

A Call for Peace – Truth Not War

18 March Melbourne Peace rally.

Talk by Shirley Winton (member of No AUKUS Victoria/AAAC and IPAN)

On behalf of Peace Roundtable Melbourne welcome everyone and thank you for coming on this scorching hot day. I would like to especially acknowledge the people who have travelled many hours from across Victoria to attend this important rally. They are from South West Regional Victoria, Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland, Castlemaine, Albury/Wodonga, and I'm sure there are others. Special thank you to Dean Yates, David McBride and Peter Whish-Wilson who flew from interstate to speak at this rally.

It is impossible to overstate the ongoing devastation that the US-led invasion of Iraq has inflicted on the people of that country. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other U.S. led wars across the world are a constant reminder to us that we must never give up on building and expanding the people's movement for peace and justice. We must unite, organise and mobilise in our hundreds of thousands to push back the new march to another US led war. This time in our region, and potentially a nuclear war.

Nuclear submarines and the AUKUS war pact are accelerating the march to war between U.S. and China with devastating consequences for the people and the environment in Asia-Pacific.

The US-led invasion of Iraq started as a big lie of weapons of "mass destruction". Today, 20 years later, the media and their masters in the weapons and fossil fuel corporations, are again carpet bombing us with lies, this time that AUKUS and nuclear submarines will defend Australia and prevent war in the region.

Nothing could be further from truth. AUKUS war pact and nuclear submarines are instruments of wars of aggression against other countries, not for the defence of Australia. They will not defend Australia, but on the contrary are making us a military target in the event of war breaking out between U.S. and China. Nuclear submarines, B52 bombers carrying nuclear weapons, US and UK war warships (more than likely carrying nuclear arms) will be based in Australian ports and across the country permanently. The U.S. is turning Australia into a US military base, a launching pad for US wars. It has nothing to do with defending Australia, but only to protect and promote America's

economic hegemony in Asia-Pacific. China's economic rise is threatening US global hegemony.

AUKUS, nuclear submarines and the Force Posture Agreement allows the US to turn Australia into its major military base, a proxy in a war with China.

The nuclear submarines that the Albanese government is buying at a cost of \$368 billion, snatched from people's hard earned taxes, will only speed up the war preparations and drag us into another devastating US-led war.

It is a blatant lie that \$368 billion for nuclear powered submarines will defend Australia and deter war. They're solely designed to increase attack capability not defence. The Australian government is marching lock in step with US preparing to provoke and start war with China.

It is incomprehensible that at a time of ongoing major crises in our chronically underfunded public health and education, rising homelessness, rents, the rising cost of housing for the majority, aged care, child care, social services, the sky rocketing cost of living: at a time of plunging wages and climate devastation, a so called progressive Labor government is throwing \$400 billion of people's taxes into helping to start a war on behalf of the U.S., throwing away the safety and security of people of Australia and the region. \$368 billion of people's taxes to prop up ailing US and UK economies, and fill the coffers of weapons and fossil fuel corporations with record profits.

\$368 billion to sacrifice the people and the environment in an unjust, horrific imperialist war.

And to top it off conscription is now being floated.

There is nothing new in any of this. In 1914 hundreds of thousands of Australian workers were marched off thousands of miles away to fight for our masters, the plundering British colonial empire, that colonised and slaughtered millions across the world. Little has changed today as Australian governments continue to sacrifice the people and national independence, this time to the US.

Paul Keating said the Australian government does not have a foreign policy. What he really means is that Australia's foreign policy is mimicking and indistinguishable from US foreign policy. Australia urgently needs an independent and peaceful foreign policy that is not tied and subservient to any super power's interests; not the US, not Britain, not China.

The same forces that cooked up the US led invasion of Iraq have not gone away, they continue to push the world into another war, this time in our region. The weapons corporations US Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, the British BAE, and the fossil fuel monopolies Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell are the main architects and profiteers from these wars. They make \$trillions in profit from massive destruction, death and suffering by the people and environmental devastation.

Soldiers, workers, the ordinary people and our environment pay a heavy price with lives, health, livelihood and destroyed environment. We are the casualties and collateral damage of big powers' rivalries and imperialist wars.

And as long as these monopolies continue to stride the world, imperialist wars with all their devastation will continue to be inflicted on the people and the environment.

And that is why we must build a long term and powerful people's mass movement for peace, for justice, for clean and safe environment. As long as the imperial forces continue to push for war the people must never give up on building and strengthening our united forces for peace and justice.

It is only powerful grass roots people's movements that can secure peace, justice and protect the environment.

This morning we received a message from a Will Faila, whom I don't know. It reads:

Unfortunately, I am a bit old to march on a hot day but I would like to thank those who are. Australia now has made a terrible mistake to join with the war mongering US establishment.

Please help to get the message out there how terrible it will be if we keep on being such a stupid nation who is keen on getting into another useless war with the US.