economic initiatives; the Trump administration has the specific intention of containing and encircling China in the global economy.

The announcement that the Trump administration wants to expand the G7 group of advanced economies to include Australia was not solely confined to the so-called 'alliance' between the two countries. Other countries which are major players in the global economy including India and Brazil have also been included in the plan. It follows a rationale that countries which play a dominant role in economic relations tend to trade with neighbouring countries and, therefore, develop workable diplomatic relations.

Australia, for example, has strong trade relations with the Indo-Pacific in general and the South Pacific specifically. India has maintained strong trading relations with the Asian sub-continent for decades while Brazil is a major player in Latin America due to its geographical size and huge manufacturing base. Both India and Brazil have also formed two of the five economic pillars of the massive BRICS regional trade organisation, which was regarded as a major player in emerging economies.

China, however, has not been included in the Trump economic initiative despite its relatively strong economic performance within the global economy. Diplomatic tensions and hostilities will be driven even higher across the Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere, as competition increases between the US and China.

Australia, in general, is being drawn ever closer into potential real war scenarios with the Northern Territory, specifically, being pushed into a front-line position and becoming a potential war-zone.

Australia needs an independent foreign policy! ■

COVID-19 pandemic shines powerful light on capitalism and imperialism

Alice M. (31 May 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the irreconcilable class antagonisms of the capitalist system. It proved again that monopoly capitalism's inherent exploitation and drive for profit works against the economic security, health and wellbeing of the people.

Frontline and essential services workers step out of the shadows

COVID-19 has shone a powerful light on the work of frontline and essential service workers. Most frontline and essential service workers are among the lowest paid in the country. The majority are women whose low paid labour enables capitalism to maximise profit making. Health care workers, cleaners, child care, disabilities and aged care workers, retail, hospitality and service workers, keep the capitalist economy functioning.

Most workers stood down by the COVID-19 lock down are in the lowest paid hospitality, retail and community services industries. The majority are women in casual and precarious jobs for most of their lives. Part-time casual workers for less than 12 months with one employer don't qualify for the JobKeeper package and face a life of permanent unemployment, economic insecurity and poverty.

George Megalogenis, an economics commentator, has pointed out that unlike the 1990s recession in which men lost 85 per cent of the jobs, and the 1980s recession in which they lost 76 per cent of the jobs, more than half of the workforce facing loss of their jobs so far from COVID-19 are women.

On average, women's superannuation savings are less than half those of men. COVID-19 and the recession will increase this inequality at the same time as older women are



already the fastest growing group of homeless in the country.

Unpaid work at home

At home women do the bulk of domestic work, childcare, organising and co-ordinating family responsibilities and activities. The lockdown has burdened women with increased household, family and childcare work. The exploitation of women at home and at work is covered and hidden under the capitalist promoted myths of the caring and self-sacrificing nature of women.

Studies in the past two months of lock down have shown that for families with children the physical isolation and school closures have added an extra six hours every day on caring for or supervising children at home. Around four of these six hours of extra child care work is done by women, and two by their male partners.

The lockdown has increased housework for women by more than an hour every day, but less than half an hour for men.

This unpaid housework and family work is a vital bedrock in the capitalist economy, essential for the reproduction and sustaining of present and future generations of workers for capitalist exploitation. The unpaid labour of women's domestic work and caring for children, the sick, the elderly and disabled maximises profits for the capitalist class.

The coronavirus crisis has exposed that the exploitation of women, both paid and unpaid, is fundamental to the

operations of capitalism and class exploitation.

State capitalism to the rescue

The scale of the economic recession and COVID-19 that has hit the global capitalist economy is taking a huge toll on the health, livelihoods and economic security of ordinary people. Even before the pandemic outbreak the global capitalist economy was already in recession and hurtling towards a major economic crisis. The bourgeois state is compelled to step in directly and take control of the entire country's economy and political functions to prop up monopolies and save capitalism. This is simply state monopoly capitalism temporarily taking over some functions of monopolies. It has nothing to do with socialism where the means of production are taken over by the working class and run for working people.

Some operations of private hospitals were temporarily taken over by the bourgeois state as the only efficient way to manage the national health crisis.

Child care is suddenly declared an essential public service and heavily subsidised by the government to make it free for frontline and essential services workers, showing the indispensable role of child care in the economy. And yet Early Childhood Educators are some of the lowest paid workers because the majority are women doing "women's work". At the same time, before the coronavirus

pandemic crisis, childcare costs in Australia were among the most expensive in the world – more expensive than for private schooling.

The government instructs banks to defer mortgage repayments and placed a moratorium on residential and commercial rents.

The banks were the first beneficiaries of \$105 billion government handouts from people's taxes.

Billions of working people's taxes are handed over to Qantas to save it from collapsing.

The billions of dollars for the JobKeeper Allowance is nothing more than the capitalist state trying to bail out big business and the capitalist system from deepening recession and looming depression. It is simply corporate welfare – welfare for big business.

Suddenly, the government found money to increase the unliveable Newstart Allowance, rebranded as JobSeeker Allowance for the unemployed.

Some describe the government intervention, the bailing out of companies and an increase in welfare subsidies for the people, as socialism. It is simply state capitalism sending in the fire engines trying to rescue the monopoly capitalist class and the capitalist system during the economic crisis. Capitalism can't be reformed and given a more humane face because the fundamental exploitation remains.

The JobKeeper and JobSeeker allowances aim to stimulate spending, dampen social unrest and get the capitalist economy through a deep recession and depression. These welfare payments to the people are dwarfed by the massive government welfare handouts to corporations and big business.

Already COVID-19 and the economic recession are sending more small businesses into extinction, increasing monopolisation.

Control and suppression of the working class

Under the pretext of the national health crisis, the state is making preparations to intensify the

exploitation of workers through "increased productivity" and "more flexibility" for big business to wipe out hard won rights and conditions and for workers to make sacrifices to reboot the capitalist economy and increase the rate of profit.

Democratic Rights

The police and intelligence agencies have been given unprecedented powers and resources to impose draconian restrictions on people's democratic rights, including public gatherings and protests, intended to suppress people's resistance to austerity.

Independence and self-reliance

The pandemic has exposed the depth of imperialist control over Australia's economy. It revealed the manufacturing industry gutted so deeply that Australia no longer manufactures even the most basic medical equipment, medical masks, ventilators and personal protective equipment. Most of Australia's medications are imported from overseas whilst many of our medical scientists are starved of public funding for research and development. Many local manufacturing industries have been taken over by multinational corporations, killed off or moved out of Australia to low wage countries where exploitation of workers is even more intense and profit margins higher.

COVID-19 has accelerated and deepened the economic recession.

Long struggles and economic hardships lay ahead for working people. Capitalism has reached well beyond its use-by date and is now threatening all life on earth. But capitalism will not collapse simply from its own created and unavoidable economic crises. The people, led by an organised revolutionary working class, are decisive in consciously ending capitalism and sending it to the dustbin of history, for ever.

The revolutionary fight for an independent socialist Australia takes many turns and twists, and is unstoppable. ■

EDITORIAL

Fight over statues and history is class struggle

The toppling of statues around the world representing colonialists and racists has received wide publicity in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

It is right that they come down. Statues of colonists, monarchs, and slave owners reflect the values of the ruling classes of the era in which they were erected. They are an affront to the people whose lands they had stolen, to the descendants of those whom they enslaved and oppressed.

Their continued veneration reflects that the values they espoused continue to resonate with the ideology of the capitalist ruling class today – a legitimate target in the class struggle. Hence, all class conscious workers who recognise their own liberation as bound up with the liberation of all oppressed peoples cannot but support the movement to remove such statues.

It is not a matter of *erasing* history. It is an act of the masses taking the historical narrative out of the hands of the rich and powerful oppressors, asserting instead that it is the oppressed masses themselves who are the makers of history. It is the oppressed and those who have fought for the liberation of the masses who should be memorialised and not forgotten.

In this vein, on June 20 the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD) scored a great victory. After fending off a legal challenge by the local city council and moves by the rightwing Christian Democrats (CDU), they successfully unveiled a statue of Vladimir Lenin in front of their party headquarters in the town of Gelsenkirchen.

"Today we are experiencing the most dramatic crisis of capitalism since the Second World War," said MLPD leader Gabi Fechtner. "So, it is high time to raise the first Lenin monument in West Germany and hold a broad societal debate over revolutionary perspectives."

The struggle over the interpretation of our past is at the same time a struggle over the direction of our collective future.

That future must be socialism – or it will be barbarism.

MARXISM TODAY

Science must serve the people

Antonio G. (15 June 2020)

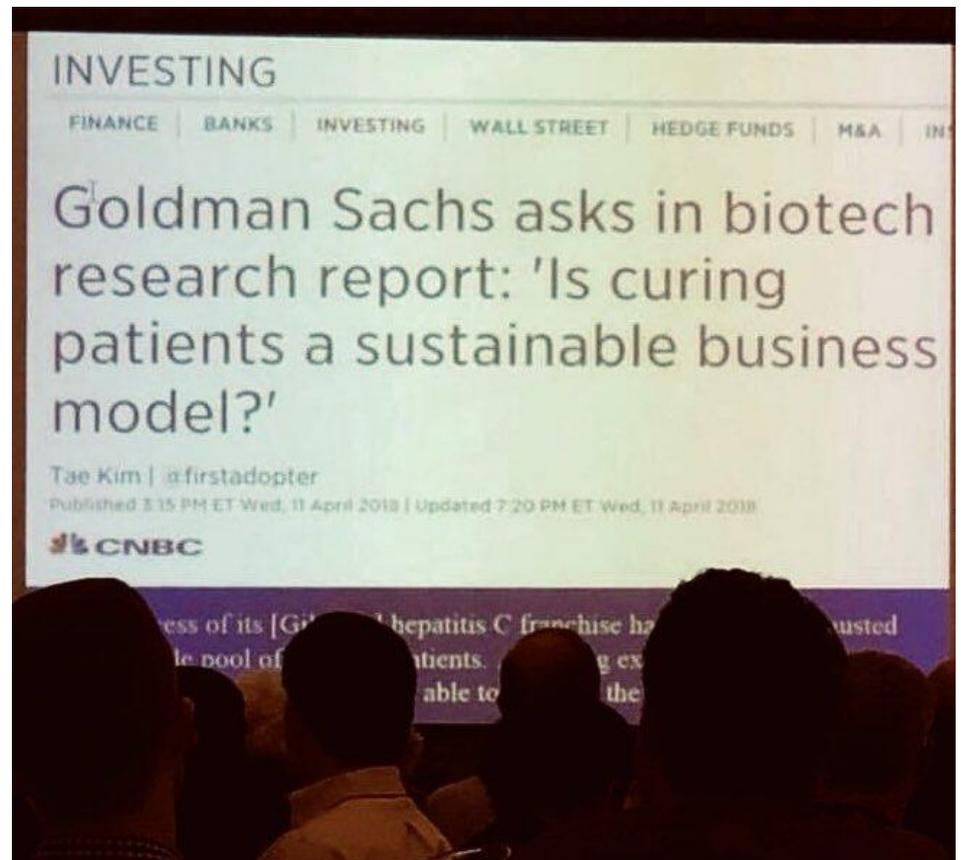
Recent reactionary comments from a successful scientist in my field have emphasised the continued relevance of Marx's contention that

“the weak points in the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism that excludes history and its process, are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions of its spokesmen, whenever they venture beyond the bounds of their own speciality.”

Scientists owe much more to humanity than just the pursuit of disinterested enquiry. Our duties derive from the human community that necessarily precedes our discipline; distinct from the social continuum of human labour that reproduces our world, what forms of experimental investigation could possibly be conceived, let alone practically realised?

Questions like these should inspire those who claim the love of truth as their motivation to better understand the relationship between our scientific work and the historical circumstances that provide its material foundation. The ground-breaking contribution of the Soviet physicist Boris Hessen, who uncovered *The Socio-Economic Roots of Newton's Principia* and thereby founded an entirely new academic discipline, would be a good place to begin, as would this recent online discussion regarding COVID-19 and the law of value.

Here, though, the emphasis must be on *beginning*, as much more will be needed to fulfil our duty. Indeed, if scientists are to be anything more than “learned salesmen of the capitalist class,” we must develop an acute awareness of how our discoveries are



deployed everywhere to maintain the hegemony of the present state of things through the sparkling edifice of technological advancement. As an Italian comrade observed in post-war Europe, when advanced scientific methods of production were being rapidly incorporated into the then burgeoning factory system, “the process of industrialisation, as it achieves more and more advanced levels of technological progress, coincides with a continual growth of the capitalist's authority,” so that *“technological progress itself thus appears as a mode of existence of capital, as its development.”* This is explosive propaganda for the bosses, and must be addressed as a matter of strategic priority. Thankfully, as all class-conscious workers understand, the power that our labour renders to capital is also, in the right conditions, a power that we can wield against it.

Knowledge is linked to struggle

How, then, are we to develop scientific methods of work that simultaneously exist within and against capital, that fulfil our duty to humanity?

One of the great materialists of last century suggested where the correct

answers to such difficult questions could be derived: “from social practice, and from it alone.” This means struggle. Scientists must struggle to *discover* the many ways that our discipline is political, we must develop *theories* about the role of our work— not just in opposition to the gifts that our labour surrenders to capitalist hegemony but also in anticipation of the disproportionate burden we must bear in the struggle to build socialism (1)— and we must *experiment*, urgently, with different forms of explicitly political organisation. The goal of our organisation will also be its substance: to initiate a struggle to bring our creative labour into the service of the proletariat; the only class whose triumph is a necessary condition for human survival.

How antithetical, then, to our crucial role in the fight for the survival of the species are the recent reactionary comments of a certain established professor, who uncritically imposes the vulgar, racist instincts of the most petty casual employer onto the scientific method under the guise of “meritocracy.”

A successful revolutionary once explained that “in class society

everyone lives as a member of a particular class, *and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class.*" Thus, in response to our senior colleague, our first question must be: which class do your comments serve? Reiteration of the service that racism, sexism and every other form of discrimination have rendered to the tormentors of humanity since the very first fence was hammered into the mud around a field of freshly sown seeds is, here, unnecessary.

"There is no royal road to science," and, for the very same reason, neither is there to our emancipation from capital. Only through acknowledging the laboratory as a terrain for class struggle, only by recognising the role that our scientific labour plays in the reproduction of a definite series of social relationships founded on exploitation, can we begin to repay our debt to humanity. As a comrade with a keen interest in science once observed, "The grand industries and their science are not the prize for whomever wins the class struggle. *They are rather the very terrain of that struggle.* And, as long as the terrain is occupied by the enemy, you have to shoot, without tears for the roses." ■

(1) *That same, great materialist identified 'scientific experiment' as one of the three forms of social practice that could be productive of correct ideas.*

Time for 'fresh thinking' on IR says Australian Industry Group. Same old thinking from the capitalists, we say

Alex M. (4 June 2020)

The latest failure of capitalism triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the cause for concern for some but not others. For the ruling class here in Australia, this new crisis is viewed as a golden opportunity. An opportunity to continue cutting costs, by reducing wages and eroding working conditions, imposing more flexibility (read precarious employment/casualisation) on the workforce and for sacking people. In other words, ramping up the practices whose ultimate aim is to lift profit rates.

Since the last recession, which was sparked by the GFC in 2008, global capitalism has been mired in low growth with accompanying low rates of profit.

The response to the GFC and ensuing recession from the ruling class and its economic gurus was to double down on what is now commonly known as neoliberalism. One of the central elements of neoliberalism is the ongoing attack on workers' wages and conditions of employment, the drive to get workers to produce more for less in

the way of wages and to reduce hard won job conditions.

Among the results of the attack on wages and working conditions since the GFC has been the rise of precarious employment and the so-called gig economy; increased levels of casual employment; and the increased use of various types of temporary employment such as the 457 Visa. What neoliberalism has failed to deliver in Australia and overseas is a return to the high profit rates that were a part of the long boom of post-World War II capitalism.

So, despite the best efforts of the ruling classes here and overseas, global capitalism has not lifted itself out of the slump that has characterised the period since 2008. In fact, for countries such as Greece (especially in the last decade), economic depression is the best descriptor.

A mere twelve years after the GFC, with global capitalism continuing in the low growth, low profit rate doldrums, along comes the pandemic and tips it deeper into recession, or possibly depression, again. Neoliberalism, which was sold as the means to revive global capitalism, has failed to do so. To be sure, neoliberalism did and does have benefits for capitalists in the reduction of labour costs and the downgrading of working conditions, but it has not reversed the overall decline of global capitalism. "What to do then," say the Australian ruling class, "now that we have another crisis? We need to reform Industrial Relations legislation in Australia. The Award system is too complex, and employers need a more simple, straightforward system." The downturn in the Australian economy is a golden opportunity for 'reform' suggests the BCA and the Australian Industry Group.

And so, we get things like this: "Now is not the time for tired old arguments about IR reform. What is needed is *(continued pg. 8)*

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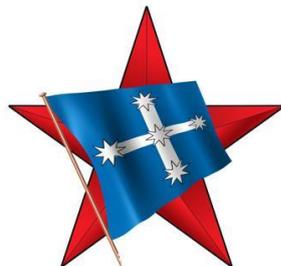
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(continued from pg.7)

fresh thinking and a new approach, aimed at boosting productivity, growing jobs, encouraging investment and restoring economic growth..." which is a statement from a 19 May press release by the Australian Industry Group (AIG) Chief Executive, Innes Willox.

The press release provides some examples of the 'fresh thinking' that Willox and the AIG suggests is necessary in these troubled times. The essential elements of the AIG's IR 'fresh thinking' extend to: increasing the flexibility of the workforce; removing from Awards provisions

concerning various leave and other entitlements that are already covered in legislation; simplifying the complexities associated with EBAs, complexities that supposedly have seen the decline of the number of EBAs entered into by employers; and clarifying the definition of casual work to make it easier for employers to employ casuals. These are some of the things that the AIG would like reformed in the current Australian IR laws.

What is immediately apparent is that the so-called fresh thinking is in fact the same old thinking, the same old attempts to drive down workers'

wages and conditions, the same old drive to make the working class pay for the latest crisis of capitalism. The bosses and their ideologues never tire of trying to increase the exploitation of those that actually produce the wealth of this and other countries. They never let an opportunity such as a recession or a depression pass them by without trying to attack the working class.

The same old thinking, the same old crises of capitalism will only be overcome by some profound new thinking, thinking which guides revolutionary practice aimed at bringing about an independent, socialist Australia. ■

Economic crisis belts the working class: Will the ACTU fight or fizzle?

Bill F. (7 June 2020)

In the wake of the coronavirus crisis, the Morrison government is taking desperate measures to restore the security and profits of the capitalist class and their foreign monopoly mates.

After years of regular abuse and anti-union laws, the federal government has reluctantly accepted that they need the union movement involved in any far-reaching plans to resurrect the capitalist economy. They have asked the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) to participate in a 'roundtable' review of industrial relations, along with employer organisations and social and community representatives.

This in itself is an admission that the capitalist class needs the working class to survive, to continue making profits and to accept capitalist domination of society. While the ACTU covers a much smaller union membership than in days past, it still covers key trades and industries including the public service, and has some capacity to reach into the wider community as well.

Five working groups

The government has proposed working groups to develop policy recommendations in five areas. These are:



Award simplification, Enterprise Agreements, Casual and Fixed-Term workers, Compliance/Enforcement, Greenfields Agreements.

Recommendations coming from this process, if accepted by government, would be dealt with through legislation, government regulation or through the federal budget now postponed until October.

It is obvious, in the short time provided, the government doesn't really expect agreement on substantial issues, and in any case, is not bound to accept the recommendations. What they are seeking is to compromise and disarm the union movement by collaboration, perhaps making some small concessions. If this is the cost of industrial peace while capitalism recovers, well and good – if not, a further reason to bring in more union-bashing 'reforms'!

What the ACTU wants

After years of wage freezes, price hikes, casualisation and social service cut-backs, the working class was well and truly hammered before the coronavirus hit, so the ACTU had no

difficulty in producing a half-decent list of working class demands to bring to the roundtable discussions. While there is no mention of even social democratic demands such as nationalising key industries, most of the items they listed focus on the immediate needs of working people and would benefit workers in the short term.

They have listed eight key areas for 'economic recovery' with some detailed explanations on each.

1. Two million new permanent jobs, halving the number of insecure jobs
2. Lift wages, living standards
3. Investing in public and community services
4. Nation-building projects
5. Education and Training
6. Dealing with Climate Change
7. Dealing with Social Disadvantage
8. Supporting Australian industry

What the bosses want

The AIG (Australian Industry Group) is making the front-running here, representing the remnant Australian capitalists while the foreign monopoly-dominated BCA (Business Council of Australia) lurks in the background, confident in more direct links to its government stooges.

The AIG wish-list is a stinker, hardly the "fresh approach" promised, but rather a re-hash of anti-worker obsessions.

In the first place they want to scrap the “better off overall test” in Enterprise Agreements – and what’s the point of an agreement for workers if they are not better off?

For the AIG and the capitalist class, simplification of awards means stripping out issues such as annual leave, personal and carer’s leave, redundancy pay and termination notices from awards and agreements and leaving them to the tender mercies of existing and yet to be defined legislation.

Furthermore, they reject any attempt to introduce criminal penalties for wage underpayment by bosses, which has been rampant for young students and casualised workers and those thrown into the so-called ‘gig economy’.

You can bet they will oppose almost every point of the ACTU position, but you can also bet they will also make a few concessions to appear “reasonable” and “realistic” in this crisis.

A big test coming

By the stated conclusion of this process at the end of September, the ACTU will be under pressure and not only from union members. In September the coronavirus crisis stimulation in the form of JobKeeper and JobSeeker packages will be downgraded, perhaps in full. Many hundreds of thousands of working people will already be in debt and desperate need, many others will be barely able to survive on charity hand-outs and meagre social services. They will be looking to the union movement as their only hope.

If the ACTU is unable to get its eight point position accepted by government, what happens then? Will they draw a line or just slag off at the government and then sit back and foster illusions for the Labor Party to win office, as happened last election. (Labor, for its part, is currently doing its own sitting back and waiting – no leadership coming there, so don’t waste your breath.)

Will the ACTU be prepared to fight for its position? Will it be prepared to educate and mobilise the working class

to press its demands through strike action? Or will it spend endless time and resources trawling through the courts and losing again and again?

That will be the test – words are not good enough, action speaks louder!

History shows, “If you don’t fight, you lose”. ■

Selling the Farm – More Dairy Farms Snapped Up By North American Capital

Ned K. (13 June 2020)

A prominent dairy production company, Beston Foods, has sold its four dairy cattle farms located in the South East of SA near Mt Gambier.

Buying and selling of dairy farms is nothing new. However, this particular sale is an example of how foreign capital is bit by bit buying up prime agricultural land in Australia. The farms are being sold to Aurora Dairies who already manage 18 dairy farms in the South East and western Victoria. Aurora Dairies is owned by Canada's Public Sector Pension Investment Board and Warakiirri Asset Management.

An article in the June edition of *Vanguard* (“Agribusinesses Still Dominate Australia’s Agriculture”) showed that this Pension Investment Board is one of the top 10 agribusinesses in Australia. They are buying dairy farms with an eye to supplying milk to the highest bidder.

Currently the highest bidders are those milk production agribusinesses such as Mondelez, who make most of their profits by exporting dairy foods, including baby formula milk, to overseas markets such as China.

This is a strange situation whereby the capital for investment purposes comes from the superannuation money from workers, in this case Canadian public servants. The Pension Fund, like industry superannuation funds here, searches the globe for investments which give their fund members a good “return”. So, we have the ironic situation of the Pension Fund of Canadian workers benefiting from the increased exploitation of dairy cattle farm workers in the South East of SA and western Victoria!

Pension Funds and industry superannuation funds are indeed

locked into the system of imperialism, even though sometimes dressed up as “ethical investors”.

As for the sale of Beston Foods. Why did the owners sell the farms?

According to the Chairman of Beston Foods, Roger Sexton, the company made a \$3.09 million loss in the first half of the current financial year and a loss of \$15.5 million the previous year. The sale of the farms was “crucial to the ability of the company to keep operating”.

Beston Foods was started by local SA businessmen Roger Sexton and Stephen Gerlach, a former senior partner of top big business firm, Finlaysons. Despite their relatively wealthy standing in the SA business community, they are small fish in the big imperialist economic sea, waiting to be swallowed bit by bit by foreign owned capital searching the globe for their next opportunity to accumulate more capital and surplus value.

The force keeping Beston afloat as a dairy manufacturing company of mainly mozzarella cheese and lactoferrin are the workers at their Murray Bridge and Jervois production plants. The directly employed workers are paid just above the award, and the many labor hire workers paid just the minimum award.

They are working in a high unemployment area and will be watching carefully to see what Beston’s next move is. Sexton said the \$40 million from the sale of the farms to the Canadian Pension Board will be used to reduce debt levels and “to release capital for reinvestment in higher returning dairy factory assets”.

This sounds like a euphemism for replacing workers with more technologically advanced machinery.

Time will tell. ■

Stop the Minerals Council's Agenda for Attacks on the People and the Environment



Nick G. (15 June 2020)

The ruling class constantly discusses its tactics and refines its agenda in preparation for fresh attacks on the people.

Social, economic and climate crises are favoured moments for such reassessments. The COVID-19 pandemic has been one such crisis, with Morrison giving the green light to industry to “lead the way” out of the crisis with new policy frameworks designed to promote growth in the profitability of major foreign and local corporations.

In an earlier article (*see pg.7 of this edition*) we analysed new demands (really, attacks) promoted by the Australian Industry Group. But they are not the only ones lining up to tell the government what must be done in the wake of the pandemic.

According to its website, the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) offers full membership to “companies directly involved in mining, prospecting or contracting activities relating to the obtaining, concentrating, smelting ore (sic) refining of minerals.” It also offers associate membership to “companies which carry on as their principal business the supply of equipment, materials, services or capital to a

company eligible for Full Membership.”

The MCA began its current campaign on May 15 when it released a paper called “Immediate Reform Priorities to Accelerate Economic Recovery”.

Changes to greenfields agreements

Amongst its recommendations were proposed changes to greenfields agreements. The MCA wants greenfields agreements to run for the life of the operation.

Greenfields agreements are those negotiated between an employer and a union before the company has started operations. At this stage there are no workers on site and the company can strike a deal with a preferred union and exclude unions it dislikes. Greenfields agreements run for four years at which stage the workers are free to negotiate a new agreement, hopefully with improved wages and conditions. By seeking to extend greenfields agreements for the life of the company’s operations, the MCA hopes to lock workers out of any future claims based on increases in their productivity and on the company’s profitability.

The MCA is also seeking a waiver allowing a 12-month greenfield agreement to be made without any union involvement. A case of the

company conveniently agreeing with itself, since no-one else is involved.

On May 29, MCA CEO Tania Constable expanded on these demands in a press release calling for simplifying awards and improving enterprise bargaining.

Only a simpleton would fail to ask of the MCA “simplify awards” for whom? “Improve” enterprise bargaining for whom? Unless we are very mistaken, these “simplifications” and “improvements” would be for the corporations, not the workers.

Changes to company tax rate

The MCA paper also bleats that “Australia’s company tax rate of 30 per cent is too high and not internationally competitive.” It calls for a reduction of the company tax rate.

Each year for the last five years, the Australian Tax Office, under massive public pressure to tell us what major companies are, or are not, paying in tax, has released an analysis of company tax payments. The company tax rate is set at 30%. Hardly any companies pay that much. They retain an army of accountants to avoid taxes.

For each of the five years for which this data is available, more than 300 of the biggest foreign and local corporations have paid not a single cent in tax on earnings in the hundreds of millions, indeed billions, of dollars.

Those that do pay tax manage to minimise their obligations and pay far below the 30% about which the MCA is complaining.

The ten biggest members of the MCA are listed in the table, with their Australian earnings, tax paid and the rate of tax.

The average tax rate of these leading MCA members is 5.2%. Three paid no tax at all. The MCA, which complains that its members are operating under an internationally uncompetitive tax system, are fleecing the Australian people of billions of dollars in unpaid taxes.

Eliminate red, black and green tape

The MCA wants its members' projects "fast-tracked" by the elimination of red and green tape. It wants inward and outward investment made easier, it wants the clean energy bodies the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) to invest in fossil fuels, and it wants the government to support the development of nuclear energy in Australia.

The MCA pays lip service to "forming partnerships with Indigenous Australians" at the same time as its biggest member company, Rio Tinto, shows its callous disregard for Indigenous culture by blasting to smithereens a cave which records 46,000 years of Indigenous activity.

The MCA boasts about high wages in the mining sector as if such wages have been provided out of the goodness of the corporate heart.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Wages are high in this sector

because they have been fought for by generations of working class Australians. They are part compensation for the often remote locations of mining operations, for the destabilising fly-in fly-out and long day shift patterns, and dirty and dangerous work. If wishes were fishes, we'd all swim in this sea.

The MCA has a common agenda with the Australia Industry Group and other peak employer bodies such as the Business Council of Australia and the Property Council.

The government has succeeded in seducing the ACTU into sitting at its table.

Workers must ensure that their own unions stay independent of attempts to buy the unions off, to dampen their efforts to protect wages and conditions and shared community concerns.

Workers should be vigilant and ensure that an independent working class agenda confronts the combined agendas of government and peak employer organisations.

Dare to struggle, dare to win! ■

Essential to the people... but not the system?

Alan H. (5 June 2020)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that frontline and public sector workers are essential to society. In fact, we know that workers in general are essential to society functioning. Without them how would the capitalist class get their profits and power? Each day since the crisis began, we have heard state and federal governments say that frontline and public sector workers are vital in getting us through this crisis. And without them, society would be in the depths of Covid-19 and its health threats.

Yet all of this appreciation and good feelings from the government and other sectors of the capitalist system is a mirage. A feel-good news cycle and media comments that mask their real feelings. This has been made crystal clear by the recent attempt by the New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian to put through a wage freeze for public sector workers.

What is essential for the capitalist class is not workers, families or communities but the economy. And of course, by economy, it is actually their profits and ability to gain it through exploiting labour from the workforce. They mask this through the threat of job losses and insecure employment. Why wouldn't they when they feel secure with the thousands, if not millions, looking for employment or more hours. Marx referred to this when he described the reserve army of labour and sadly it is still very much relevant today as it was last century.

But all is ok, the state government wants to give public sector workers a payout of \$1,000. That is if they accept their pay freeze. Some called it a sweetener, others a bribe, and others a form of economic coercion. Stadiums before hospitals and schools, and now this slap in the face. Especially arrogant considering how essential these workers were not too long ago. Not surprising really, we know how they really feel about workers, families and the community. ■

Company	Ownership	Brief description	2017-18 Aust revenue	2017-18 Aust tax paid and rate of tax
Rio Tinto	Anglo-Australian	the world's second largest metals and mining corporation	33,176,084,964	3,170,873,230 (9.5%)
Glencore	British	ranked tenth in the Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest companies	15,694,206,513	239,872,883 (1.5%)
BHP	Anglo-Australian	the world's largest mining company	36,685,553,130	3,523,250,116 (9.6%)
Anglo-American	South African	the world's largest producer of platinum	4,720,895,769	311,947,890 (6.5%)
Newmont	US	the world's largest gold mining company	2,399,681,101	266,474,855 (11%)
Peabody	US	largest private-sector coal company in the world	4,323,880,463	0
Yancoal	Chinese	Australia's largest pure-coal producer	4,206,512,986	0
COAL21	Various	includes 26 investors from among black coal producers in Australia	n/a	n/a
Newcrest	US	subsidiary of the world's second largest gold producer	428,492,069	39,052,552 (9.1%)
Whitehaven	Australian	Biggest ASX-listed coal miner	2,307,717,714	0

ICOR Resolution:

Forward to Worldwide Rebellion against Racism and the Anti-Communism of Imperialism!

The following resolution was released by the ICOR on 9 June 2020

Since the murder of the African American George Floyd on 25 May in the city of Minneapolis, mass unrest is spreading and escalating in the USA. In the entire country, mostly young people are rising against police violence and racism and demanding justice. In the meantime, this movement has become an international one with millions of participants. **The responsible police officers must all be indicted and convicted! In the entire world the murder of George Floyd has become a symbol of racist oppression and people rally in the streets against it, and against the rightward development of imperialist governments – young and old, people of different skin color together.**



Racism has a long history in the USA. The often embittered struggles against it cost the lives of countless people. Racism has always been used as a method of division to counter the development of working-class solidarity. For years the resistance of African Americans has included the struggle against police violence. But there is more at issue with the current mass unrest. In the USA, the world economic and financial crisis has led to a rapid increase of unemployment to currently 40 million, to poverty and misery, especially among the especially exploited and oppressed minorities. Many people can no longer pay their rent and are even losing their health insurance in the midst of the pandemic. The corona-crisis has already cost the lives of more than 100,000 people. The interpenetration of the world economic and financial crisis, the corona-crisis, the environmental crisis and the economic relapse of US imperialism has developed an enormous impact and depth. This combines with an open political crisis and an intensification of societal polarization.

The Black population and the population originating from Latin America is especially affected by this development. A large part of the workers in the USA who are especially exploited and oppressed are Black. It is especially young people and women who see their futures threatened and are rising up against the effects of this imperialist social system. The demonstrations are encountered with brutal police violence. People are drawing their conclusions. Outrage, bitterness and anger are unleashed – but especially the determination to never again accept racism as a normality and the wish for societal alternatives.

The ruling class is developing a propaganda campaign of intimidation and division. In an openly anti-communist manner, Trump brazenly claims that the demonstrators are “radical left, anarchists and anti-fascists” and declares them to be “terrorists”. With the mobilization of the National Guard by different US governors at Trump's behest and his demand for the deployment of the US military to suppress the protests, openly fascist methods are practiced. Trump shows that he's ready for anything. In the USA and worldwide, people reject police brutality and growing repression and because of that question more and more the societal relations. The daily mass protests all over the country have among other things achieved that Trump has withdrawn the National Guard from Washington. Everywhere also police officers are deliberately siding with protesters.

Like in a burning glass, the entire crisis-proneness of capitalism and the continuing destabilization of the imperialist world system is expressed. This is a challenge for the workers and masses in the USA. They deserve the unshakable solidarity of the revolutionaries and masses of the entire world! The turmoil in the USA, in connection with the struggles being led worldwide, has the potential for a revolutionary movement for societal change. The strengthening of the revolutionary forces is of great importance! The ICOR will do everything to anchor genuine socialism as an alternative to the rotten imperialist system.

Organize solidarity with the struggling masses!

Long live international solidarity!

Workers of all countries, unite!

Workers of all countries and oppressed peoples, unite!

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) is an affiliate of the ICOR (International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organisations). The CPA (M-L) signed on to this resolution along with 35 other organisations around the world.