

Fight New Attacks on Workers' Rights!

Danny O. (22 February 2021)

In the final sitting days of federal parliament last year, the Morrison LNP government tabled two new bills aimed at attacking workers' rights and their unions.

The first was the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Withdrawal from Amalgamations) Bill 2020. It removed legal barriers to amalgamated unions demerging after the five-year cooling off period had passed. While the law itself appears rather innocuous, giving union members the democratic right to vote to demerge if they wish – though final decision rests with the Fair Work Commission (FWC) – its real aim is to split the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU), to isolate the more militant Construction and Maritime divisions and clear the way for further targeted attacks on the strongest sectors of the union movement.

For the past 18 months the government had failed to get the necessary support for its nuclear strike option targeting the more militant Construction Division in the form of the Ensuring Integrity Bill. Fear of widespread fallout hitting all unions meant the union movement was, even if somewhat reluctantly, united in opposition to the bill. By contrast, this new legislation was a well-placed surgical strike.

Drawn up in collusion by the federal government and disgruntled Labor Party aligned officials from the Mining and Forestry/Manufacturing divisions following two years of well publicised infighting in the CFMMEU,



it took less than 24-hours from when it was introduced for both houses of parliament to pass the bill into law with the full support of both the government and the opposition Labor Party. The silence from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and many other unions was deafening.

Whatever the internal tensions that exist between the official leadership of the various divisions and branches in the CFMMEU, no solution that really benefits the interests of the union's members and the broader working class can come from union officials running and collaborating with the rabid anti-union and anti-worker government of the ruling class.

The move to demerge, far from being an initiative of the rank and file for more democratic control of their union – something that all class

conscious workers would support – is rather a cynical move concocted by union bureaucrats which serves the long-term interests of the bosses dividing and weakening the organised workers' movement.

The fate of the unity of the amalgamated CFMMEU now lies in the hands of the rank and file members of the Mining and Energy Division who are expected to vote on the future of the division in the near future. If they choose to leave, the Forestry/Manufacturing division is likely to follow close behind.

Don't get hit by the Bus

The second piece of legislation is the Fair Work Act (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill 2020 – commonly being referred to as the federal government's Industrial

Relations Omnibus Bill. Although its name suggests that these reforms have been brought together to deal with the economic downturn connected to the ongoing global pandemic, the proposed changes in the bill have been on the wish list of big business for a long time before the pandemic began.

On the whole, the reforms have been designed to do one thing – increase profit for business at the expense of workers' pay and conditions. In particular, many of the proposed changes target casual workers, workers in insecure and low paid work, and the unorganised.

There's no denying that these attacks on workers' rights are drastic and severe. Yet it is also not the root and branch shake up of the entire industrial relations system that some in the boss class were hoping the government would push for under the cover of the pandemic.

With a federal election looming in the not-too-distant future, Morrison has made clear that IR reform is not going to be the hill which his government dies on. Nor are the crossbench senators that the government needs on side to pass the legislation likely to want to be seen attacking working people after they have already made so many sacrifices during the pandemic. Better to claw away whatever conditions they can get away with now, and try for more later.

Indeed, the government has already announced that they are dropping one of the more blatant attacks of the bill after crossbench senators said there was no way they would support it. The proposal would have allowed employers 'affected by the pandemic' to undercut the legal minimum

conditions of Industry Awards by creating Enterprise Agreements that didn't have to meet the requirements of the Better Off Overall Test (BOOT) in the Fair Work Act. It's the kind of outright assault on workers' conditions reminiscent of the Howard government's WorkChoices, a connotation Morrison's government is hoping to avoid.

Just how much the dropping of the BOOT changes placates the crossbenchers remains to be seen, though it's likely to give ground to the government to argue for the passage of the rest of their 'modest' attacks.

Of course, the remaining attacks are anything but modest. Among them are proposals that:

- *undermine the FWC's ability to check if workers are better off under new agreements and allow bosses the chance to slip through dodgy agreements

- *overturn a recent Federal Court decision that allowed casual workers entitlements comparable to non-casuals if they worked a regular roster over a long period of time

- *cut overtime penalty rates for part-timers in effect making part-timers into casuals but without casual loading

- *extend the duration of greenfields agreements for major construction projects from four to eight years effectively locking workers and unions out from negotiating better pay and conditions during the life of the project

And to help ram these attacks through, the government has tied it all up in a neat ribbon of deception with a toothless federal anti-wage theft provision that undermines more rigorous recent state laws passed in Victoria and Queensland.

Independent working class agenda – not class collaboration!

Whatever shape the final bill takes when it's voted on in the coming months it must be fought. So far, the official union movement's response to these new attacks has been nothing short of underwhelming, relying on not much more than lobbying of the crossbench senators begging them not to pass the Omnibus Bill.

For five months the ACTU was party to round table talks with big business lobbies and the government about IR reform. During that time there was not a whimper about the need for workers to get organised and prepared to fight. The ACTU were completely side swiped when the draft bill was tabled. Did they seriously think they could protect workers' rights by being "partners" with big business? If ACTU secretary Sally McManus' speech at the National Press Club in early December before the announcement of the Omnibus Bill is anything to go by, she certainly did: "The union movement has had its national role returned to where it should always have been – as a widely accepted part of Australia's civil society, and a trusted social partner for Governments and business."

This outright class collaborationism and compromise is reminiscent of the major sell-out of the Accord and exactly how the trade union movement has gotten to its weakest point in decades. It's the kind of approach to class struggle that's as dangerous as the attacks coming from big business.

We should have no illusions in the government or the bosses that they will willingly look after our wellbeing. Every gain, every benefit, every

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measure that serves the peoples' needs must be fought for and won from the hands of the ruling class. They will never give it up for free. It is not class collaboration, but class struggle; not begging, but the strength of the people organised that will force the demands of the people to be met.

As workers, we need our own demands, our own priorities, and our own organisations to take up the fight and be prepared to organise and mobilise. We need an independent working class agenda and movement that starts from an understanding that as workers our interests are not the same as the interests of the capitalist ruling class and their institutions of class rule, like parliament and the courts. An independent working class agenda would not subordinate itself to the electoral interests of parliamentary parties, nor would it line itself up with the interests of businesses to "keep the economy going".

Real working class leadership will not come from the ACTU and class collaborationist union officials. It will come from rank and file organising in work places often in opposition to union officials who seek to compromise unnecessarily. It will come from union delegates and organisers with unyielding commitment to class struggle politics. The role of the Communist Party, as a strong, disciplined organisation of the working class is central to bringing together these committed activists to co-ordinate, analyse, strategize, and push forward the struggle for an independent working class movement.

Demands will change with different workplaces and communities, but the common thread must be the working class taking independent action to build its capacity to fight as a class in its own class interests. It will require mass, militant, and sometimes illegal, action by large sections of workers – the victories of our class have always come from waves of militant struggle on the jobs, in communities and in the streets.

None of it is easy. But it is the only way forward if the union movement is to turn itself around and really fight back the constant attacks from big business and their puppets in government. ■

Farm Workers Needed – Opportunity to Organise

Ned K. (25 January 2021)

Covid-19 placed restrictions on the number of people coming in to Australia, including temporary visa farm workers.

Farmers who rely on overseas workers to pick and pack a wide range of fruit and vegetable crops in Australia have been active in pushing the federal government to change quarantine policy to make it easier for temporary visa workers to come in to the country to work.

Farmers have class differences with these workers. Some are "hands-on" rural workers as well as small property owners. Others are slightly larger owners and do not work "hands-on" themselves. Then there are the large agribusinesses where the owners are far away in a business office somewhere.

All of these owners have one thing in common. They need workers to pick and pack the crops. For many decades, the workers have been sourced from back packers, students and overseas students and migrant workers on temporary visas or migrant workers who have permanent residency but still waiting in the queue for citizenship.

The dependence on overseas workers on temporary visas is high. So high, that despite Covid-19 quarantine requirements and restrictions on the number of people coming into the country, the federal government has recently approved a restart of the Pacific Workers and Seasonal Worker Visa program.

However, since August last year only 1,500 workers have arrived. The National Farmers Federation says it needs 26,000 such farm workers for March 2021!

Queensland Horticultural body Growcom claim that 67 growers of fruit and vegetable crops in Queensland have already lost \$42 million since December 2020 because they could not get enough workers to pick and pack.

The situation of dependence on temporary migrant farm workers is



similar to the dependence on undocumented farm workers in the USA. In both countries, for decades there has been struggle for better wages and conditions by these workers.

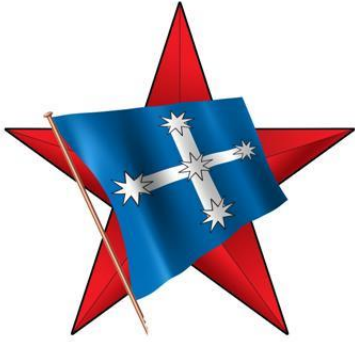
In Australia, the farm owners, led by big agribusinesses, have resisted attempts by these workers to organise collectively and also refused to lift working conditions to standards that the majority of people in Australia would agree were acceptable minimum standards.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed this situation of dependence on super exploited migrant farm workers.

However, this crisis of labour shortage is also an opportunity. Some unions, such as United Workers Union, have allocated organiser resources for farm workers, with some success in forcing labour hire companies who provide the labour for farmers to agree to right of return each picking season of each year for workers. Unions, through organising, have also reduced the occurrence of wage swindles (wage theft) where workers were paid way below the award minimum.

However, much more organising needs to be done across a farm worker workforce of well over 100,000 workers. In past decades, young activists would often work in factories and contribute to the organising efforts with co-workers. The modern-day equivalent of those factories includes the farms. Perhaps an organising opportunity and experience for young activists, especially at a time when labour is in short supply. ■

STATEMENT International Working Women's Day: We Won't Be Silenced!



Alice M., Vice-Chairperson on behalf of the Central Committee, CPA (M-L) (8 March, 2021)

International Working Women's Day on 8th March honours the long and tenacious struggles of women to end economic and social exploitation and oppression, in all its disguises. We pay tribute to the courageous women in all corners of the world organising and leading struggles for freedom, national liberation, to end the barbaric system of capitalism and imperialism and advance the fight for socialism and communism, the liberation of all humankind.

Working women are in the forefront of struggles protecting the livelihoods, health, security and wellbeing of all people, for workers' rights and democratic rights, for the environment, for justice and peace. We fight against the patriarchy, sexual abuse and violence, racism, against fascism and imperialist wars.

On International Working Women's Day we take stock and review how far women have advanced, but also the setbacks, the deceptions, and how far working women still have to go to achieve our liberation.

The history of working women is one of long and arduous struggles for our rights, our dignity and emancipation from capitalism and patriarchy. It is a history of class struggle and continues today in numerous ways and places.

First Nations' women

The British colonial invasion and theft of the country in 1788 brought with it the brutal oppression of First Nations women. Resilient and powerful First

Nations' women are leading the fight to protect and empower their communities and culture, for sovereignty and self-determination.

In December 2020, June Oscar, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission wrote on the recently released *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* report on First Nations women and girls, "Wiyi Yani U Thangani shows how imposed western systems continuously fail to recognise the vital worth and contributions of our women and girls...our women are the backbone of our societies and have been for millennia. In every part of life, our women and girls are there. They are, and always have been, integral to the making of history and the future we all want and deserve."

Working women and capitalism

The global Covid Pandemic has laid bare and amplified the exploitation and oppression of women in developed capitalist and semi-feudal, semi-colonial developing countries. The Covid Pandemic exposed the lauded illusions and deceptions of equality and improvements in working women's economic and social conditions under capitalism.

During economic and social crises capitalism has little capacity to even

maintain the appearances of women's equality and economic independence.

Many roads and struggles have been tried and tested by women to minimise or to end the exploitation and oppression of women within capitalism. But with every step we come up against the profit driven capitalist system and its cruel patriarchy and sexism. For the majority of working women, the few legislative improvements that promised women a few crumbs of social and economic empowerment, rights and independence have proven to be window dressing.

Equal pay for equal work, affordable childcare, jobs and economic security, workplaces and homes free of sexual harassment, abuse and violence, remain unreachable.

Male chauvinism saturates capitalist societies casting women at all levels of society as inferior to men. Women are too often ignored and dismissed. For working class women, the exploitation is doubled as workers and as women. Notwithstanding the capitalist exploitation of working class men, women continue to be cast as inferior to men in paid work, unpaid domestic work, socially and politically. Patriarchy and male chauvinism protect the capitalist exploitation of working class women



and men, and normalise degrading, abuse and violence against all women.

The commercialisation and commodification of women in the profit-driven capitalist market is as pervasive as ever. Monopoly capitalism has turned women into a profitable market and a commodity for the capitalist class to exploit. Women are treated as sexual objects and vessels for the reproduction and maintenance of future generations of workers to exploit for the creation of surplus value and profit. Women carry the main burden of unpaid domestic work, caring for the children, the sick, the elderly, the family and home. And because profit cannot be extracted from this unpaid labour it holds no value in a capitalist society.

Capitalist culture of patriarchy

The culture towards women stems from capitalist social and economic relations. Attitudes and behaviour towards women swing between paternalism, tokenism, patronising, misogyny and abuse.

Women struggle against the double oppression of patriarchy and class exploitation in the capitalist relations of production. Patriarchy and the capitalist relations of production are interdependent, oppressing not only women, but all humanity. The fight against patriarchy and male supremacy in all its disguises, is essential in the revolutionary struggle to end capitalism and for an independent and socialist Australia.

Gender inequality, male chauvinism, and domination over women is expressed in numerous ways across all sections of society. The capitalist ideology and culture of male supremacy is endemic, often subtle and couched to deflect the root cause of capitalism.

Men are not the enemy. Nevertheless, the conditioning of men and boys in male dominant capitalist society and culture enables men to be agents and beneficiaries of women's oppression. The struggle against the culture of gender inequality is constant for both men and women. This responsibility falls especially on communists working with the people developing a genuinely revolutionary movement and Communist Party.

Today in Australia on the eve of



International Working Women's Day, allegations of rape committed by current and aspiring politicians in the corridors of bourgeois parliament have exposed the hidden day to day systemic violence against women. The exposures of sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse and rape, the most brutal expression of violence and disempowerment of women, were thrust into the public stage for all to see by courageous women, one of whom took her life. Women across the country cried and applauded these brave women. In spite of her horrendous sexual abuse as a teenager, Grace Tame's strength, optimism and confidence in the collective power of women to speak out and force real change, inspired and moved the nation.

Economic class exploitation

This public outrage at violence against women must be extended beyond the corridors of bourgeois parliament and women in positions of power and privilege.

Where is the equally powerful outrage at sexism and abuse against working class women subjected every day to sexual harassment, violence, intimidation and degradation in workplaces by the bosses?



This outrage has to be extended against the violence of capitalist economic exploitation of working class women. Where is the outrage against Jobseeker cuts to \$43 per day on which many working class women depend for their survival and condemned to the lifelong existence of poverty and homelessness?

Where is the outrage against the demeaning and discriminatory Cashless Debit card imposed on women fleeing domestic violence, unemployed and with no other source of income?

Women suffer the highest levels of casualisation and insecurity living the precarious day by day existence. Where is the outrage against the draconian anti-worker and anti-union laws aimed to crush unions that can provide even the minimum protection from workplace abuse and discrimination of women by the predatory bosses who will go to any lengths to increase the exploitation of workers and abuse women? Where is the promised affordable child care and housing?

And where is the outrage and demands to end imperialist wars inflicting the heaviest burden on women in the countries attacked, subjected to untold suffering, rape, mass murder and impoverishment.

It is only through solidarity with working class women and men, and all the oppressed peoples in struggle against capitalism and imperialism, for socialism and communism, that the liberation of all humanity can be achieved. ■

First Peoples Women are warriors – Invaders have learned not to underestimate them

Lindy Nolan (7 March 2021)

Last October Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Bunuba woman June Oscar finalised the first countrywide report giving voice to First Peoples Women since 1986. Oscar and her team spent thousands of hours sitting down with First Peoples' women in hundreds of communities to create *'Wiyi Yani U Thangani, Women's Voices: Securing Our Rights; Securing Our Futures.'*

In the concluding section on overarching recommendations, Oscar wrote, "The success of these recommendations depends on governments entering into genuine partnership and ensuring the full participation of our women and girls in the design, delivery and implementation of them."

The report was addressed to Attorney General Christian Porter.

Who knows if he glanced at it? What's not surmise is that the issues troubling this continent and islands are systemic, not individual, forecast in 1770 and landing in 1788.

Patriarchy a given

British invaders made a huge mistake. They completely discounted the power of First Peoples' women, because they discounted their "own" women.

Ownership was the right word. In 1788, most British women were suffocated by patriarchy or struggling in inhuman conditions in capitalism's slums.

In a world where fake science conveniently supported invasion and suppression, patriarchy was a given.

How could colonialists understand the division of labour that meant women here both raised children and, assisted by those children, provided most of the food? This economic power meant their standing and Lore was as powerful as men's.

Most colonial administrations tut-tutted at massacres, like those committed by the Prime Minister's forebears, or looked away. Women were slaughtered because they were

"breeders" of future men, not because of their own power. Murder, kidnap and rape were early weapons. This illegal nation is founded upon them.

British puppet state

By 1901, it was not fake science or a squeaky new Constitution that most powerfully underpinned British power. It was monopoly capitalism. Lenin and others defined this development of capitalism as imperialism.

In 1901 seven British Colonies morphed into a British puppet state. The racial superiority of eugenics is embedded in Federation's illegal "Australian Constitution".

Despite reserves that opened lands to capitalist profits and stealing children as policy, First Peoples women still refused to bow the knee. Like men, they resisted by secretly teaching culture, by mission walkouts, Days of Mourning and more. Resistance bubbled along, sometimes breaking out.

Finally, in the 1960s things exploded, with the Referendum's powerful united front, and the Gurindji struggle against the biggest landowner on the continent, British-owned Vestey Pastoral Company.

Women and children, who also laboured without pay in the Company homestead, walked off to great hardships. Their descendants like

Brenda Croft, unlike those old women, are better known powerhouses fighting against corporations and corporate policies like the ongoing Northern Territory Intervention, policies which open Country to deeper corporate exploitation, humiliate all First Peoples, but especially men, and saw sexual medical tests on small children, often without parents' informed consent, and much, much more.

Mum Shirl

First Peoples often remind us that they are only three percent of the population. But in 1966 Gurindji determination to sit down in Country as organised workers meant they had strength beyond their tiny numbers. They spearheaded a united front, with First Peoples including powerful women activists, unions, students, churches and many more across the lands, supporting them.

In Redfern a Wiradjuri woman supported rising activists.

'Mum Shirl', before her prison visit pass was revoked always said, "I'm his mum" when challenged about her visits to many Aboriginal prisoners and her support during court cases. By the time she died she had also helped raise 60 children.

Her strength came from culture including the 16 First Peoples' languages taught her by her



grandfather, and from the collective that grew from culture. Mum Shirl and other Elders helped inspire the Tent Embassy and through that almost every Aboriginal legal, medical, housing, children's, theatrical and detox services established in those heady days.

Defiant possibilities

Huge struggles erupted across the country, and young generations of women were increasingly the public face. Foreign-owned mining multinationals ripping the guts out of sacred Country were often the target.

But it was 1988 that cracked the foundations of the corporate ruling class. It showed defiant possibilities.

Gathering in La Perouse and marching from Redfern, where 40,000 First Peoples lived, came the greatest gathering of clans in the history of this continent and its islands.

Their rallying cry? "We have survived!"

Colonialism and the corporate inheritors of invasion used all their power to exterminate First Peoples, to wipe them from the face of the earth, and failed.

All this and more were background to June Oscar's report. Women who spoke to her had their own histories, diverse and similar at the same time.

Partnership?

The report stated, "Genuine partnership requires that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are able to speak in a representative capacity. The form of this is not a decision for government. It is a matter for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women themselves."

Although much of the document is couched in words of partnership, the report warns that women are rising and uniting regardless of government actions.

They are determined to win.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was the first and only national representative body for First Peoples. Signifying strength, it also had problems inevitable under a capitalist system founded upon exploitation. But for the ruling class, ATSIC had to go because it gave control to First Peoples.

The excuse was historic rape allegations against its chair. He



Wiradjuri leader Lynda-June Coe

stepped down. Then, the whole organisation was abolished with bipartisan support in 2004. The contrast to today's parliament is stark.

Making history

In December, June Oscar wrote, "The report presents fundamental truths so long undervalued and overlooked: that our women are the backbone of our societies and have been for millennia. In every part of life, our women and girls are there. They are, and always have been, integral to the making of history and the future we all want and deserve."

It has taken two hundred years for the ruling class to comprehend this simple truth.

From their 1988 crisis, the Business Council of Australia planned to transform corporations into "saviours" for First Peoples after two centuries of "government failure". They outsourced the blame to the administrations that all along had done their dirty work.

Though they talk of "empowering" First Peoples, that is the last thing they will tolerate. Rio Tinto and BHP were early converts, and they sponsor the most well-known First Peoples' statement currently circulating.

It takes little to scratch the surface of horrors inflicted upon First Peoples to find corporate profits, or governments protecting them. Waters poisoned by mines, Santos fracking the Pilliga, a "gas led recovery", developers building on flood plains and demanding dam walls rise and

flood sacred sites, or agribusinesses damming rivers dry, Woollies making three dry Aboriginal communities in Darwin fight a Dan Murphy's within walking distance for five years, and alcohol corporations delaying health warnings while babies are disabled for life with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and on and on and on.

And, in a weapon aimed knowingly at women as enemies, theft of children – including threats against activist mothers and of children being placed with abusers rather than now safe mothers – spirals upward.

Further military suppression also seems likely to unfold on their lands.

Against all this, resistance rises.

Unity

Like many First Peoples, June Oscar believes capitalism can be reformed. We strongly disagree. But her report has no corporate sponsors. Its agenda rises from the grassroots.

Wiradjuri leader Lynda-June Coe who was sought to help lead powerful Black Lives Matter protests says, "Everything we do is from love. We fight from love."

Like Oscar, Coe speaks and acts to bring First Peoples together. She organised a Wiradjuri clan gathering in 2017. She calls for wider gatherings, and for allies to unite in mass action with First Peoples.

"Let's stop calling it a government. They're tyrants. ... We need to look at the one percent capitalists running this world... That system needs to be dismantled," she says. ■

Building Unity Across the City-Country Divide in the Face of Common Enemies

Louisa L. (19 January 2021)

Farmers' finances are up and down with the weather, and so are towns reliant upon them. Decades-long government restructuring to suit corporate profits has stripped them bare.

Many eastern state country towns were booming into the 1980s. They had industries, often including resident railway workers. Many towns had a \$1 million plus railway payroll each fortnight. Railway lines were shut, replaced by privately owned trucking.

Like cities, the bush has been restructured to suit corporate profits.

"Now," says a *Vanguard* correspondent, "some towns are often little more than retirement centres."

Lifeblood

Water is a lifeline. Despite the drought's end, upstream theft, exorbitant prices and environmental flows still focus local anger. A minority support necessary environmental flows, but none have sympathy with robbery or price gouging.

As our Party's General Program states, "Water must be a common good, not a tradeable commodity."

Although invasion and dispossession of First Peoples happened everywhere, different regions faced different intensities of brutality. Major rivers themselves were stolen for transport by the invaders.

Key river sites were taken to become ports. Brewarrina, Wilcannia and Bourke on the Barka, or Darling, and nearby Walgett on the Namoi, were birthed this way in some of the bloodiest violence. The Barjkindji, Gamilaraay, Ngemba, Ualarai, Murrawarri and Wailwan were denied access to their lifeblood. Effects flow through generations, especially when twinned with high unemployment after the disappearance of most rural jobs.

Gamilaraay now fight fracking.

Destroying livelihoods

In some places, locals have vivid images of fruit that couldn't be given away, trees bulldozed when juice and other processing factories closed down



"Ladies of the Land" is cooperative group set up to supply care packages to rural women

to be replaced by cheaper, multinational imports.

Many abattoirs and dairy processing centres also closed.

Only the biggest regional towns still have local newspapers. The rest were shut down in the last year.

Vanguard is told, "Covid has been tough in the bush." But even before its arrival on our shores, unemployment, especially among young people, was much higher than in the city.

In some towns the biggest employers are the supermarkets and fast-food chains. Like the city, these monopoly employers prefer school-age kids.

Understatement is a mark of many country and regional people used to extremes of drought, flood and fire. "Woolworths", our comrade says "is not a good employer".

Supermarket profits hit mega-heights as the price of milk and other primary products went Down! Down! Down! Many dairy farms closed. Drought levies on milk were for spin, not care about farmers. Only a nationwide backlash against supermarket chain profits, sadly much of it organised through One Nation, forced the levy. This cancerous corporate squeeze crushed other farms.

Unemployment and disempowerment

Once workers were generally sympathetic to the unemployed. The very big pay packets of sections of

workers in regional mines or building the new suburbs and high rise in regional centres especially near the coast, tended to break that class solidarity.

Now pay has been cut significantly for miners in the Hunter Valley and the multinational media mantra, that unemployed welfare recipients are rorting the system, softened significantly when huge queues formed outside Centrelink offices in city and regional towns alike.

In many small rural towns, JobKeeper payments mainly went to workers in the club and hotel industries.

JobSeeker mopped up all the rest, with lower payments and more harassment. As a pensioner says, "I shudder when I see that Centrelink letter!" He says they are still pursuing RoboDebt in regional areas.

People in Covid Centrelink queues were mostly young. In some towns, only two people were allowed in at a time. Those using precious phone credit could spend two hours or more on Call Waiting, and still not get through.

"I don't like Centrelink at all. It punishes people. Workers are cordial, but they are following orders," we are told.

Those orders are designed to stop people getting pensions or other entitlements.

Some Centrelink workers go above and beyond in trying to help people.

At least Centrelink agencies give people access to computers, but it doesn't make up for forcing people back to starvation levels as Covid subsidies disappear.

Worse is to come. Humiliating and disempowering cashless welfare was trialled on First Peoples' during the NT Intervention. It then hit communities in remoter parts of the eastern states. It will be forced on all welfare recipients sooner or later, unless it is stopped.

Who's led this charge? A charity, run by mining magnate, tax dodger Twiggy Forrest.

Soon debt repayment, from government Covid-handouts to multinationals will be another excuse to slash payments and squeeze requirements.

Health and housing

In regional towns, hospital waiting lists for surgery are even longer than in the city. Nursing staff has been cut, with one nurse on night wards. When hospital funding is cut back, managers and politicians bleat, "There's no cuts to services."

In some regional centres with populations of 7,000 or more, there are no doctors on call, accident victims can wait two hours and then be sent to other regional centres with bigger hospitals. The latter are at breaking point. None of this used to happen.

People in some small towns are so concerned they try not to be treated locally.

Dental care also has long waiting lists.

In aged care and nursing homes, nurses and cleaners are more poorly paid than their city counterparts. One nurse often looks after two wards or floors. Food is poor quality.

There is a severe shortage of public housing and zero maintenance.

"People are really doing it tough," an unemployed worker told *Vanguard*.

A good year and war preparations

With more rain last year, most fresh stone fruit crops have been "fantastic". Grains poured into GrainCorp silos. But last year's wine grapes were smoke tainted, and then damaged by too much rain. Economic effects flow into regional towns.

Economic recovery from drought takes years.

GrainCorp, an ASX listed company, was once the government-owned Grain Handling Authority. Now this monopoly's profit heads into private hands, but for farmers, a good season is a good season.

Unless our government is poisoning Australia's relationship with our major trading partner, China.

For 75 years we've been USA's little lapdog. Governments now happily throw farmers and other primary producers under the bus. China pointedly gifts what were formerly Australian contracts to US barley farmers.

Like most people in Australia, country people are mostly taken in by the relentless demonisation of China, but some are beginning to see the sabotage of their livelihoods by government.

Federal ministers have said war with China is likely.

Rural workers and industries are paying with their livelihoods for imperialist war preparations.

Without organised resistance we will all pay an inconceivably heavier price. The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) is making an important start in this fightback, with its 'People's Inquiry: The Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia' (see www.ipan.org.au/the-ipan-inquiry). It asks, 'What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US Alliance?' Rural voices need to be heard.

The other side is the privatisation of fracking fields and its water theft, sometimes in Chinese corporate hands. To paraphrase Deng Xiaoping's "black cat/white cat" plan to open China to capitalism, what does it matter if it's the US or China ripping off First Peoples' lands and waters, and farmer's land and water? The giant water thief, Cubby Station, was for some time in Chinese corporate hands.

But it has been reckless government pandering to the other superpower, the one with military bases dotting this land, troops in Darwin, and a stranglehold on our economy. The US superpower has to be brought to account.

United we stand

In regional towns and cities, despite histories of collective action, the ruling

class has successfully disorganised the people.

Vanguard has been told that many people are conservative and very set in their ways, so it's difficult to organise. Racism, particularly against First Peoples, sexism and discrimination against the poor and some on disability pensions are often rampant. But some rural towns are multicultural and people work. Rural people are renowned for working cooperatively.

Many regional towns traditionally looked to Labor. In NSW this changed to National voters almost overnight when Premier Barry Unsworth tightened gun laws in the late 1980s.

Now, *Vanguard* is told, "You could get a stick and put 'National' on it, and people would vote for it. You have to be diplomatic when you talk to people."

The very far right is organising too, on many fronts. For example, sympathisers attend B&S (Bachelors and Spinsters) events, where young farmers and workers find release from isolation. This move to the right stems from capitalist individualism and its system of crisis.

Recent government announcements that it will introduce legislation to help break the mining and forestry sections from the CFMEU shows they are intent on dividing our peoples. In the Hunter Valley, an articulate mineworker embedded in his community stood for One Nation at last year's election.

On the other side, a coalition of Gamilaraay, local farmers and residents, plus environmentalists stood against fracking in the NSW Pilliga. This is powerfully illustrated in the documentary 'Sacrifice Zone'. They face Santos, and the foreign owned banks that fund it. ANZ loaned Santos \$2,532 million, with \$1,532 million specifically for the 850 wells in the Pilliga State Forest, the Commonwealth lending \$319 million, NAB \$290 million and Westpac \$222 million all for the Pilliga project.

Such unity against the real enemies of the people shows the way forward.

We need to put Marxism into practice, uniting the working class with First Peoples, farmers, small business people across the city country divide. We have common enemies.

Capitalism and foreign domination must be ended. It won't go of its own accord. ■

Altona Refinery Workers: Victims of the De-industrialisation of Australia

Bill F. (13 February 2021)

The announced sudden closure of the Altona Refinery by ExxonMobil has hit the western suburbs of Melbourne very hard, with 350 jobs to go later in the year. There are wide national ramifications for energy security.

To quote Tim Kennedy, National Secretary United Workers Union, “There is nothing inevitable about the destruction of secure and decent jobs. The Altona refinery workers are highly skilled and valued by their employer. However, our domestic labour market has been hollowed out so extensively that these workers will likely not have equivalent jobs to move into once the site closes. This is a failure of vision. If we want to be a country that can ensure a secure and decent job for everyone who wants one, the Federal Government needs to invest in just transition and quality jobs of the future.

“For decades workers have been told they must skill-up for the future or be left behind. That’s exactly what these workers did. Yet this Government has failed to provide opportunities that match these skills. The closure of the Altona site, without any plan to repurpose these workers’ skills for future industries, is a terrible missed opportunity.”

Countless others in nearby foreign owned chemical industries such as Qenos, BASF, and Dow Chemical, which use product from the refinery, are also threatened. And local transport industry workers’ jobs are suddenly less secure.

For the billionaire bosses of ExxonMobil, the rate of profit from Altona Refinery was just not sufficient. This clique of unknown people in another country will have planned their announcement months ago, if not years, with no consideration whatsoever for the impact it would have in Australia.

Ten years ago, there were seven oil refineries in Australia, now only the Viva Energy plant in Victoria (Geelong) and the Ampol plant in Queensland (Lytton) will continue for a while, and may eventually become storage depots for imported refined fuels. The Viva plant also has tentative plans to expand into a gas import hub, a farcical consequence of large amounts of Australia’s LNG being exported overseas in the hands of US monopoly Chevron.

ExxonMobil has been making huge profits from the oil and gas fields in Bass Strait, while slashing into

workers’ wages and conditions. The recent two-year-long dispute at Longford is evidence of that.

Most of this crude oil is shipped to more profitable refineries in Singapore with cheaper labour and lower environmental standards, and then comes back to Australia at high cost to customers.

The Morrison government is quite relaxed about this and has even been negotiating to store Australia’s reserves of refined fuel at depots in the United States. So much for energy security, self-reliance and national independence! And it won’t be Australian crewed ships bringing the fuels here!

Australia is being de-industrialised and is becoming increasingly dependent on imports. For workers this means less skills, less training, lower wages, insecure casual jobs, falling standards of safety and poor working conditions. ■



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MARXISM TODAY The Anarchy of Capitalism; the Security of Socialism

Bill F. (13 February 2021)

The closing of the Altona oil refinery demonstrates the anarchy of capitalism, where production is carried out solely for profit rather than to meet the needs of people. So-called “market forces” dictate what is produced, not rational planning. When profit cannot be sustained and improved, capital is withdrawn, and the creators of the wealth, the workers, are thrown into unemployment.

Capitalism has evolved from its harsh beginnings in primitive workshops, mines and factories. Ruthless competition has seen the domination of whole economies and even countries by monopoly companies, and later, by global corporations controlled by a handful of super-rich shareholders. Sure, many small and middle capitalists operate as assemblers and providers, producing commodities and services which return lower levels of profit. Their continued existence is not secure, often at the mercy of the banks and the larger monopolies.

So, when we talk of capitalism in today’s world, we really mean the domination of these large corporate monopolies entangled with finance capital and supported to varying degrees by collaborating governments. This is the core of modern capitalism

today – what Lenin called “Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism”.

US imperialism is the main bastion and standard-bearer for modern imperialism, with more than 800 military bases and outposts scattered across the world, nuclear armed ships, submarines and planes on permanent patrol, all to “protect American interests” in places where profits can be made (especially oil, minerals, weapon sales) and collaborating politicians enlisted.

Australia is one such place, host to growing numbers of US Marines and Air Force looking to defend US interests here, which amount to 25% of all foreign investment. Our subservient government grants all sorts of tax concessions, and the profits derived from Australian workers are sent back to the USA, with often minimal or no tax at all.

The domination of Australia by US imperialism is reinforced and propagated by the Murdoch media, and by US agents in the Institute of Public Affairs, the Australia American Leadership Dialogue, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the monopoly-heavies in the Business Council of Australia.

The ‘globalisation’ agenda of US imperialism has seen manufacturing jobs and skills in Australia transferred

to low wage countries. Industries that can’t compete just disappear, such as the clothing and footwear industry and domestic appliance manufacturing. Other industries are reduced to assembling imported products and providing parts, such as the car industry.

The security of socialism

In contrast to the insecurity and haphazard boom and bust of capitalism, a socialist economy is built on consultation and planning which prioritises the needs of the people, providing a measured balance of industries, agriculture, technical and scientific, trades and skills to ensure that all working people have secure and satisfying jobs. While capitalism alienates workers from their work, (and indeed the products of their work), socialism empowers workers to have control over their work and their lives, to contribute their ideas and enthusiasm to benefit the workplace and the society.

As US imperialism staggers under its crises of overproduction, endless war, obscene inequality and political decay, Australian workers can look ahead to more frequent and intense struggles to break free from US economic, political and military domination. Only then can we build a secure and decent socialist future. ■

Lenin’s *Imperialism – The Highest Stage of Capitalism*

“But very brief definitions, although convenient, for they sum up the main points, are nevertheless inadequate, since we have to deduce from them some especially important features of the phenomenon that has to be defined. And so, without forgetting the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its full development, we must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features:

(1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.

Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.”■



Biden and US policy in the Indo-Pacific

Contributed (23 January 2021)

As President Biden enters the White House to begin a four-year term of office, the domestic threat of civil war with armed conflict has begun to ebb away.

Foreign policy considerations, however, still continue to present worrying real-war scenarios, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where US-led initiatives to counter China have resulted in an escalation of diplomatic hostilities.

Serious studies of the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific neighbourhood reveal the US will be highly unlikely to make a successful challenge in economic terms. Attention must, therefore, be raised about the continued threat of war in the region as US-led diplomatic tensions are unlikely to subside from the previous period.

The successful inauguration of President Biden has marked the end of the Trump administration and following the tumultuous events on Capitol Hill earlier in the month, the failure of his supporters to organise protest rallies has seen the very real threat of civil war quickly ebb away. In fact, many of Trump's supporters appear to be actively shunning him, for fear of being associated with a political failure who has serious character flaws.

Elsewhere, however, foreign policy initiatives from the previous period in the Indo-Pacific region continue to present difficult problems. The region has been the power-house of the global economy for decades and the US has experienced the rapid rise of China in recent years as a competitor. It has resulted in the US seeing its traditional hegemonic position challenged by China, which has used much more sophisticated diplomacy toward countries across the vast region.

A recent World Bank report has revealed the US economy is likely to contract by 3.6 per cent this year together with the Euro-zone



contracting 7.4 per cent resulting in a global economy decline of 4.3 per cent. China's economy, by contrast, is expected to grow by between nearly 8 or 9 per cent in 2021.

The economic statistics reveal serious political implications for US regional diplomatic positions.

Behind the economic statistics lies the outcome of the Trump administration's unsuccessful trade war with China which resulted in the latter continuing to increase its share of global GDP from 14.2 per cent in 2016, to 16.8 per cent last year. The position of the US with the same statistical equation has revealed its position has declined slightly from 22.3 per cent in 2016 to 22.2 per cent in late 2020.

China's share with global export of goods is still continuing to increase from 13.7 per cent in late 2019 to 15.4 per cent last November.

The so-called US trade war toward China can best be regarded as the outcome of Cold War diplomatic positions and having failed to achieve objectives; in fact, like virtually everything associated with the outgoing Trump administration, it was high on pompous and delusional rhetoric and deficient when measured for practical outcomes.

The legacy of the Trump administration's trade war with China has, however, presented the incoming Biden administration with a major problem. By pursuing the position laid down by Trump, the US is likely to experience a further reduction in the traditional hegemonic position. Whether Biden chooses to pursue a more conciliatory diplomatic line with China in the Indo-Pacific remains, as yet, to be established, although it would appear a likely scenario under the present circumstances.

There is also a longer-term legacy to be taken into consideration.

The present problem has been exacerbated by the legacy of the

previous Bush administrations when Donald Rumsfeld was Defence Secretary nearly twenty years ago. Under the guise of a Global Transformation of Defence and Security (GTDS), the US sought to develop Japan as a northern regional hub for 'US interests' with Australia as a southern counterpart. The triangular US-led diplomatic GTDS framework is now fully operational with additional support from India to create the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or 'quad'.

Much of the US-led regional diplomacy has been channelled through these hubs during the Trump administration; economic competition from China has, therefore, had far-reaching defence and security considerations as China increasingly presents a credible challenge to traditional US hegemonic positions.

A common feature of the regional diplomacy pursued by Trump was to foist greater and greater responsibilities onto the hubs, as a means of the US cutting expenditure and general ineptitude on the part of his administration. Japan, Australia and India have, therefore, been drawn closer to US-led Cold War positions during the past four years. The moves have been accompanied by increased defence budgets of military equipment designed to be compatible with US-led facilities.

Japan has had to take greater responsibility for its own defence and security provision and have Clause 9 of the pacifist constitution 're-interpreted' to enable its inclusion in US-led regional operations. An official high-level diplomatic statement about the matter noted:

US and Japanese officials announced an agreement on Monday that would extend the reach of Japan's military – now limited to its own defence – allowing it to act when the US or countries US forces are defending are threatened.

In Australia, the sycophantic nature of the Morrison coalition government in Canberra toward the Trump administration has been both nauseating and counter-productive; serious problems have arisen in many areas of the economy and society including blockages to trade-flows and witch-hunts of people regarded as

being pro-China in the present US-led Cold War.

It is, therefore, no surprise to find the Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security conducting, at present, a high-level inquiry into academia, academic circles and their association with figures regarded as having involvement with China. It has already been noted, however, that 'much of what Canberra knows about hostile Chinese government activities comes from classified intelligence', tending to indicate the outcome of the inquiry will be opaque and not straightforward.

A further factor the Trump administration foisted upon Australia was the decision to not allow Huawei to develop 5G telephone facilities, due to its supposed links with the Chinese military. The decision will, inevitably, prove counter-productive; technological de-coupling of the US-led systems and China will result in a world of divided communications facilities between two technological groups, those which are US and European orientated and those which are China-based across their Indo-Pacific neighbourhood.

It has already been suggested within the next decade there will be two internet systems; Australia will remain part of the Five Eyes although communications elsewhere might involve using a second sim-card or computer program to gain access into a different telecommunications system.

India, likewise, has had problems with contested territorial areas and

China, which has no wish to have US-led military facilities placed near its borders.

The diplomatic record of the past four years of the Trump administration pursued through its regional hubs is not an impressive history. In fact, it has already led some of the previous supporters of Trump to state he 'will go down as a total failure'.

The most distinguishable feature of the Trump administration in the Indo-Pacific region has been the transition from traditional diplomatic and trade relations toward more aggressive military planning; it has presented worrying signs of logical and likely real-war outcomes.

The Australian Defence Strategic Update for 2020, for example, revealed the country was in a 'security environment... increasingly characterised by grey zone competition; state behaviour that is

aggressive but often covert, or at least deniable, and falls short of acts of war'.

The serious escalation of diplomatic hostilities has included numerous US-led military exercises targeting sensitive areas of the region: the Taiwan Straits, Korean Peninsula, South China Seas. While the exercises are usually based in computer-simulations, they also include provision for 'real-war scenarios'.

During the Trump administration the Pentagon was allowed to push hawkish positions in the Indo-Pacific, the incoming Biden presidency will have to deal with an appalling legacy of war-mongering conducted in the name of regional diplomacy.

It is against this backdrop of increasingly worrying defence and security considerations and the very real threat of real-war scenarios that Australia should seriously consider an independent foreign policy! ■



Independent & Peaceful
Australia

PEOPLE'S INQUIRY: THE CASE FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND PEACEFUL AUSTRALIA

**What are the costs and consequences of Australia's
involvement in US-led wars and the US Alliance?**

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) invites you to participate in a national public inquiry into the costs and consequences of the Australia-US Alliance for the Australian people, and invites proposals in relation to measures that could assist in achieving a genuinely independent and peaceful foreign policy for Australia.

To read more about the inquiry, forward a submission or donate towards it visit
INDEPENDENTPEACEFULAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

On January 26, we must learn to look invasion in the eye

Lindy Nolan (25 January 2021)

When James Cook scouted Gweagal and other lands in 1770, he did not see farming or trade. He saw strong, healthy Peoples defending their lands. He saw the rich wetlands and waters of Kamay, teeming with food.

His orders were to make treaty for trade. He knew the lands were not empty, with shots fired to prove it. But First Peoples had no goods Britain wanted except the land itself.

Treaty was unnecessary. Invasion, called "settlement" was recommended.

Cook's report lay unnoticed until Britain lost the American Revolutionary War. The forces of revolution, and for independence in British colonies like Ireland and India, grew stronger. So did Britain's colonialist rivals, especially France.

The century before it invaded what is now called Australia, Britain fought seven wars against France and its allies, in total nearly 50 years. Soldiers and sailors were expendable.

In stark contrast, clan battles here stopped when there was injury or death. People were too precious to waste.

When its "first fleet" set out for these shores, British ruling class fear was at fever pitch. Its jails were full of the poor, often rural folk denied access to common lands by the 1773 Enclosure Act.

British trade and maritime power needed a base to keep out the French and as a dumping ground for convicts. Such high ideals! Such cause for celebration!

Mourning, survival, invasion

January 26 marks the day Captain Arthur Phillip claimed sovereignty of NSW for Britain.

First Peoples live it as a Day of Mourning, Survival and Invasion. Sovereignty was never ceded.

British colonialism still holds sway through Australia's constitution, the former colonies reborn as states, parliamentarians who swear

allegiance, not to the people, but to a foreign Queen.

But the power behind the parliamentary facade has long since passed to US imperialism and its corporations. Monopoly capitalism has taken over where divine right of kings left off.

In Covid times, "governments" pretend moral outrage at rallies and marches. But they ignore unfettered capitalist encroachment on wild areas and growth of mega-cities that make pandemics inevitable.

They ignore also the terrible diseases British invaders knowingly and deliberately brought with them – the small pox, measles and influenzas that radiated out from Warrane, Sydney Cove, killing family after family, clan after clan, silencing the language, song and laughter.

So, we have Mourning marked in hearts from 1788, and in First Peoples' written history since 1938.

"We have survived."

Immediately across the water from Cook's first landing, in Kamay's rich wetlands, Bidjigal man Pemulwuy cast the first spear of a continent-wide guerrilla war.

A just war. A war against foreign invaders.

Pemulwuy's son Tedbury carried on resistance first led by his father. By the time Tedbury was killed in 1810, invader massacres and First Peoples' armed resistance spilled over into every area the invaders entered, only ending in the late 1920s, because then

the cost was deemed too high and the prize too poor for the British.

First Peoples' weapons were set down. But the war was not over. Invasion continued. First Peoples were and are still murdered.

Yet, despite everything colonialism and then foreign corporate domination did to crush all trace of First Peoples, they were unsuccessful.

Shocking facts were gradually exposed more widely when, after the 1967 Referendum, the Census gathered them for the first time.

Unity grew from thousands of small and large acts of resistance and mission walk-offs, till the mighty Pilbara strike of the 1950s. Unity was made concrete in the Gurindji struggle which joined worker demands and Aboriginal struggles for land. Then came the Tent Embassy and wider struggles for land rights against foreign mining multinationals.

All this was expressed in the huge gathering of Peoples and clans in Sydney in 1988.

Survival Day was the biggest gathering of First Peoples from across this continent and its islands in history.

Led by Elders, organisation was centred in the old mission community at La Perouse, and in Redfern, where 40,000 First Peoples had converged from the 1970s.

The rally's cry was simple, "We have survived."

Despite everything colonialism and its brutal child, imperialism could throw at them, First Peoples stood united.



A LARGE BLACKBOARD displayed outside the hall proclaims, "Day of Mourning." Leaflets warned that, "Aborigines and persons of Aboriginal blood only are invited to attend." At 5 o'clock in the afternoon resolution of indignation, protest, was moved, passed.

Day of Mourning, 1938

In boardrooms, fear was chasms deep.

Divide and conquer, tried and true since 360 BCE, became their weapon, sharp and dangerous, but with smiling faces, money and corporate experts “to help”.

Invasion and allies

“Australia” must look this word, invasion, in the eye and own its truth.

It means continued state murder of First Peoples, theft and jailing of children, cutting off water supplies, demolishing communities, bulldozing sacred sites, tens of thousands of fracking wells, a deluge of sorry business, funding cut to services, a lack of hope. And more.

It means setting one group against another, especially through so-called native title.

But, again and again, invasion has meant resistance, and alliances, both between clans and with the wider population. This is the answer to the governments, representing US corporations and the Business Council, which again speak of world war.

The Gadigal saw in horror the flesh torn to bone as convicts were lashed. Gadigal had no gaols, no military, no courts. They had Law immersed in the Lands, the air, the water. They sometimes took in escaped convicts.

In 1804, two years after Pemulwuy was killed, convicts also rebelled against the British at Vinegar Hill. The enemy was the same. British colonialism.

Today, Gunnai, Gunditjmarra and Djab Wurrung leader Lidia Thorpe and others hail ongoing alliances of the oppressed with First Peoples.

Who would have thought young farmers would lock-on with Gamilaraay against fracking in the Pilliga?

A new generation of First Peoples is rising, taking guidance from Elders, standing, they acknowledge, “on the shoulders of ancestors”. They seek allies.

But the working class, once a shining hope for First Peoples and their strongest ally, has been systematically divided and disorganised by ruling class laws and compliant “leaders”.

Here too, young workers are organising with elders, determined, step by step, for the working class to regain its own collective strength.

Before and beyond our days

In songlines of Sovereign Peoples, struggle goes back in time to a time before invasion and forward beyond our days.

They remember and build towards times of greater strength. A time when invasion and mourning are ended with the systems that engender them.

Two other things are key. Understanding the enemy we face. And unity.

We stand by their side.



Gunnai, Gunditjmarra and Djab Wurrung woman Lidia Thorpe, currently Senator for Victoria for the Greens

Cry me a river...

Nick G. (23 January 2021)

People living along the Barka (Darling) River remain angry at the lack of water coming down from southern Queensland and northern New South Wales.

The Barka has always been susceptible to the effects of drought, but its near-total ruin is the result of capitalist greed. Supporters of the Barka refer to the 4 “Cs” – cotton, China, corporates, corruption.

Cotton is an extremely thirsty plant and much of its water is held throughout the year in very large, shallow dams. Cotton growers have been accused of illegal diversion of surface water (water in rivers and lakes) and floodwater harvesting (building levees and canals which then direct flood waters into giant storage tanks instead of allowing it to make its way into the river or into the soil.) This is unregulated and unmonitored in NSW – a case of a public good being seized by private hands without any action taken by government.

A person who had paddled down the Barka wrote on Facebook: “we saw the massive pumps when paddling down the Darling. Sometimes 4 of the biggest Catapillar motors inline pumping massive amounts of water. Open channels that have huge water losses.”

Another Facebook post reads: “Yep they bleed these rivers dry I understand drought but this is a man-made drought it’s about time something is done about this it’s all for bloody greed and money and cotton...”

Another post says: “Drought man-made because of over extraction of water upstream, licensed and illegally

taken by the unlawful use of Flood Plain Harvesting, unmeasured, unmeasured and unpaid for by thieves and endorsed by Politicians of all Major Parties both State and FederalLiberal, National and yes Labour parties by their silence not calling out and the opposition all have to answer as to why they are allowing the destruction of our waterways...”

Yet another complains, “Flood plains harvesting is killing our rivers system and making droughts longer and more difficult to cope with. Water from the floods belongs to every one along the entire river systems from streams creeks billabongs and our rivers.”

China is a major purchaser of Australia water entitlements. Part of that is linked to its involvement in cotton growing. According to the Australia Tax Office’s Register of Foreign Ownership, in 2019 China owned 1.9% of Australia’s total water entitlements, but was closely followed by the US (1.8%) and the UK (1%). Although these figures seem small, the private water market is still relatively young and the foreign share is growing. Foreign held water entitlements in Northern Murray Darling Basin (MDB) increased by 32.5% between 2018-9.

Corporates include the huge agribusinesses that have purchased prime agricultural land and turned it over to heavily water dependent single crops including cotton, but also including almonds and walnuts. Single cropping over huge areas contributes to loss of biodiversity. They also include finance companies speculating in “blue gold” (water) now that water entitlements can be bought by companies not involved in irrigation (*continued on pg.16*)

(continued from pg.15)

and held until rising prices make resale profitable enough.

A Facebook comment on corporations reads: “Corporations do not give a f**k about what happens as a result of a board meeting or an operational decision. Communities on the Darling or indeed in the MDB are irrelevant and surplus to the corporations’ requirements. This is pretty obvious by the way they adhere to pumping rules and control politicians. Everything a corporation does is for its bottom line, expansion and shareholders and nothing else.”

Corruption refers to the NSW government and to the National Party at both state and federal levels. Australia’s “Watergate” – the scandal that saw Barnaby Joyce, then federal minister for agriculture, pay \$80 million to buy back water from a company linked to then energy minister Angus Taylor, even though nearby water had been assessed at zero value.

As one Facebook commentator writes: “The corrupt bastards that govern our country haven’t got the guts to stand up to China or all the others that invest in water trading together they are killing our rivers and destroying our farmers, without water



where will our food come from...”

But it is the National politicians in NSW who are being focused on in the Barka debate. Water minister Melinda Pavey has angered communities along the Barka by claiming on commercial TV stations that all storages, lakes and rivers are in flood and all is great. This Facebook post reveals the scorn with which many have greeted her claims: “would not trust her as far as I could piss into the wind, puppet for the northern irrigators and flood plains harvesting she lets them go willy nilly...”

Rob McBride of Tolarno Station writes: “The rivers and lakes are dying and by this occurring our First Nations traditions and cultures are being destroyed together with all our native fish species. The National Party corrupts the Liberals at every vote to drop transparency into water licences and ownership, the Nationals must be obliterated at the next state and federal

election if the rivers are ever going to get back to health.”

Contrary to the lies about the current health of the rivers peddled by Pavey on channels 7 and 9, locals know that “The River is in a horrific condition & the lakes barely exist as us locals remember.”

As the locals see it “The water stopped flowing over Bourke weir for two months. Once the flows stop there the lower part of the river dries up very quickly. In some parts near Loath and Wilcannia the river dries up completely so when water does come down from Bourke it’s always a first flow hence the muddy water look. Oh and the water stopped flowing over Bourke because the greedy cotton pricks took it all after the big rains early 2020.”

Another reports that “Menindee Lake is actually Totally Dry DRY DRY ...zilch in Menindee Lake ...Menindee Lake has NO..None ...Nothing in it except dry Parched clay based soil, water being released is either from Pamaroo Lake or Lake Wetherall, part of the Menindee Lake Scheme which is currently under 20 % empty...”

Locals have offered their own solutions to the death of the Barka. One writes, “A first step would be no floodplain harvesting & extraction

New Book Released: Fight capitalism’s destructive impact on nature

The book is a 120-page compilation of 29 articles relating to contemporary environmental issues taken from our Party’s website from 2017 to 2020.

Although the content of some articles will have dated, what is more important is the analysis of these events and issues from a Marxist-Leninist perspective.

That perspective differs from some environmental writings in clearly foregrounding some of the basic contradictions inherent in environmental issues:

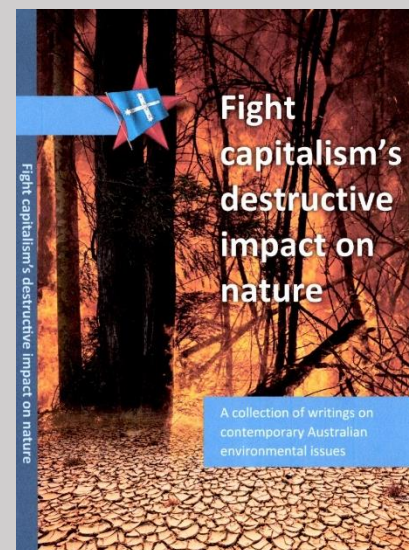
- The contradiction between capital and labour
- The contradiction between capital and nature
- The contradiction between imperialism and the Australian people.

Our perspective also differs in clearly foregrounding the rights of the working class, the environment, and the broader Australian people against capitalism and imperialism.

Our perspective is that the workers can and must exercise leadership in resolving the three contradictions above, that their right to struggle and win is entirely just and bound to succeed.

While it is likely that readers will learn details of some of the struggles covered in this book, we hope that a more substantial learning will be from the approach taken towards the issues covered in the content.

In this way, environmental activists will be better placed to analyse and form responses to new and unforeseen issues and thus strengthen the connections between the struggle for socialism, for anti-imperialist independence and for a healthy, clean and sustainable living planet.



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licences issued to land owners only, the water market is a big problem. Not to mention thirsty crops owned by mainly foreign investors. Fix them 3 points up & the once pristine Darling would be healthy again.”

First Peoples are keenly aware of the issues and Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council called last year for the suspension of water trading in the Barwon Darling River System.

There is a widespread awareness of the need to defend our water and the rivers that carry it. Nearly 31,000 people follow the Facebook page of Tolarno Station, while the Broken Hill-based Watershed Alliance Facebook page has two and a half thousand members and is supporting an event in Sydney this weekend at which Uncle Bruce Shillingsworth has issued the invitation, “Yaama come along and support our rivers (BAAKA)

let’s stop the big greedy corporates taking over #WATERISLIFE”.

There is a solid basis for unity between the organised working class movement and defenders of the rivers who by and large are opposed to foreign ownership, support biodiversity and the environment, and reject corporate greed and the corruption that sustains it. ■

The SA Draft Pastoral Lands Bill 2020 is Corrupt

Fred Kelly (27 January 2021)

Due to the nature of capitalism, in the contradiction between sustainable practices and the profit motive, the profit motive will always be the principal aspect, while sustainable practices play a subordinate role.

This is shown, for example, by the slow reaction of the world’s countries to come face to face with the climate crisis, while we, the general population, the workers, the future generations, are knocking on the door of a world-wide catastrophe. Policies and international pacts have been made, but truly, the international capitalists are trying to scrape out of this doing the bare minimum!

This is evident in Scott Morrison’s refusal to commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and his proposed plan of a ‘gas-led recovery’ out of the Covid-19 recession. Capitulation to sustainable practices will generally be made in the name of profit; these capitulations may serve to dull a popular mass cause, or, to solidify future profits because if sustainable practices aren’t put in place there will be nothing to extract profit from in the future. To put it simply, *the quick buck* or *the long play*. Land conservation policies will generally have one or both of these aspects in mind.

When land is cleared for grazing and that land is overgrazed and/or a drought kills off the ground cover flora, the topsoil becomes loose and contributes to the available soil a dust storm can draw from. Australia already has a history of overgrazing and land clearing, and coupled with regular drought, Australia has seen many a severe dust storm. Now we face

climate change which threatens an increase in frequency and intensity of drought, creating conditions for the increased frequency and intensity of dust storms. On January 11th, 2020, Australia was hit by one of these dust storms, visible from space by NASA satellites. Additionally, there are areas in Australia that are experiencing drought with the lowest rainfall on record. With current land practices, the future is grim.

In South Australia a new bill has been proposed, the *Draft Pastoral Lands Bill 2020*, which is to replace the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act of 1989*.

As the removal of *conservation* from the title may suggest, these changes are not in the interest of sustainable practices. This new bill has the quick buck in mind. It is likely to increase allocated watering points and maximum stocking limits of livestock on pastoral leases. This promotes overgrazing and draining of our natural water bodies.

The SA Pastoral Board members administrate 40% of all land in SA, with 1-2% of that land designated as conservation land. The Pastoral Board, whose six members appointed by the Minister of the *South Australian Department of Primary Industry*, in accordance with the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act of 1989* requires the board consist of: (1) someone with experience in administration of pastoral leases; (2) an ecologist; (3) a soil scientist; (4) a beef cattle pastoralist; (5) a sheep pastoralist; and (6) a conservationist. It is currently unknown if the board is legally comprised in accordance with the bill; further, six out of six board members are from agricultural backgrounds who hold pastoral leases.

The Chairman of the board is David Larkin, the CEO of Hancock Agriculture and Australian Outback Beef, both companies owned by Gina Rinehart. You can infer where the interests of the Pastoral Board lie.

It gets worse from here. The Draft bill keeps the facade of requiring a diversification of backgrounds on the Pastoral Board while gutting it of any real substances. It is proposed that the Minister will appoint up to seven board members who must have knowledge or experience in one of the following: (1) operational management of pastoral leases; (2) natural resource management and conservation of productive pastoral land; (3) governance; (4) financial management; and (5) native title and the cultural and traditional connections of Aboriginal people to the land. There is no requirement that the board be comprised of members from each category. Hypothetically, 100% of the board could be comprised of people with experience in finance management and nothing else.

Australian Outback Beef has stated objectives of increasing the number of watering points on their pastoral leases, which would effectively increase the number of cattle on their properties. Both the allotting of new watering points and increase in cattle stocking limits must be approved by the Pastoral Board, again, whose chairman is the CEO of Australian Outback Beef. And with the changes made in the Draft Bill, there might not be any push back (if there is any currently).

The Draft Pastoral Land Management Bill 2020 must not be put into law. It will only serve to profit those whose interests lie with the degradation of our environment. ■

ICOR Resolution: Solidarity Against the Brutal Anti-Communist Wave of Repression in the Philippines (28 January 2021)



INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION OF
REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

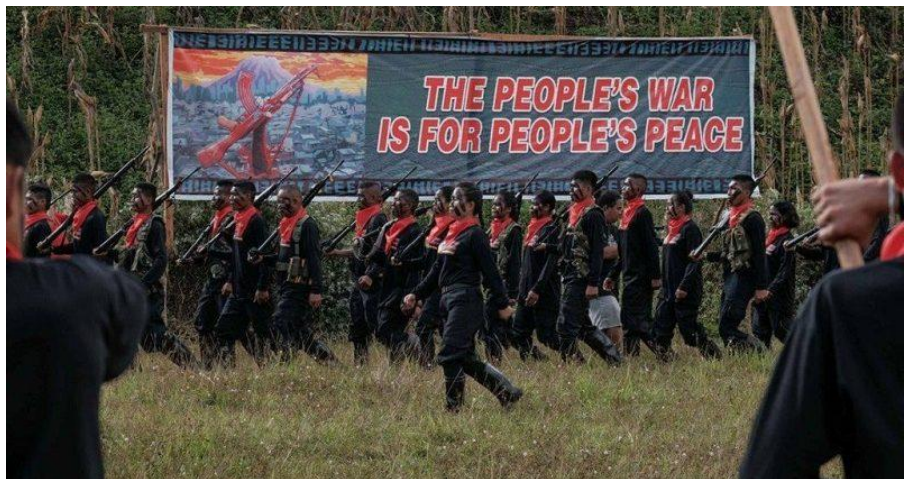
The CPA (M-L) is a signatory to this ICOR resolution of solidarity against the brutal anti-communist wave of repression in the Philippines.

One of the demands by the signatories to this resolution is for "Removal of the organizations CPP and NPA (New People's Army) from the terror lists of the U.S., EU, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom."

*In 2013, we made three unsuccessful submissions to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the removal of Comrade Jose Maria Sison, the Communist Party of the Philippines, and the New People's Army from the Australian terror list. We call on interested individuals and organisations to review these submissions and make their own. The submissions can be accessed from the **Party Statements** section of our website (www.cpaml.org/statements.php)*

For 52 years, the revolutionary movement in the Philippines, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), has been waging the justified struggle for national and social liberation.

The proto-fascist Duterte regime in the Philippines takes action against it with increasing terror, denouncing and defaming the liberation organizations and their representatives as "terrorist", assassinating leading representatives, killing and persecuting activists of the human rights, women's and youth movements, as well as trade unionists. With terrorist methods and an increasing fascistization of the state apparatus, the Duterte regime seeks to suppress the outbreak of a general societal crisis. However, in the Philippines too, the world economic and financial crisis is intensifying in interrelation with the corona crisis, and the masses' search for a genuine societal alternative is growing.



Defaming the liberation struggle as terrorist is anti-communist and criminalizes the liberation struggle, that has been being waged in the Philippines for five decades, and the armed resistance of the Filipino people.

Duterte came into office declaring a supposed war on drugs, which has led to over 30,000 illegal killings and tens of thousands more arrests under this misleading banner. The Duterte administration attempts to suppress the liberation movements with these counter-revolutionary methods and to silence them. Just before the end of 2020, in coordinated action, nine activists of the indigenous population were bloodily murdered in the city of Capiz and seven trade unionists were arrested. Soon after his taking over office, Duterte announced peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), but these were terminated in 2017, and instead they began to kill communists in massive numbers. Increased international solidarity against this aggressively anti-communist repression is urgently required.

ICOR condemns the anti-communist denigration of the Philippine liberation struggle, the CPP and NDFP, as terrorist. It demands that the Philippine government ceases its violent repression of the liberation struggle in violation of international law!

It calls for the international condemnation of the Duterte regime and removal of the organizations CPP and NPA (New People's Army) from the terror lists of the U.S., EU, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Resumption of peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the NDFP.

We call for worldwide solidarity with the struggle of the Filipino people for national and social liberation!

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 over 35 other organisations around the world. For more visit www.icor.info