

ExxonMobil oil monopoly in Australia

by Alice M.

Australia's oil exploration, refining, processing, distribution, the import of Middle East crude oil and export of processed products are largely controlled by two global monopolies, ExxonMobil and Shell. The fortunes of Australia's manufacturing, petrochemical and transport industries and many others are dependent on these monopolies.

Recently, large volumes of unleaded petrol leaked from a 10 million litre storage tank at the ExxonMobil refinery at Altona (western suburbs in Melbourne). Luckily, refinery workers and fire fighters contained the leaked petrol in a concrete bunker around the storage tank. This incident again highlighted a long litany of safety breaches by the refinery that has exposed workers, the local community and the environment to oil spills, toxic emissions and pollutants into the atmosphere and local waterways.

For more than 30 years, local communities have campaigned to ensure the refinery operates safely. The refinery is 60 years old, one of the oldest in Australia. Whenever workers and local residents voice their concerns about safety breaches at the refinery, they are met with threats to relocate production overseas, and the loss of thousands of jobs. Workers and local communities are also held to ransom if they dared to demand that one of the wealthiest multinational corporations in the world invest in modernising the refinery to make it safe.

A recent letter in the local paper by a resident states, "...Australia needs its own oil refining industry. We have the skills, technology and expertise to operate a modern and safe oil refining industry which should be located away from major residential areas. ExxonMobil is one of the biggest and richest multinational corporations in the world. The huge profits it ships out of this country to its head office in the US could well be put into building Australia's own safe and modern oil refining industry."

Global plans to maximise profits

The multinational oil and petrochemical corporations constantly try to set up workers and communities against each other. They spread lies in the community that workers don't care about the safety of local communities and tell workers that local communities don't care about workers' jobs and just want to close down the industry

altogether.

In fact, the company threats are a smokescreen to cover up what's really going on behind the scenes in Australia's oil industry. ExxonMobil and Shell's worldwide plans are designed for what's best in maximising their global corporate profits. Their decisions do not take account of the needs and interests of people in the countries where their operations are based.

Two years ago the Geelong Shell refinery closed its lubricating oil plant, throwing many workers out of work.

Now ExxonMobil announced it would also close its lubricant plant in Yarraville (in Melbourne's west) over next 12 months, shifting all jobs to overseas plants and sacking more than 100 workers.

ExxonMobil's manager in Australia told Yarraville workers, "despite the improvements and efficiencies made in recent years, the Yarraville blend plant no longer has the scale or location to be competitive in the global/regional supply of lubricants." So now, Australia will not be producing lubricant oils, but depend totally on imports.

ExxonMobil and Shell want to cease their refinery operations in Australia because it would be more profitable for them to import refined oil, including other processed oil by-products, from their new, low cost and modern refineries in Asia.

Another reason is the peaking of oil reserves in Bass Strait (Victoria). ExxonMobil has the sole licence for exploration, operation and processing of crude oil deposits in Bass Strait. It has exported and made big profits

Our British Correspondent leaves a rich legacy

The world communist movement has lost a great fighter and thinker. Jack Shapiro, known over decades to Vanguard readers as "Our British Correspondent", died on January 29 at the age of 93. Jack was the Honorary Chairman of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and a much loved friend of our party.

Jack truly embodied what the word 'communist' means. He dedicated his entire life to the service of the ordinary people of the world. He knew that if they were led by a working class imbued with Marxism-Leninism, they were an unstoppable force. But he knew that this would not happen spontaneously, that without the guidance of communist parties, organised and steered in the particular struggles of their own countries, capitalism would continue to triumph.



from highly priced Bass Strait crude oil, which is in high demand in other countries for its cleanness compared to the cheaper, heavy crude it imports from the Middle East for refining.

Now the Bass Strait deposits are dwindling, after peaking in the late 1980s.

The petroleum and chemical industry is undergoing major restructuring in Australia, as a result of peak oil and increased monopolisation of productive capital globally.

The oil monopolies' plans to close down Australia's main oil refining and processing operations will impact heavily on the Australian chemical and manufacturing industries. Oil and its by-products are essential for the production of many chemicals used in the production of many manufactured goods. Without a domestic oil refining industry, Australia will become heavily dependent on the import of refined oil and chemical products. It will

make Australia even more exposed to imperialist domination and control, and dependent on the profiteering priorities of oil monopolies.

Nationalise the oil industry

A viable, sustainable, modern and clean oil processing industry is imperative for any developed industrial country. In Australia a nationalised oil industry run by workers is the only answer that will guarantee jobs, economic control, self-sufficiency and independence. Profits from the oil industry can then be ploughed not only into building and maintaining a modern and safe oil industry, but also used to research and develop alternative renewable energy technology and industries. Workers in the oil industry and their allies in local communities will unite in a common cause for cleaner, safer, and environmentally sustainable industries.



Jack, alongside his wife and comrade Marie, made an inestimable contribution to the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), through his numerous articles which were a model to other Vanguard contributors in their incisive and thorough analysis of the facts, and in his unwavering commitment to Marxism-Leninism as a

science which must be deeply studied and constantly tested against reality in order to be developed.

Comrade Ted Hill, the founding Chairman of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) formed in 1963, deeply respected and drew strength from Jack's sharp Marxist-Leninist analyses during their discussions on his visits to London.

The CPA (M-L) extends its deepest sympathy to his family and friends, and to the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist). Jack Shapiro will be long remembered for his great service to the Australian people. May his example inspire us all.

In solidarity,
Central Committee
Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)