

# Vanguard

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

For an Independent and Socialist Australia

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## Organised Workers in Collective Action Provide Leadership to Australian People



Ned K. (25 September 2021)

**T**he week leading up to the AFL Grand Final on 25 September saw two contrasting trends in the working class movement in Australia.

One trend, strongly promoted by the imperialist media outlets, was epitomized by the extreme right wing influenced street demonstrations in Melbourne under the Trump like banner of "freedom" of workers to take no responsibility for the impact of actions, such as opposing vaccinations against Covid-19, and opposing restrictions on movement of people to stop the spread of Covid-19. This trend suited the needs of big corporations who oppose any restrictions that retard their production and services for profit maximization.

The other trend, disciplined, united collective action by workers in pursuit of the working people's interests

received hardly any publicity in the imperialist media outlets.

In the Riverland and Southern Vales of South Australia on Thursday, winery and vineyard workers employed by US multinational Accolade, the largest winery in the southern hemisphere, took strike action and marched through the streets of Berri.

The workers and their union, United Workers Union, took this collective action to prevent Accolade eroding conditions of employment that would have dire implications for the whole community. Accolade want to reduce workers' retirement income (superannuation) and undermine community standards by accelerating a two-tiered worker system by increasing insecure work at the winery and vineyards. Workers' future action will depend on whether Accolade back off or not.

In the city and regional areas of

South Australia, workers employed by SA Water went on strike on Friday and held a rally outside SA Water House in protest at SA Water's intention to change rosters, enforce longer working hours and its consequent negative impact on safe work standards. These workers look after the quality and supply of water, an essential service to the people of South Australia.

On Thursday, 2,000 Transport Workers Union members employed by Australia Post's StarTrack parcel delivery service went on a 24-hour strike to oppose provisions in an "offer" made by the employer as part of a new Enterprise Agreement. The corporate bosses have mischievously described their offer as generous, but they have been outsourcing jobs to companies like Amazon's Flex service which use lower paid sham "sub-contractors" and labour hire employees. Delivery service standards have fallen at the same time as  
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outsourcing has occurred.

The vote strike was carried by a 97% majority vote. Next week 2,500 TWU members at FedEx will also strike.

In the examples described above, workers actions were well organized and in the interests of the people.

During the week, both the Maritime Union of Australia and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union on behalf of their members made strong public statements opposing the Morrison Government and US imperialism's intention to intensify military tensions with China and threaten the people's security and well-being by building nuclear-powered submarines in Australia. At Friday's anti-nuclear-powered subs rally in Adelaide, a strong message of support was sent by the SA State Secretary of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union.

This latter trend of organised workers taking collective action to defend and extend living standards and for peace, not war mongering, is the dominant trend and is sure to grow while the former trend promoted by big business does not have the support of the overwhelming majority of working people and is sure to fail. ■



## Workers Struggle Against Impact of Privatisation and Outsourcing on Many Fronts

Ned K. (18 September 2021)

**G**overnment privatisation and outsourcing of services has been a feature of capitalism in Australia for many decades affecting public transport, water utilities, public health, aged care, disabilities and education and many more sectors. For example, road traffic controlling where road works are undertaken, used to be performed by workers directly employed by state or federal governments.

In many public hospitals most of the support services have been contracted out to multinational companies like Serco, ISS, Spotless or Compass.

In public schools, maintenance and school cleaning has been contracted out for years to both large companies like Spotless as well as smaller locally based companies.

A common outcome of this outsourcing is more insecure work, higher workloads, lower wages and lower quality of service to the people who use the services.

The practice of privatisation and outsourcing over the decades has become so entrenched that governments have become almost servants of the capitalists delivering the service rather than delivering all the assurances the people were given that services would improve, and governments would ensure contractors

did not put profits before workers' working conditions and service to the people.

In the last decade particularly there has been a fightback by workers to prevent further privatization and outsourcing and also campaigns to reverse privatisation and outsourcing.

Unions and their members have often supported election of a Labor Federal, State or Territory Governments with high hopes that if elected they would reverse privatisation or at least ensure that workers' wages and conditions would be the same as if directly employed.

Workers have had some success in their struggles. For example, in the ACT several years ago, the Government agreed to take school cleaning back in house with improved wages and conditions as a consequence. In WA and Queensland, directly employed school cleaners have successfully resisted attempts by both Liberal and Labor Governments to outsource cleaning to private for-profit contractors.

In South Australia, public hospital directly employed support services workers won an Enterprise Agreement which included a clause that at change, renewal or extension of commercial contracts with companies where services had been already contracted out twenty years ago, the workers had to be paid the same wages as directly employed public sector workers.

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In Victoria, workers employed by private contractors to provide support services in schools forced the state Labor Government to kick out contractors who were not even paying workers minimum award wages and conditions. This was a first step in the workers' struggle to win back direct employment as public sector workers.

### Labor Governments Do Some Good Things, Some Bad Things On Privatisation Front

During the Covid-19 period, there has been even more pressure on governments to provide better services, especially to ensure a hygienic environment for people using public services.

In Victoria for example, the Andrews Labor Government decided to increase cleaning services on public transport and areas like railway stations and tram stops. Here was a perfect opportunity to directly employ more public sector workers, ensure they were well trained and with public sector standard pay and conditions.

However, the Government fell well short of this. It gave this extra Covid-19 related cleaning work to a major contract cleaning company GJK who said thank you very much and then engaged cleaners as individual contractors on under-award pay.

In some States and Territories when under a Labor Government, through pressure from workers and their Unions, there has been a move by these Governments to disguise the continuation of the neo-liberal privatisation and outsourcing agenda by giving assurances to Unions and their members that only "responsible contractors" would be given contracts to provide public services.

However, this has usually resulted in the Government Department bureaucrats allowing the so-called "responsible contractors" from continuing on their merry way of cutting corners, reducing worker numbers by not replacing those who leave, or replacing full time and part time workers with casuals or labour hire casuals.

At the federal level of Government, the Labor Government of Rudd and Gillard did some good things for workers such as introduce at least some regulations in relation to contracted out services such as ground maintenance

## The Gig Economy – The Latest Innovation in Exploitation

Duncan B. (24 September 2021)

**T**he working class is no stranger to precarious employment. From the earliest days workers often lived with being employed day by day or even hour by hour. Workers could be hired and fired at the whim of the capitalist. Older workers remember having to line up outside wharves or railway yards hoping to get a day's work.

Workers have for many years faced casual employment in hospitality, retail, transport and warehousing. They often do the same job for the same employer working full-time hours, but are still classed as "casual."

In recent years a new form of precarious employment has come into existence—the "gig" economy. The gig economy involves workers in short term work arrangements doing flexible, temporary or freelance jobs. The workers and employers are often connected through on-line platforms.

The gig economy covers many sectors of the economy including rideshare, food delivery, parcel delivery, personal care, performing tasks in people's homes and freelancing jobs in areas such as information technology. Renting out spare capacity in accommodation, cars or caravans is another example.

Australians will be familiar with companies such as Uber, Deliveroo, Airtasker, and Air B&B. World-wide

and cleaning. This only came about because of workers' struggles over a number of years.

However as soon as the Abbott government came in to office, these services were again completely deregulated with severe consequences for workers.

So, while Labor Governments do some good things when pressured by the collective struggles of workers, the changes they make are often half measures at best, or temporary due to the short-term electoral cycle.

This often demoralises workers who always vote Labor, but they also see the limitations of parliamentary system of which Labor governments and Labor out of office are a part. ■



there are hundreds of companies covering various areas of the gig economy. About 7% of Australians participate in the gig economy. (Queensland University of Technology study, 2019)

Many people participate in the gig economy to earn extra income, but for many it is their only source of income. They juggle several ride share-driving or food delivery gigs with low paid casual jobs such as retail work or as cleaners or security guards to try to make ends meet.

The majority of the companies behind the gig economy are based in the US, although Airtasker, Menulog and Mable are Australian companies. Rideshare company DiDi is based in China and Deliveroo is a British company.

Exploitation is rife in the gig economy. For example, Amazon Flex pays people \$108 to use their own cars to deliver 30-40 parcels in a four hour "block." Drivers face being cut off from work for alleged "violations" without explanation. Food deliverers have been injured or killed on bicycles or motor bikes while delivering food. Ride share drivers have been assaulted and robbed during their shifts. Support workers complain of difficulty getting paid by on-line agencies. The gig economy companies try to treat their workers as independent contractors, leaving them with minimum pay and none of the benefits or protection such as sick pay and workers' compensation enjoyed by workers classed as employees.

Gig workers are starting to organise in defence of their rights with the help of unions such as the Transport Workers' Union. Recent court cases in Australia and the UK have gone in favour of gig workers being treated as employees. However in California, ride share companies Uber and Lyft are (continued on pg.4)

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appealing against a court ruling which will make them treat their workers as employees rather than independent contractors.

No worker is safe! The wholesale closure of many manufacturing companies in Australia has led to the destruction of some of the most unionised and militant sections of the working class. Many skilled workers

who enjoyed well paid jobs were forced into early retirement, unemployment or low paying jobs in the service sector. This is what happened when Alcoa closed its smelter in Geelong (Vic) in 2014. Workers were offered retraining as prison guards or aged-care workers. No doubt some had to go into the gig economy to survive.

The changes to the workforce

stemming from deindustrialisation and the rise of the gig economy pose challenges to working class organisations. They need to find new ways of organising and connecting with workers who today are more dispersed with the closure of the large factories and workshops which were the traditional places where organisation and recruitment once took place. ■

## JOB SECURITY – WORTH FIGHTING FOR!

Ned K. (31 October 2021)

**T**he Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and affiliated Unions are starting a "Job Security - Worth Fighting For" campaign narrative, coinciding with the lead up to the coming federal election.

Surveys conducted by the ACTU and many Unions show that job security is a highly important issue for workers across pretty much all industries and occupations. The stand downs, job losses and cuts to hours of work experienced by millions of workers during the Covid-19 pandemic of the last two years have taken the level of job insecurity to new heights.

What is "job insecurity"? It takes many forms. Casualization, labour hire, fixed short term contracts, sub contract work, insufficient hours of work, low wage jobs, so-called gig economy jobs are some of the most common forms of job insecurity.

However, under capitalism, even so-called secure jobs such as in the public service or large manufacturing businesses turn into insecure jobs without warning.

For example, outsourcing and/or privatizing of government jobs, trade wars leading to reduction in production and job losses or loss of regular overtime or even cutting back from three shifts to one day shift can see workers moving from relative job security to job insecurity within a very short space of time.

The ACTU is hopeful that it has found an issue that the majority of workers (especially young workers, new migrant workers and women workers) feel strongly enough about and see as "worth fighting for"!



"Worth fighting for" has been included in the campaign narrative to try and replicate the success of the "Your Rights At Work, Worth Fighting For" campaign which succeeded in throwing out the reactionary Howard Government in 2007.

Job security in its many different forms is an issue that affects millions of workers far beyond the 9% union membership density of the private sector workforce in Australia.

It is a campaign narrative that is likely to win support from millions of workers, especially if linked to the insecurity for working people caused by the impact of climate change.

For young people secure jobs for the future is inseparably linked to the issue of environmental sustainability.

Within the leadership of the Secure Jobs Worth Fighting For campaign on the eve of a federal election, there will no doubt be an opportunist element who want to steer the campaign to a dead end if a Labor government is elected in the coming election.

The stated intention of the campaign is that it is a longer-term campaign to unite millions of workers to define in common struggle what an Australia with secure jobs will look like and what changes to the current set up need to be made.

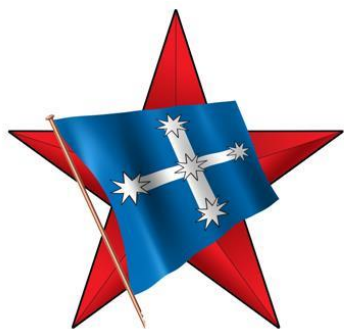
The initiators of the campaign say that the extent of the changes needed for secure work for workers will depend on the development of the strength and power of the grass roots movement in workplaces and communities. This is encouraging to hear.

The ACTU formally represents far less than 50% of workers at any point in time due to the low union membership density. However, Unions in general have a fluid membership. Many workers not currently in a union may have been in one a year ago or may be in a workplace shortly where there are union members and union rank and file leaders.

The success of this latest ACTU campaign getting off the ground will largely depend on the level of involvement and leadership of active workers in their workplaces and communities and build from the ground up.

Any attempt to confine the activities of such a stated campaign to marginal Liberal or National Party electorates should be opposed as most workers, union members or not, know that to reverse the trend of insecure work will need a social movement that extends far beyond the establishment's three year election cycle. ■

# STATEMENT No to nuclear-powered submarines! No to AUKUS!



*Central Committee, CPA(M-L)*  
(16 September 2021)

**The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) condemns the announcement that Australia will build nuclear-powered submarines.**

The decision further embeds Australia within the military structures of US imperialism and significantly raises the degree of interoperability between the US and Australian armed forces. It significantly reduces any capacity by Australian governments

for independent decision-making in matters of foreign policy.

Former Prime Minister Paul Keating said last week: “The whole notion of Australia’s right to an independent foreign policy – a right to be itself and act in its own interests – is being suborned by a government determined to subordinate its interests to those of another country.”

Australia has been led by the nose into one US military disaster after another, into one unjust act of aggression and invasion after another. Now we are being positioned to be part of US preparations for war with China.

The nuclear submarine proposal is a significant escalation of military threats aimed at China. It has nothing to do with preparations for the defence of Australia. A submarine fleet for coastal defence would be significantly different to submarines designed for long-distance, global movement at the service of US imperialism.

First Peoples are denied control of their own affairs to fix the huge

negative consequences, in all aspects of their lives, of ongoing invasion, especially the cynical failure to ensure their safety during the pandemic. Our hospitals are bursting at the seams, public schools remain poor cousins to the rich private schools, aged care is a mess, mental health is under great strain, road infrastructure needs massive upgrading, our rail services belong to centuries past – and none of this will be properly funded because the US wants us to be part of their nuclear-powered submarine fleet.

We need to redefine and revive our relationship with China. It is our major trade partner. It is a country that has abandoned socialism and embarked on economic and political expansion. We no more want to be under China’s thumb than we do to remain under that of the US. But supporting the provocations of one imperialist power against another is not an act of independence. It is not in our interests.

We demand an independent and peaceful, socialist Australia. ■

## Rally to Stop AUKUS in Adelaide

*Nick G. (24 September 2021)*

**Several hundred people rallied in Adelaide late on Friday afternoon to protest nuclear-powered submarines, AUKUS and the latest war preparations.**

The rally was called by organisations including the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), Friends of the Earth, SA Greens, and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

The rally was held at Parliament House just as commuters were leaving the city via the nearby train station.

Several speakers connected the issue of nuclear-powered submarines with the proposed nuclear waste dump at Kimba on Eyre Peninsula, commending the Barngarla First Peoples for their staunch opposition to the dump on their land.

Arabunna elder Uncle Kevin Buzzacott, well-known for his opposition to uranium mining and to big corporations like BHP, bemoaned the fact that materials for the submarines were likely to be taken



from Aboriginal lands without the permission of traditional owners. He said that for the future of our children, war must be opposed.

Greens Senate candidate Barbara Pocock condemned the nuclear-powered submarine decision and the AUKUS Pact for further embedding Australia in the war plans of the United

States.

IPAN’s Stephen Darley said AUKUS denied Australia the capacity to act independently, contributed to regional tensions and imposed an extraordinary economic burden on the Australian people.

It was a very good beginning for what is going to be a long campaign. ■

# Interoperability comes at a cost

Nick G. (19 October 2021)

**T**he Australian Navy is set to dump six European-made helicopters for twelve made in the US.

Following on from the decision to scrap French-made submarines for the nuclear-powered US submarines, it looks to be part of a trend to replace European-sourced military hardware with that from the US so that "interoperability" is further enhanced.

The MRH 90 Taipan helicopters, manufactured by France's Airbus, were purchased in 2006 at a cost of \$3.7 billion. It is alleged that the MRH 90s have "suffered from poor availability since entering service". Specifically, it is claimed that door on the MRH-90 was too narrow to allow its gun to fire while troops were descending, and that three rounds of remedial work have had to be carried out on the fleet.

The plan is to replace the six MRH 90s with 12 Sikorsky Romeo Seahawk helicopters in a deal worth around \$1.3 billion. Sikorsky is a US Lockheed Martin company.

Australia's navy already operates 24 MH-60R Seahawks based at HMAS Albatross, near Nowra, and this next purchase would mean a common fleet of 36 aircraft.

The ditching of a MH-60R Seahawk helicopter in the Philippine Sea during a routine flight last week has, meanwhile, been kept relatively quiet. No-one wants questions raised about the Seahawks at such a sensitive time. The cause of the incident, in which the crew conducted an emergency landing in the water, is still being investigated.

The decision on the Seahawk purchase follows one earlier this year

when Minister for Defense Linda Reynolds announced that the government would replace the French Airbus Tiger with 29 AH-64E Apache gunships to the tune of \$3.5 billion as its new Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH).

The U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which approved the sale of the Apaches, manufactured by Lockheed Martin and Boeing, said "The proposed sale will improve Australia's capability to meet current and future threats, and will enhance interoperability with U.S. forces and other allied forces."

Australia is being required by its US masters to engage in massive spending as a military outpost of the US empire.

The billions spent on further embedding us into the US military-industrial complex are billions that will not be spent on:

- Ambulance ramping - a chronic problem in all states
- Filtered air-conditioning for classrooms - a major worry of epidemiologists as states open up after lock-downs
- School nurses - common in some countries but mostly unavailable for Australian public schools
- Improvements to country roads
- Low-cost housing

These are just the tip of a social iceberg of the Australian people's needs that are being ignored as we are forced into gearing up for war with China.

Our subservience to US imperialism directly undermines our ability to survive under capitalism.

We must strengthen our resolve to develop the fight for anti-imperialist independence and socialism. ■

## Taiwan: Implications for Australia?

Contributed (16 October 2021)

**A** flurry of US-led Cold War diplomatic positions and escalating tensions over Taiwan has revealed just how high the stakes have become for the US with their regional hostilities against China.

The timing of the developments has not been coincidental; other factors have been brought into play, a change of political leadership in Japan has been a decisive factor.

Behind the scenes, however, recent defence and security initiatives have increased the likelihood of Australia being drawn into regional 'real-war' scenarios to defend 'US interests'.

In late September Fumio Kishida replaced Japanese prime minister Yoshihide Suga; the new leader is a well-known China hawk who supports 'aggressive government spending worth hundreds of billions of dollars to lift Japan's economy out of the doldrums'. The Japanese economy has been sluggish for decades, with many warning signs of longer-term political problems. It is, therefore, interesting to note Kishida is part of a faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) known as the 'home of the patricians', composed of members of important families and those who have served in high-ranking bureaucratic government positions.

Kishida would appear their man with a mission: in his campaign to become the new Japanese prime minister Kishida was quoted calling for a hard-line stance on China and for Tokyo and Washington to 'run joint simulations of how they would respond together in a crisis scenario involving Taiwan'. Fears, historically, have existed that while the US is formally committed to defending Taiwan, it is hampered by geographical considerations. Allies, such as Japan, are therefore, regarded as essential for effective defence of Taiwan strategies.

Almost immediately after Kishida took office as prime minister, US-led regional diplomatic tensions escalated over Taiwan accompanied by intelligence assessments of a likely military invasion by China. There was



little ambiguity about the timing of the developments, Kishida was actually quoted in an editorial in the Australian newspaper immediately after taking office that 'Japan continually needed to update its preparations for a conflict involving Taiwan'. The term possible was not included.

And then the Australia government sent former prime minister Tony Abbott to Taipei for high-level diplomatic talks with Taiwanese counterparts. It was not intended as a holiday after other extra-curricular duties conducted on behalf of the Morrison coalition government in Canberra. After pledging Australian support for Taiwan, Abbott was allowed to address the nation on Taiwan's National Day celebrations; it was duly noted elsewhere that the country was 'looking beyond Washington in its strategic and security policies'.

Taiwan, historically, was a peripheral entity for Australian foreign policy. For many decades Australia has fostered stronger diplomatic links with China for trade. Canberra has always accepted the United Nations position of the One China policy which, effectively, diplomatically isolated Taiwan long ago.

It is important, therefore, to look behind the scenes to establish the changing nature of US-led diplomacy toward China, which has serious implications for allies such as Australia.

Taiwan is strategically placed as part of US military planning with Island Chain Theory (ICT), designed to contain and encircle China from ready access and egress to the wider region through lines of small land masses and underwater areas difficult for submarines and shipping vessels to navigate easily. Links between Japan and Taiwan also have a long and shared history with US foreign policy and ICT. While Taiwan forms part of the first chain, Japan is located as part of both the first and second chains. Beyond the second chain lies the western Pacific and Oceania of which Australia is the key hub for 'US interests'.

It is, therefore, not coincidental to find that Abbott, in his official diplomatic address, drew attention to the sensitive western Pacific, where major US-led tensions have arisen.

The western Pacific and Oceania is a vast area, including Polynesia and Micronesia, where many small countries have huge diplomatic significance through their membership of regional trade bodies and as voters at the UN. US military and security considerations also include their regional military headquarters for the Indo-Pacific which are based in Hawaii; it has added to the increasingly paranoid position of the Pentagon.

In recent times, China has been able to make large-scale diplomatic inroads with many of the Pacific Island countries with mutually beneficial trade relations. It has not gone unnoticed in Washington and the Pentagon, where military planners do not take kindly to competitors to their traditional hegemonic positions. The escalating US-led diplomatic tensions sweeping the region are little other than an attempt to reassert 'US interests'.

Central to the US-led position are the role of sensitive intelligence facilities based at Pine Gap, Australia. The continually scan the region and monitor adversaries and those assessed as not being compliant with 'US interests'. When Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu 'urged Australia to increase intelligence sharing and security cooperation', it was a request from Taipei for greater access to the US-led facilities together with other assistance from elsewhere.

While the Pine Gap facilities have been updated many times, it is a recent announcement from within the military-industrial complex which has revealed added dimensions to the existing US-led intelligence program.

Coinciding with developments focussed upon Taiwan, an announcement that an Australian-based \$240 million space radar project designed to track 'hundreds of thousands of orbiting objects' including satellites with the ability to 'keep an eye on other nations' and 'monitor government activity' together with large-scale telecommunications interception facilities, has to be taken very seriously.

The development has also been accompanied by the CIA establishing a China Mission Centre, part of a major concentration of US intelligence service focus upon China. The Centre has a planned broad focus upon their



adversary. An official media release noted, for example, that 'China poses a unique challenge to the US given its economic might, in technology, trade, diplomacy, defence and other spheres'.

A recent media release about an Australian-based quasi-intelligence organisation, LeoLabs, can therefore be placed directly into its appropriate context: the seemingly out-sourced corporate entity has already employed a number of former military officials including one with previous experience of being the Australian government's military attache for space-related matters in Washington, together with others who are already working alongside NASA administrators in Australia.

It is a common practice for intelligence services to use front-type corporate bodies to avoid unnecessary publicity and to distance themselves from any controversy. It also enables them to hide behind the trade-craft of 'plausible denial' if detected.

LeoLabs recently announced that their project had the range and capacity to be 'the world's first commercial deep space radar ... allowing detection of every object, in every orbit, in Australia's orbital area of interest'. Such statements leave little to the imagination. With recent Australian diplomatic initiatives toward Taiwan, it would appear the faraway island, previously of little interest to Canberra, has recently been placed into Australia's orbital area of interest by the Pentagon.

With developments such as these taking place there is every likelihood Australia will be drawn into US-led regional hostilities with China during the future, possibly sooner rather than later!

**We need an independent foreign policy! ■**

# Election Speculation – What value for people?

John G. (16 October 2021)

**E**lection speculation took a feverish turn in recent weeks.

Canberra Journalists have been on tenterhooks. Would Morrison head off to see the Governor? Will he, won't he, has trickled down to the provinces.

Local ALP and Greens branches have been put on a 'war footing', prepared for a Federal Election at short notice. The ACTU has launched its "Secure jobs. Worth Fighting For" marginal seats campaign.

Commentators read the tea leaves in opinion surveys for guidance but who knows when an election will be held. According to law it has to be held by May next year. The speculation on a pre-Christmas election is easing as COP 21, the UN Sustainable Development Conference, and the G20 meeting loom. Morrison flirts with attending.

What is clear is that an election won't be held over the Christmas holiday season. At least we have them scared enough to leave us alone during our summer break.

But the threat of shoving the Canberra circus even further into our lives brings up just what use that circus is.

One way of looking into it is to ask some basic questions.

Are politicians our servants or does government act as our master? Just think of a few issues where people want things done.

Climate change. Public opinion has three quarters of us wanting serious action to provide avenues out of coal, oil and gas extraction and burning, support for the workers in those industries to transition to other industries, support for applying sustainable technologies and new industries

What happens? Political leaders of both major parties have wilted into confusion and inaction when the top capitalists from the fossil fuel industries and bankers have complained against action. Loudmouth political cretins take up station as fossil fuel megaphones and lobbyists. People don't get action. We get left slowly stewing as capitalists in fossil fuel corporations are left to prosper.

## We only represent corporations



## Our people are of no value, and are simply a cost to us Australian Government

Government acts as masters of society, not servants of the people. And its masters for the big money, big multinationals over the vast majority, the rest of us.

Covid crisis early days. People want protection from the deadly virus. Government orders industries to close down, people to stay home. Millions literally, 5 million, found themselves a payday away from poverty, not able to pay mortgages, put food on the table, out of work. The Government offered the starvation New Start Allowance, when people could register for it.

For a week they stood by crying poor-mouth. Government wasn't there to look after people but held firm with their policy of making unemployment so unpalatable that people would scramble over each other to get what work was available, even at near starvation wages. But then there were no jobs to scramble for.

People's servants relieving people's difficulties or masters ordering people to be grateful for what they got, if they could get on the website to get it? Again, barring people at the door not seating them at the table. No service just mastery.

That approach fell apart as people in their tens of thousands haunted the footpaths outside Centrelink offices and their website collapsed under the tsunami of applications. Millions of the desperate, newly without wages, posed a threat of anarchy on the streets. Only after nearly a week when the level of disruption and desperation was hammered into their brains with the prospect of society revolting against its government, did the masters turn

towards service, with the clear motive of sustaining their position.

With the Covid lockdowns, people's unhappiness with insecure casual and contract jobs grew into a burning hatred. Corporate bosses and government love of them just grew. Government outsourcing to casual employers has become a trademark. Qantas, despite the hundreds of millions of government support, wrangled ways of outsourcing more of its work to companies employing people on contracts or as casuals. People want secure jobs. Government and corporate bosses manoeuvre to push more and more into casual and contract jobs. Government serving the people or masters over them?

Back to the coming election.

Dreamers and charlatans carry on about elections and parliamentary government being a way for the majority to run society, for the common interests to prevail, a real commonwealth. That may have been the idea and to an extent the fact in ages past but its miles from that today.

In Australia today, democratic government has become a means for government to rule over the people. The corporate world is in charge. Government jumps to their tune. Corporate bosses have the Prime Minister's phone number on speed dial. He takes their calls. The needs of the core of Australian corporate world are at the core of government and Labour leaders' actions.

Apart from the corporate core of parliamentary policies, top politicians act ruthlessly to look after their own special interests. They wriggle and

squirm to stay in charge within their parties, hand out favours, do deals, curry favour with corporate and sectional interests. Government leaders flagrantly use the public purse to shore up their support within the party and to curry favour with groups of voters. Accountability is nowhere to be seen. Even the prospect of an ICAC with few teeth makes them faint. Everything is on the table to secure re-election and get hold of government office.

Sometimes there are concessions to people when they are aroused and firing. Jack Lang's NSW government in the Depression and the 1970s

Whitlam Government were the epitome of concessions to the people.

No stone was left unturned to get rid of them as quickly as possible. The Commonwealth Government moved to seize the Lang government funds and was tossed out by the governor when he withdrew a million dollars from the reach of the Commonwealth. Whitlam saw appointment of a Senator against all precedent followed by the Senate stopping funds to the government, again unheard of in a Westminster style parliamentary democracy.

Neither government set out to pose a threat to corporate Australia but did make significant concessions to the people. Even those enormously

popular governments were wrangled from office quick smart. Governments looking after people were out and normal mastery over the people resumed.

The idea of politicians being at the service of the people is a wonderful ideal, but it has little to do with the reality of parliamentary government in Australia. Government operates as master over the people, a master for the corporate world.

The coming election, whenever it might be, isn't offering serious concessions. It will consist of deciding which group of political careerists will be put in office to exercise mastery over us for the next few years. ■

## Sold Down the River!

*Duncan B. (2 October 2021)*

***Sold Down the River: How Robber Barons and Wall Street Traders Cornered Australia's Water Market* by Scott Hamilton and Stuart Kells, (Text Publishing 2021, \$35), is a book that everyone interested in the sad story of the Murray-Darling Basin should read.**

The authors tell how Australia's most precious resource was handed over to speculators at the expense of farmers, the other inhabitants of irrigation areas, Indigenous people and the environment.

From the earliest days in the late nineteenth century when irrigation schemes were established, water was publicly owned and controlled and water rights were always linked to land ownership. In the early nineteen nineties, under the influence of the Friedman economics of the "free market" which brought on a mania for "competition" and privatisation in Australia, water rights were separated from land ownership and water rights became something that could be traded or sold.

In 2004 the "National Water Initiative" made water markets the primary tool of water management. Water became just like any other commodity. It became a financial asset. Compared to sectors of the economy such as banking and finance there was very little regulation of the



players in the water market - the traders and brokers who set about making enormous profits from trading water. There was no requirement for water traders to have any connection to farming.

Farmers who often struggle with poor mobile phone and internet connections found themselves in competition for water with water traders who use supercomputers and "bots" to trade water in seconds.

Many of the traders are US based banks and hedge funds. The authors detail how these parasites manipulate the water market, benefit from periods of water shortage and create artificial shortages. They milk high profits from farmers desperate to obtain water to start or finish off their crops.

The water traders ally themselves with the mega-farms run by organisations such as the Canadian pension funds. They ensure that there is adequate water for the huge

plantations of almond, olives etc, while depriving productive farmers of much-needed water.

The authors call for a new model of governance for water where "we would decide as a society how best to allocate scarce water in a way that balanced all the imperatives such as efficient agriculture, river health, and recognising the cultural and economic rights of Indigenous people."

Given the vested interests involved in the water market and the billions of dollars in profits they are making, the chances of this happening are remote. It is only with the overthrow of capitalism and the advent of socialism in Australia, that the just, equitable and planned use of public resources such as water, can be guaranteed. As can be seen when reading *Sold Down the River*, late stage capitalism spells doom for national treasures such as the Murray Darling basin. ■

# MARXISM TODAY Put Capitalism on trial at the COP26 Climate Conference

Contributed By A Party Study Group  
(24 October 2021)

This is an edited version of a much longer article. The full article can be read on our website here:

<https://www.cpaml.org/post4.php?id=1635134047>

**T**he global warming crisis is confronting capitalism/imperialism with enormous difficulties in moving from fossil fuel sources of energy to clean, renewable sources of energy. There are just too many competing political and corporate interests to guarantee the transition is fast enough to achieve a significant reduction in global emissions, and this poses a grave threat to humanity.

The movement to renewable energy requires a massive injection in fixed capital in the form of new technologies and means of production. However, this will result in a relative decrease in the labour required to operate and maintain these new developments and an overall decrease in the unit cost of energy production. Competition within capitalism drives companies to achieve this outcome either through more productive, cheaper labour sources or new, more efficient technologies. In the case of moving to renewable energy, there are two positive outcomes in the longer term for the energy companies; cheaper costs associated with the production of energy and an increase in revenues at the expense of the rate of profit. This is already happening in a number of countries, including Sweden, Germany, Norway and Nicaragua.

Investment in renewable energy is consistent with the tendency within capitalism to adopt new technologies that provide a more efficient, relatively cheaper means of production. However, this is only a tendency and can be countered by a number of factors and it is necessary to understand some of these when addressing the issue of replacing non-renewable energy with renewable resources in Australia.



The adoption of new technologies has been analysed in depth in Marx's *Volume 3 of Capital*. In Part III, Chapter XIII, "The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall", he points out how the introduction of more efficient means of production through technological innovation causes a relative increase in fixed capital relative to variable capital (labour power) and this results in a relative decrease in the rate of profit. "The immediate result of this is that the rate of surplus-value, at the same, or even rising degree of labour exploitation, is represented by a continually falling general rate of profit."

In relation to energy there are at least two competing factors within capitalism. The first is that energy is a cost to all industries, and while it is a cost to the energy industries, it is also the primary source of revenue. The second is that the energy industries are some of the largest companies in the world and exert extensive control internationally. The energy industries have significant investment in the production of non-renewable energy resources and any movement to replacing these will be constrained by the need to maximise the opportunities to realise profit on existing investments. From their point of view,

the interests of the country are a very secondary consideration. They will attempt to make the people pay for any transition that does occur.

This brake on moving forward with renewable energy resources is further constrained within countries like Australia because of their particular economic nature and corresponding historical alliance with industries associated with the extraction and export of raw materials. The investment by the energy industries is very significant in Australia as is the extensive influence and control of the owners of the energy industries. A particularly glaring example of the willingness of Australian politicians to collude with these industries at any cost is the LNG export arrangements and taxes.

In an article in the *Age* by Melissa Clarke (9-Sep-2021 – "Resource sector lobbies hardest on climate change, while net zero backers 'disengaged'"), it is pointed out that a report by a UK-based think tank that maintains a global database of corporate and industry lobbying efforts on climate change found that: "Corporate support for government action on climate change is muted in Australia, with the most intense lobbying coming from resources and energy companies calling for more

limited change. Corporations that back reaching net zero emissions by 2050 as well as other policies that broadly support the Paris Agreement do little or negligible lobbying to encourage federal and state governments to take stronger action on climate change.”

The lack of strategic thinking and subservience by politicians to these largely, American owned companies reflect the nature of Australian capitalism and our dependence on the extraction and export of raw materials. Clinton Fernandes (*ARENA Quarterly*, Sept 2021) argues that Australia is characterised as an economic growth rather than an economic development country. This simply means we are focussed on a limited number of exports and if economic development involves ‘only such changes in economic life as are not forced upon it from without but arise by its own initiative, from within’, then Australia’s is not well placed to initiate substantial change. In terms of economic complexity which relates to the level of diversification (manufacturing and number of products to export), Australia is an anomaly amongst advanced economies with the lowest level of all the OECD countries and in 2017 was ranked fifty-ninth in the world for economic complexity.

Further in his *ARENA* article Fernandes states that “Australia’s .... Critical Minerals Strategy isn’t concerned with nation-building or increasing economic complexity but with creating a benign environment for private investors to carve up our critical minerals”.

### **The role of the capitalist state**

Currently in Australia there are a number of coal-fired power stations. Most were built by the various state governments using taxpayers’ money to provide reliable electricity for the manufacturing boom after World War Two. An important function of the capitalist state is to provide infrastructure, services and investment capital beyond the resources of individual capitalists. These power stations were sold off to corporate ownership during the wave of privatisations that swept Australia over the last two decades. Now they are owned and operated by corporations

such as Origin Energy, Alinta, Energy Australia and others.

Similarly, the previously state-owned distribution grids of sub-stations and transmission wires were also privatised to different corporations, and so too the retail sectors servicing the customers.

Even though the generation, distribution and retail of electricity is owned by many separate companies, they are mutually dependent and combine to form a powerful bloc of interests. Collectively, they occupy a monopoly position in capitalist Australia, though having the appearance of competitors in the retail market. In particular, they use any and every excuse to “pass on costs to the consumer”.

The state governments continue to provide services to these powerful corporations in the form of access to land, tax concessions, and subsidies for new equipment and technology. The capitalist state organisation ensures the profitability of these corporations, giving them privileged access to government in acknowledgement of their leverage and the implied threat of “blackouts” and “loss of jobs”.

### **UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow (November 1-12)**

The looming threat of devastating climate warming in excess of 2°C will be the focus of world attention at this international conference. Limiting warming to 1.5C will require a much faster rate of retiring fossil fuels than currently projected.

Various countries, and especially the industrialised countries, will be expected to detail what progress they have made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and what initiatives they have taken to introduce and support renewable technologies, and what efforts have been made to clean up and restore the natural environment as fossil fuels production phases out.

Political leaders seeking media attention will focus on what commitments they are prepared to make into the future, for example, net zero emissions by 2050, or 50% reduction by 2030. China has already signalled to meet net zero by 2060, but this may change when the conference meets. Undoubtedly there will be some positive movement and commitments

made by many countries at this conference. Several factors are influencing the positions taken by governments around the world with many realising that some progress has to be made on this critical issue.

- Firstly, there is the massive wave of popular struggle and demands by people across the world, but especially young people concerned at the future humanity is facing.
- Secondly, there is the growing evidence of unstable, extreme climate events which are not only devastating livelihoods, but are also threatening established industries and corporate profits.
- Thirdly, there is an increasing investment risk for companies, banks, insurers, superannuation funds and shareholders to invest in fossil fuels which may become “stranded assets” in a relatively short time.
- Fourthly, there is the rapid expansion of renewable technologies and the growing attractiveness for investments in solar, wind, hydrogen, geothermal and batteries, with new opportunities to realise profits in emerging markets.

### **Morrison’s hot air**

Prime Minister Morrison will travel to Glasgow immediately after the G20 meeting in Rome. The Australian government has a well-earned reputation as an apologist for the fossil fuel monopolies, led by a shallow individual whose promises and commitments mean little. In a government flush with climate change deniers and protectors of the coal and gas giants, Morrison waffles on about “modern farming technologies” and “avoided land clearing” and funding “carbon capture and storage”, but has not been able to demonstrate any practical pathway to significantly reduce emissions in Australia.

Under pressure from his AUKUS mates Biden and Johnson, Morrison has made some conditional commitment to meet a net zero by 2050 target to keep in step, but his credibility has been torpedoed.

In any case, as Greg Jericho points out in an article in the Guardian, “To stay within our 1.5C carbon budget, we need to get on a path to net zero by 2035 from now, not 2030”

Nor will Morrison make any commitment to cease the export of coal (*continued on pg.12*)



(continued from pg.11)

and gas to developing countries which adds to extreme weather events, dangerous levels of air pollution and the rising sea levels which threaten many island states and low-lying communities. The disastrous consequences of increasing global greenhouse gas emissions will inevitably lead to more mass migrations and regional conflicts.

### **The future of Coal**

Apart from the emissions target, another key issue for the COP26 conference will be the future of coal, the most polluting and damaging of the fossil fuels. Leaders of countries will be under pressure to set closure deadlines on the mining, export and use of coal in power stations.

Immediate pressure will come from demonstrations of people from across the world demanding an end to the global coal industry, as well as many rallies, public meetings and actions in Glasgow prior to and during the conference. Further pressure will come from scientists and delegates to the conference who have studied the facts and reflect the concerns of the mass populations already experiencing changing and extreme weather patterns.

According to an article published in *Nature*, much of the world's reserves of coal will have to remain untouched if a target of 1.5C is to be achieved by 2050. Globally that means 89 percent of reserves or 826 billion tonnes. For Australia, it translates to 95 percent of coal reserves or 80 billion tonnes. Nearly 60 percent of oil and gas reserves would also have to be left in the ground to limit global warming to 1.5C.

Given the weight of evidence for urgent action on limiting greenhouse gas emissions, the political/environmental demands of global populations and the risk to profits, it clearly means that thermal coal production in Australia is on borrowed time.

Companies such as BHP and AGL are re-structuring to protect their investments and winding back their involvement in coal production. AGL will close down its Liddell power station in NSW next year and may bring forward the projected dates for Bayswater in NSW (2035) and Loy Yang A in Victoria (2048). Energy Australia will close down Yallourn power station in Victoria 4 years early in 2028.

While coal is used to generate up to 70 percent of the power for east coast Australia, this could be replaced within a few years by large scale battery farms fed from wind and solar and other renewable technologies. This has been the experience in South Australia where 60 percent is currently supplied by renewables.

Thermal coal is becoming increasingly unviable as an investment. Coal-fired power stations in Australia will shut down sooner than current company projections as profits disappear in the face of competition by renewables. The export market for thermal coal will also contract as other countries step up their transition to other renewable sources for electricity generation.

Coking coal exports for steel making will continue to be Australia's major contribution to (global) emissions in other countries. However, the days of selling iron ore and importing it back as steel may also be

under threat. There are plans by Fortescue Mining to develop a "green steel" manufacturing industry using hydrogen made from renewables, doing away with the need for coking coal and its export overseas, and perhaps providing jobs for displaced mine workers.

The Morrison government will continue to underwrite the coal industry in Australia using every trick to frustrate and delay the final years. Federal Energy Minister Angus Taylor has been sprouting a "capacity mechanism" which would provide rapid energy generation when "the sun isn't shining and the wind blowing" using pumped hydro, gas, batteries and coal-fired power stations. The implication is that renewables are not reliable and that coal needs to stay in the mix. In return, Morrison and Co. hope to be re-elected on the back of coal miners' votes in Queensland and New South Wales.

While granting the fossil fuel monopolies billions of dollars in tax concessions and subsidies for exploration, railways, ports and research on so-called "clean coal", the federal government has not committed to ensuring the economic future of mine workers and their communities when the coal mining industry shuts down.

At the same time, the federal government has refused to properly fund schools, hospitals, public housing, pensions and social benefits to meet the needs of the people.

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### **Fundamental change is needed**

This decade will be critical in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to prevent dangerous climate warming from having disastrous effects in Australia and across the world. The global monopoly capitalist/imperialist economic system may indeed be able to adjust to the replacement of coal with renewable sources of power.

But even this will require the need for intense struggles by the people to force federal and state governments to cease guaranteeing the coal industry and to guarantee the futures of the workers and communities as coal production winds down. Many, but not all, may be able to transition into new jobs in the renewable industries. Others who cannot must not be



abandoned by governments and certainly not by the organised working class.

Gas and oil corporations are at the centre of the global monopoly capitalist/imperialist system. They exercise direct and indirect power and influence over governments, providing crucial resources for manufacturing and land, sea and air transport. They will not surrender their power and profits without a fight.

Companies such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Woodside, Shell, INPEX, Origin Energy and Santos control the production, refining and export of gas and oil in Australia. They rely on a network of international banks and investment financiers to support the continuing profitability of fossil fuels, and at the same time, finance their diversification into renewable energy projects. The gas and oil companies have great influence through the Business Council of Australia and the Minerals Council. Their executives, both in Australia and internationally, form part of the ruling class of imperialism which dominates Australia's economic and political existence. Prime Minister Morrison promotes their influence through his "gas-led recovery" and calling for new gas-fired power stations to replace the older coal-fired ones and continuing support for coal seam gas fracking.

Waiting for their turn to oversee capitalism, the Labor Party leadership never challenges this ruling class domination of Australia. They also have with no program for winding

back emissions, and actively support fossil fuel exports and coal seam gas extraction.

Breaking the hold of these companies and rolling back their substantial contribution to global climate warming means radical and far-reaching change in Australia's ownership and control of resources.

Not only do the old polluting technologies have to be replaced, but the anarchic capitalist system of private ownership which sustains and protects them also needs to be

replaced. Socialism, based on collective ownership and participatory democracy, can rebuild the harmony between nature and humanity, and do it more efficiently and effectively.

It calls for determined struggle to expel imperialist domination of the economy, the military, politics and culture. Only widespread mass struggle of the people can force the necessary changes, not waiting and hoping for a 'progressive' parliament.

It calls for the ownership and control of Australia's critical infrastructure and resources to transfer to a revolutionary state of the working people which will lead the people in building a socialist society.

Socialism must ensure decentralised systems of participatory democracy where communities, townships, workplaces, etc. can have meaningful input into the policies and services that affect their lives; a real democracy not only monitoring the implementation of agreed policies but also participating in their delivery. This must involve the intensive rehabilitation of degraded lands, forests, and marine and river systems as well as the continual development and expansion of clean, renewable energy with both large-scale and community battery storage systems. ■

# ICOR Webinar

International Coordination of  
Revolutionary Parties and Organizations

## Forward with turning the environmental movement to a worldwide mass movement

Saturday, November 27

Lima, Peru - 8 am

Paris, France - 2 pm

Moscow, Russia - 4 pm

Delhi, India - 6:30 pm

Sydney, Australia - 12 pm

Zoom-Webinar-ID: 86979680783



# Call of the ICOR for the Environmental Day of Struggle – November 6

(16 September 2021)

**G**lobal and Regional environmental disasters call for basic system change, not catastrophic crisis management. On the International Day of Struggle to Save the Environment, 6 November, let us develop the environmental struggle! Let's promote a real society-changing environmental movement!

In 2021 we have seen an extreme development of the transition of ongoing environmental crisis into a global environmental disaster. Heat waves with record heat and forest fires, droughts on the one hand and record storms with floods and landslides on the other, have extreme consequences for the masses. The glaciers at North and South poles and Greenland ice is melting faster than ever before.

Hundreds of people have died in the floods all over the world, but for the first time to this extent also in Europe. Thousands have lost their homes, whole villages and districts have been razed to the ground.

**Heat waves in North America, the Mediterranean and Asia are killing people, causing forest fires and droughts.**

The alternation of extreme heat and drought and extreme storms accelerates erosion, destroys valuable arable land and thus the livelihood of farmers and ultimately the food basis of humanity.

As a consequence of this crisis - following the break out of the SARS virus and the MERS - the more serious Covid19 pandemic is creating havoc at global level, with the threats of more disastrous viruses in future, threatening the existence of humanity on the earth.

We are experiencing extreme events worldwide this year in the wake of the looming climate catastrophe. This is not a one-off "event of the century", but an indication that the transition to a global environmental catastrophe is progressing. The international supermonopolies are the main perpetrators of this development. Important tipping points have already been passed and thus a qualitative leap towards ecological catastrophe has been initiated. Like all previous agreements the Paris Agreement has also definitely failed. The so-called "climate neutrality" is a perverse commerce of rights to pollute.

Just as ruthlessly as the international monopolies are shifting the burdens of the world economic and financial crisis onto the working class, the broad masses and national budgets, they are also shifting the burdens of the global environmental crisis. The refusal of the rulers to solve this pressing problem for the whole human life is turning more and more people against capitalism. "System change - not climate change!" became the slogan of the Fridays for Future movement. But in order to get a real perspective, it has to be clarified that this system change can only consist in overcoming imperialism in a revolutionary way and building an alternative path of sustainable, egalitarian development with all powers to the people which many ICOR organizations associate with achieving socialism by struggle world wide. This is why there are attempts to exclude revolutionary forces from the environmental movement with anti-communist orientation. Only a socialist society can restore the unity of humanity and nature in a sustainable way!

The most advanced struggles often develop where workers' and environmental struggles combine. In Latin America broad masses of the population are uniting in the struggle against privatization of water resources, of sewage systems, of drinking water and against its pollution. In Colombia the union of the struggle of the miners of El Cerrejón against layoffs with the struggle of the indigenous people against the environmental destruction caused by open-pit mining were important struggles. There are similar examples at global level.

Consciously promoting this unity is the task of the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement. ICOR has worked systematically on this since its foundation in 2010. The ICOR will also discuss how the ICOR and its member organizations will further develop the worldwide struggle against the threatening global environmental catastrophe. This will be an important impulse for the further development of the environmental movement as a whole.

**Forward with turning the environmental movement to a worldwide mass movement!**

**Forward with the unity of the workers' and environmental movements!**

**Forward with the ICOR!**

**Forward with building socialism all over the world, which only opens the path of sustainable, egalitarian development in the unity of humanity and nature!**

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 31 other organisations around the world.