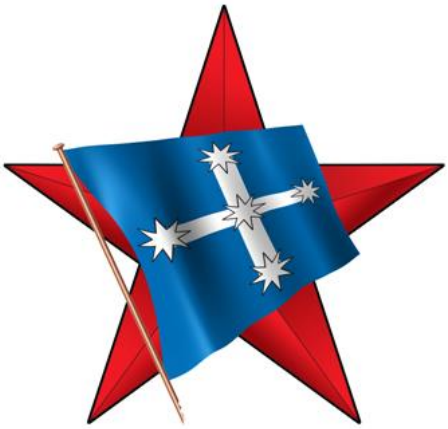
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General Program of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)



Adopted at the 15th Congress, June 2019

The general program of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) sets out the Party's ideological standpoint, basic aims, analysis and revolutionary strategy.

1. Our Party

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) strives to be the revolutionary party of the Australian working class.

The Party arises from the struggles of the Australian people, and aims to embody the needs and hopes of the working class. It is guided by Marxism-Leninism, the scientific theory of the revolutionary proletariat. Using this theory, it endeavours to examine Australia and world reality. Its aim is to fundamentally change that reality through a socialist revolution in accordance with the material conditions and existing contradictions of society as revealed by scientific Marxist analysis.

The Party exists to assist the working class to lead the Australian people in their day to day struggles and toward revolution. Only the united masses can overthrow the imperialist ruling class. Only they can create a system which serves the people.

2. Marxist Philosophy and Ideology

Marxist philosophy shows that the material world is primary. Ideas and consciousness are the reflection of this objective reality. But everyone's thinking is shaped by their material conditions, their actions and the class to which they belong. In time this general outlook on life becomes a system of thinking, an ideology, which in turn influences their actions. A person's position in the class relations of production generally shapes their class consciousness and ideological outlook.

However, no matter what an individual worker or group of workers may think, the real interests of the working class are only served by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. This includes the important theoretical and practical contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong. Because we are all affected by capitalist ideas, most workers are not yet fully aware of this.

Marxism is a guide to action, based on practice. It recognises all things in nature and society are constantly changing, coming into being and passing away. It recognises that

contradiction (unity and struggle between opposites) is present in the process of development of all things. As Marxists, we seek to understand the contradictions in Australia and the world and use that knowledge to resolve problems in society. This approach is fundamental to Marxist philosophy, which is called dialectical materialism. This philosophy openly stands at the service of the working class. It emphasises that theory grows out of practice and in turn helps guide and shape practice.

3. Colonisation and First People's Self-Determination

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) recognises that Australia is built on the violent dispossession, oppression, and exploitation of First Peoples by British colonialism. For 150 years after 1788, a guerrilla war raged in every new area where settlement was attempted. Resistance, both then and now, takes many forms.

For tens of thousands of years, First Peoples lived according to their Law. This Law and their custom, values, belief and practices have underpinned their survival and continue to do so in the face of attacks by multinational corporations.

The tap root of invasion is based on four principles, asserted to this day. It says to First Peoples:

"You are not who you say you are."
"You don't belong here."
"This is not your land."
"You must be like us."

For First Peoples, decolonisation reaffirms who they are and where they belong. It places them in their Country. It affirms their identity.
Living within a settler colonial system, we share in the fruits of colonial dispossession, we too need to decolonise our minds and actions.
Our Party strives to respectfully listen to and work with the First Peoples of this continent and its islands. They have much to teach us. They are the Peoples who have suffered most from colonialism, past and present. Just as the working class is an indispensable ally in their struggles for decolonisation, First Peoples are indispensable allies of the working class in the fight for a society free of oppression and exploitation.

We acknowledge that First Peoples have never ceded sovereignty over their lands, and that colonial oppression and attempted dispossession everywhere occurred through force and violence, or the threat of force and violence. Resistance to that force and violence is the inalienable right of First Peoples.

Sovereignty comes out of their Law and is held in their Country. It is the heart of First Peoples' struggles.

Sovereignty means First Peoples' control over their affairs.

We support the right of First Peoples to actively assert their sovereignty, choosing their own strategies, tactics and demands.

4. Capitalism

Australia is a capitalist society characterised by production for profit.

Profit is derived from the unique quality of human labour power to produce value. Workers' labour power is a commodity purchased on the market by capitalists. In exchange workers receive a wage sufficient to cover the cost of maintenance of the worker and their family. Set to work in a process of production, the worker's labour power produces more value than the worker receives as payment for working. This extra value, which the worker produces but is not paid for, is called surplus value and is the source of profit when the commodity is sold. Capitalists can exploit us without stealing from us. How is that possible? In a simplified model, Marx assumes capitalists pay us in full for all the costs we meet in reproducing the only commodity that our class has left to sell them. That commodity is our capacity to add value.

Surplus value was identified by Marx in his massive three-volume study "Capital". By investigating numerous real-life situations, he showed that the way in which a worker receives a wage conceals his/her exploitation. A worker appears to get a wage for a whole day's work. In fact, only a part of the day's work is paid for – enough to cover the worker's basic needs. The worker spends the remaining hours of the work day adding value to the commodities being produced without pay. The wage may be $100 per day. If the worker creates that much value in half a day and then adds another $100 in value during the other half of the day, then that second amount is a surplus value and the worker is not paid for it. Thus, Marx exploded the myth that there could ever be a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay" so long as capitalism existed. The nature of capitalist exploitation, made invisible by the method of seeming to pay a wage for a whole day's work, was revealed in the discovery of surplus value. There is no such thing as "a fair wage" under capitalism. Even if workers are paid high wages, they are still exploited by the capitalists who obtain profit from the surplus value that these workers produce.

Another feature of capitalism that became more obvious as it grew and developed was that production is socialised. This means many different workers in society are involved in the production of any one particular product or service. On the other hand, the benefits and profits of that production do not go to the workers, but to the numerically small but powerful capitalist class which privately owns the means of production. This contradiction between socialised production and the private ownership of the means of production is the fundamental contradiction in capitalism.

Another major contradiction is between highly organised workplaces designed to increase productivity, and the anarchic, unplanned and competitive nature of the market in which those commodities are sold.

These and other contradictions within the system of capitalist production lead to the inevitable cycles of boom and bust, overproduction and periodical crises that characterise capitalism.

The extraordinary advances of technology over the recent period does not alter fundamental social laws. On the contrary, it sharpens those fundamental laws.

These economic and social conditions and contradictions of capitalism impel people to resist, organise and create conditions which give rise to the revolutionary Communist Party of the working class.

The Communist Party strives to guide the working class in its revolutionary and historical role to end capitalist exploitation and establish socialism. This can only be done by depriving capitalists of the right to private ownership of the means of production.

5. Socialism and Communism

Under socialism, the major means of production and major industries will be socially owned. This includes the big factories, mines, corporate farms, construction projects, plus the banks and other financial corporations which fund them. This social ownership is the foundation upon which the new system of socialism will rest. Surplus value will belong to the whole of society. Planning will end over-production, crises and market anarchy. Workers will replace capitalists as the ruling class. These are the goals of socialism which we seek to achieve through a revolution in Australia led by the working class.

The period of socialism will continue for a long time. It will be a transitional society between capitalism and our ultimate goal – the classless and stateless society of communism.

After the revolution classes will still exist. Class struggle will continue during the entire period of socialism. So, a new revolutionary state apparatus run by and for the working class is necessary. It will prevent the former exploiting class and foreign imperialists from destroying the newly-established socialist system. It will prevent a new bourgeois class from arising. The working class state will resist all attempts at counter-revolution and sabotage. It will resist any armed attacks or the promotion of capitalist ideas that undermine the achievements of socialism or encourage the reinstatement of capitalist relations of production.

The Marxist term describing this socialist period is the "dictatorship of the proletariat". It is not a dictatorship over the broad ranks of the people; rather, it is a dictatorship by them over the hostile class forces. Power, once gained by the working class, must be defended and maintained. Just as the bourgeoisie used coercive state power to keep the workers from revolutionary agitation, so the workers must use a coercive state power to keep the overthrown capitalist ruling class from counter-revolutionary agitation.

This coercive state apparatus will not be required when communism is eventually achieved.

6. Imperialism

We live in the era of imperialism. Imperialism is the stage of capitalism when monopolies and finance capital (i.e. bank and industrial capital merged) dominate; when the export of capital rather than the export of commodities is most important; when the world's resources, markets, government assets, and territories have been divided among big banks, financial institutions and multinational corporations and when there are no longer any new territories to be seized without imperialist conflict.

The Australian people have achieved an important measure of formal independence; however, it is still limited. The US replaced Britain as the dominant imperialism in Australia after World War Two. The nation as a whole is trapped in a very powerful net of economic, political, military, diplomatic and cultural dependency. It is dominated by imperialism, primarily US imperialism. Australians must break free of capitalism and imperialism to gain genuine and lasting independence.

Imperialism concentrates the nation's wealth in the hands of a small number of monopolies, most of them foreign. They are driven by fierce capitalist competition to maximise profit. As a result, millions of ordinary Australians suffer intensified exploitation, growing debt and insecurity, greater costs of living, and increased repression and discrimination. Australia's natural wealth and heritage are looted for monopoly profit. Massive amounts of profit are shifted out of the country. The resulting struggles against this foreign imperialist domination at the heart of Australian capitalism are objectively struggles toward Australian independence and socialism, although the participants in many cases may not realise it.

Imperialism drags Australia into the vortex of rivalry between different imperialist powers and groupings. While US imperialism is currently the strongest global power, there are growing contradictions between it and other imperialisms, including European, Russian and Chinese. These contradictions and rivalries create constant international instability and wars of aggression. Imperialist expansionism and rivalry amongst the imperialist powers is the root cause of local and regional conflicts and wars, and the growing threat of a third World War.

Internationally, people's movements for peace, independence and opposition to US military bases and US wars of aggression, are growing stronger.

The US-Australia military "alliance" embodies the dominance of US imperialism over Australia and its subservient ruling class. The US-Australia military alliance ties Australia into US global imperialist agendas and wars of aggression. It locks Australia into the US military-industrial complex. The Party works in the people's movement opposing imperialist military domination of Australia and fights with the people to end the US military alliance. It struggles for genuine independence from any big power domination and control of Australia.

7. Our Revolutionary Strategy

The revolutionary strategy of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) is the continuing struggle for socialism through anti-imperialist revolution. This strategy in the struggle for socialism is based in the concrete conditions of Australian domination by imperialism. The present struggle to end capitalism and advance to socialism in Australia is the struggle for revolutionary independence from US imperialism, which currently dominates and controls the Australian nation state. This struggle can only be won through the organisation and mobilisation of a powerful anti-imperialist people's movement led by the working class. Through this struggle the foundations for socialism, and the eventual move towards communism, are laid.

Success in this anti-imperialist independence struggle will see the assets of the foreign imperialists and their local collaborators, which constitute the core of Australian capitalism, seized and pressed into service for the benefit of the majority of Australia's working class and the people. The expropriation of these assets imparts a predominately socialist character to this stage, and it can only be achieved under working class leadership exercised through new revolutionary working class organs of state power. This anti-imperialist struggle of Australia's socialist revolution will empower the working people through the establishment and expansion of people's own democratic mass organisations and structures based on participatory democracy.

The deepening of the socialist revolution and its extension to all economic sectors in which private capital operates constitutes the achievement of socialism. Independence and socialism are mutually dependent throughout the continuing revolutionary socialist strategy.

8. Australia's Revolution and Internationalism

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) views the struggle for revolution in Australia as part of the international struggle against imperialism and for socialism.

The Party supports the broad masses of people around the world fighting back against imperialism which exploits and keeps the people oppressed. We learn from and support the right of all nations to self-determination, and the efforts to build revolutionary working class movements in countries around the world.

The Party recognises that the best way to assist the international working class and the oppressed people of the world is to overthrow imperialism and establish socialism by building a strong anti-imperialist and revolutionary movement here in Australia. This is the key task we set ourselves to fulfil our internationalist responsibility.

No country exists in isolation from other countries. An independent, socialist Australia led by the working class will determine the need for and nature of economic, political and cultural relations with other countries based on respect for national sovereignty and mutual benefit.

9. State and Revolution

To maintain and protect the colonial dispossession of First Peoples and the imperialist domination of Australia, a powerful state machine has emerged. It consists of the bureaucracy, parliaments, police, courts, gaols, armed forces, and intelligence agencies. It creates illusions that it stands independently over Australian society. In reality, it exists to uphold ruling class interests and capitalist relations of production. Parliamentary "democracy", with its limited formal rights, operates within this context. No matter how "democratic" the state may appear, in the final analysis, it is always the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

While such rights have positive aspects, the central feature of the capitalist state is its repressive, violent and deceptive character. Without it, the capitalist ruling class could not

maintain its power. Australia’ s ruling class uses the mass media, education system, culture, etc., to push a system of ideas which disguises imperialist domination and exploitation. It presents the current system as inevitable.

Capitalist class rule compels the erosion of democratic rights and more open repression, particularly in periods of deep economic difficulties, social unrest and working class resistance. There is always a danger that Australia's ruling class will dump its democratic mask and rule through systematic, open, ruthless violence - fascism.

In the face of this likely ruthless and violent suppression by the capitalist state machine, the people must be prepared for all means of struggle. The imperialist ruling class and its local collaborators will never voluntarily give up their power to exploit the working class and oppress the people. History shows that the working class must organise and be prepared to defend itself against the armed force of the capitalist state.

The Party must be able to function under any circumstances and continue its work through rapid changes of conditions. Full attention must be paid to the hostile activities of the state.

10. Methods of Party Work

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) places great importance on mass work. This means immersing ourselves among the masses. It means listening to and learning from the people. It means active involvement in people’ s struggles. Only by having deep connections with the people and their struggles is it possible to understand and respect their level of political consciousness, how they think and feel. Only mass work allows us to fully understand concrete conditions.

Communists bring their experiences and lessons from people’ s struggles to the Party. Collectively, the Communist Party applies the tools of Marxism-Leninism in its examination of numerous struggles and people’ s concrete experiences and level of consciousness. This assists the Party to assess the overall objective conditions and develop strategies and tactics that advance the interests of working people. When correctly carried out, mass work allows us to gain the trust and respect of the people and consult with them. In turn, it allows us to provide leadership to the people and their struggles, and step-by-step raise revolutionary consciousness among them.
Mass work is central to all social investigation and class analysis of objective conditions by the Party. This is a key task for charting the revolutionary road to an independent and socialist Australia.

Mass work and social investigation are the bedrock of the Party’ s ideology, political work and organisation. It is the method through which the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) continues to develop revolutionary theory and practice in Australian conditions.

11. Building unity of the people

The ruling class works systematically and with great skill to divide the progressive and

revolutionary forces of the people. Our Party seeks to inspire unity in all sections of society against imperialism and its Australian collaborators.

The working class movement was born simultaneously in cities and rural areas before Australia was declared a nation. Many workers still live in rural and regional areas which lack many services available in major cities. Basics like food and fuel are more expensive.

Remote areas are home to significant numbers of First Peoples living in Country, and despite demonstrated better outcomes in health and education than those in some regional towns, they have been systematically driven into regional towns to make exploitation of mineral or gas resources from their lands available to multinational resource companies.

Working farmers are important allies of the working class, but too often capitalist domination has meant that their livelihoods have been sacrificed to provide cheap food to cities through the major supermarket chains. Like workers, they labour increasingly long hours. They are squeezed by high overheads and low prices for products and by the rise of corporate-owned industrial-scale farms.

Small business people and subcontractors are squeezed by imperialism and are beset with regulations, costs and insecure income streams. Many, like subcontractors, are simply workers in disguise to whom corporations outsource costs and risks.

These are just some of the groups which the ruling class seek to win to their side. But the long-term real interests of the people are diametrically opposed to those of the ruling class.

Currently, unity in struggle is transitory and often based around important single issues, including that between First Peoples and farmers opposed to fracking on their lands. The Party actively organises to create the widest possible and most deeply rooted people’s movement against the ruling class.

12. Women and capitalism

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) fights alongside working women in the struggles for economic and social equality, respect and an end to the violence, abuse and exploitation of women.

We are inspired and pay our respects to the courageous First Peoples women in their long and resolute struggles for sovereignty of their communities, land and culture. We firmly support their fight against colonial oppression and dispossession.

We vigorously uphold equality and respect for women in the Party and in the people’s struggles. We do not tolerate any form of discrimination, sexism and gender inequality, abuse and violence against women.

The exploitation and oppression of women came into being with the emergence of private property and the division of society into two main classes thousands of years ago. The patriarchy of present class society predates capitalism and goes back to slavery and feudalism. The development of the capitalist economy is based on private ownership of the

means of production that reduces everything to a commodity to be bought and sold. The patriarchy of capitalist economy and society generally cast women as inferior with fewer rights and the private property of men with whom they enter a marriage or partnership relationship. Domestic violence against women and children flows from this patriarchal ideology.

Capitalism exploits and oppresses working women at work and in social relations. The capitalist class as a whole exploits and benefits from paid and unpaid family work done mostly by women at home. Without this work, the labour power of current and new generations of workers necessary for the survival of capitalism could not be created or maintained. Capitalism relies on the continuing dominance of men for the double exploitation and oppression of women.

For the overwhelming majority of working women exploitation at work is multiplied by the added responsibility as main carers of families, children, the elderly, the sick and family members with disabilities – with a pittance or no state support. Capitalist relations of production create a culture that commercialises and commodifies women as objects and possessions for sexual gratification and exploitation for profit.

Many of the inequities and injustices of capitalism are visited more frequently and more intensively upon women of the working class than on men. Economic and social inequality, abuse and violence against women and children flows from the exploitative capitalist system and its culture.

In over 120 years of struggle since achieving the right to vote in Australia, women have achieved some important social and legislative improvements. But the continuing exploitation, discrimination, abuse and the burdens and stresses facing working women at work and at home are largely unchanged.

Capitalism has entrusted a small handful of privileged women, alongside the much larger number of privileged men, to wield the powers of capital and imperialism against the oppressed and exploited.

The oppression, inequality, discrimination and abuse of women are embedded in the class exploitation of capitalism and imperialism.

The double exploitation, inequality, abuse and violence against women cannot be eradicated under capitalism. Socialism will create the necessary conditions for women to achieve their full potential, economic independence, equality and respect in all sectors of society. In a socialist system, working women will be empowered to run the society as equals to men for the benefit of all working people.

13. Youth

The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) readily acknowledges the country’ s youth as a crucial element in the struggle for socialism and against imperialist hegemony. The Party recognises the vast potential of the country’ s youth as a powerful engine of social progress.

We must aim to be a guiding force in the education and mobilisation of the youth as agents of revolutionary change, promoting comprehensive examination of Australian conditions, literacy in class analysis, and working among the country' s youth in service of these ends.

As the rights of workers are made subject to increasing violation, funds to vital social services are cut, and the prospect of affordable housing declines in a market dominated by multinational development firms, the possibility of secure employment, comfortable retirement and "the Australian dream" of home ownership fade from view for many of the country' s youth. Meanwhile, environmental catastrophe and global war loom menacingly on the horizon. Capitalism offers a meagre lot to a generation already disillusioned by its numerous pitfalls of cyclical crises, unemployment, mounting debt and the horrors of imperialist war, with many turning to damaging behaviours, to self-harm and suicide, or succumbing to the lure of reactionary ideology. These problems are not exclusive to young people but particularly impact on this age group. As conditions under capitalism deteriorate and social safeguards are eroded, young people will be more at risk than ever before and will be more open to embracing the revolutionary cause.

The Party seeks to learn from young people, especially those young First Peoples who are embracing and asserting their collective culture and language to build strength and resilience in the face of attacks. Young First Peoples suffer the most extreme attacks by the state, and carry the trauma of inter-generational disenfranchisement.

The Party has a significant role in tracing the origins of these extensive social problems to their foundations in the material conditions of Australian society, in concentrating the scattered and unsystematic ideas of the masses and integrating them into a cohesive Marxist analysis so as to provide clear direction to the struggles of the youth and working people.

Such an analysis is also critical in that it serves to counter and repel the harmful lies and incessant scapegoating touted by far-right fanatics and agents of reaction who seek to divide the working class.

The Party must aspire to channel the innate revolutionary fervour of the youth toward the establishment of the preconditions for the construction of a socialist society, toward the construction of a society which promises a life free of the ills of capitalism and wage-slavery, a life of co-operative perseverance toward the common good of all, infinitely more fulfilling and abundant than that which has gone before.

14. Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis

The only two sources of wealth are human labour power and nature. Capitalism attacks, devalues and destroys both. In the early stages of the 21st century, the damage to the environment as a result of capitalist plunder has reached potentially catastrophic proportions for humanity and the planet. Over ninety percent of the world' s climate scientists agree that human induced climate change and global warming are approaching the point of no return.

Fighting climate change is important to the working class. Renewable energy must replace fossil fuels, and sooner rather than later. Water must be a common good and not a tradeable commodity. Pollution and waste must be reduced and eliminated. The dangers in uranium mining and the problem of nuclear waste make nuclear energy unviable.

Biodiversity matters to the working class. The planet is facing an alarming rate of species extinctions. Habitats of other species must be rehabilitated and expanded. Research into the biology of other species must be ramped up in order to create programs for the restoration of their numbers.

The united struggle of the people can force short term advances under capitalism to reduce pollution, move to renewable energy and protect the environment.

However, capitalism and its current form imperialism have given rise to the irreversible destruction of the environment and global warming in particular. Imperialism is based on growth at all costs and puts profits before the needs of people and the environment. It must be overthrown and a socialist society established. Only this will make it possible for humans to be able to live in an environment that is sustainable long-term.

The Party and the working class must exercise leadership in protecting the environment and ensure that a socialist society works not to "conquer" nature, but to co-exist with it, restoring the balance between humanity and nature.

The First Peoples of this continent and its islands survived at least 60,000 years prior to invasion. They have the answers to restoring balance and must be listened to.

15. Membership

Diversity of the working class is a great strength. The Party welcomes that diversity in its own ranks. It fights for a society where mutual respect exists between all races and genders, where racism and gender inequalities are not tolerated, where gender identities and sexual preferences are respected. The Party upholds these standards amongst its membership.

Members of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) undertake disciplined and ongoing study of Marxism with the aim of developing revolutionary theory and practice in Australian conditions.

Members of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) accept a lifetime commitment to the welfare of the working class and the great cause of communism. They struggle to remould themselves without ego or individualism. They aim to serve the people and will put the people's interests before their own.