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Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 666 | September 2024 | socialist.ca

End Trudeau's attacks on workers

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE



Teamsters rail workers are fighting for the right to strike while the anti-union Liberals force binding arbitration. Story on page 2.

Stop the bosses' assault on collective bargaining

by: Ritch Whyman

Rail workers are fighting against the billionaire rail barons in Canada.

As of 12:01 midnight, Thursday, August 22 nearly 10,000 engineers, conductors and yard workers were locked out at CN and CPKC (formerly Canadian Pacific) across the country.

The bosses moved quickly and are forcing binding arbitration on the workers. Picket lines have been forced to shut down.

This is a massive attack on workers rights. Every union and worker should defend and support the workers and oppose attempts by the employers and politicians – both Liberal and Tory to strip these workers of their democratic right to strike for better safety conditions and wages.

If the bosses are able to get away with this it will mean more anti-union measures to shut down the widespread anger at the growing gap between workers and the billionaires.

Recently Air Canada pilots voted overwhelmingly to strike. There are already statements that the bosses there will also try and stop any work stoppage.

Rail workers contract

The workers have been without a contract since December 2023 as CN and CPKC have been demanding concessions and refusing to negotiate in a serious way.

Initially the union took a strike vote on May 1 after several rounds of meetings where the employers refused to budge on their demands for concessions which put the workers in a legal strike position for May 22.

Trudeau's anti-worker Minister of Labour, Seamus (scabby) O'Regan invoked a section of the federal labour code to try and thwart the strike days before May 22. Using the notion presented by the Propane industry bosses that any strike could have an effect on public safety by preventing the delivery of critical supplies. Something that neither CN nor CPKC raised, and the union disputed as interfering in their right to strike.

This move by the strike-breaking Liberals sought to prevent a strike and bully the union into acceding to management's demands by delaying the possibility of strike by several months. This strategy of the employers and their minions in the Trudeau government failed to work.

Importantly, the default of Liberals and Tories to break transportation strikes – as they did at the BC and Montreal ports by forcing arbitration - was smashed by the successful strike of the small group of WestJet mechanics in early June this year.

Their determined defence of the right to strike and subsequent victory emboldened any worker

paying attention and led to the hasty demise of O'Regan who stepped down shortly after his failed attempt at strike breaking.

employees be forced to relocate for extended periods of time to cover for the deepening issue of labour shortages for these skilled positions

come after years of gutting safety and conniving with the Transportation "Safety" Board in eroding working conditions for

ensuring safer railroads, ensuring workers have quality work life balance and that critical time to rest isn't removed to reward shareholders with more money.

This is one of many major strikes that have occurred since Covid restrictions ended and inflation took off.

It is a strike that like the BC port workers, the Ontario construction strike of 2022 and the illegal walk out by Ontario school board workers, has the possibility of opening up bigger fights against the cost-of-living crisis that workers are continuing to face. It has the possibility to not only beat the rail bosses but open the ground for fights that push the profiteers and their politicians back.

Already the lobbyists and corporate PR clubs like the Business Council of Canada are demanding the government prevent a strike via back to work legislation. Trudeau's partner in crime Chrystia Freeland is calling for the Union to remain at the negotiating table. We know that once lines go Poilievre will shed his fake worker friendly stance and demand the government intervene, just like he did during the BC Port strike and his friends in the convoy movement did when they drove their truck through picket lines at the Regina Co-op refinery strike.

That the strike is both economical and political means every unionist, socialist and activist needs to head out to the picket lines to show support for striking TCRC members.

There is a mood across the country of anger at the rich and powerful who control monopolies like the rail barons. The mood that is disgusted with the Galen Westons and their ilk is the mood that can be won to back the workers and push back against the business narrative that the strike will cause inflation to return.

The labour movement should be arguing that the rail monopolies be brought under public control, that private capital shouldn't control the shipment of vital goods, that workers who ensured that the economy continued during Covid shouldn't have to sacrifice their (and our) safety and families to make CN and CPKC more money.

For the past 3 years the labour leadership has refused to knit together and build strikes beyond the immediate strikers. Too many strikes have been left on their own to fight it out rather than being built into a fight not just against an individual employer but against the bosses who have profited from the crisis we face.

And unfortunately, the NDP has continued to prop up the strike breaking Liberal government rather than use their resources to help support a workers fightback.

We need to rebuild rank and file power in our unions to challenge the status quo approach of the union leaders.



The Teamsters fighting for workers rights. Every trade unionist needs to show solidarity

Public safety and workers rights

These workers are organized in the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC).

TCRC's leadership has expressed deep frustration at the employer's demands to gut health and safety provisions at CPKC, by demanding the wholesale removal of hard-fought critical fatigue sections of the agreement. In essence they are demanding that crews be made to stay awake for longer periods and have refused to address serious shortages of rail traffic controllers.

CN management is demanding

and want to extend the working day.

Both railways have made billions annually over the past decades. Last year CN reported a whopping \$9.24 billion in profits and CPKC had revenues of \$3.5 billion in the first 3 months of 2024 alone.

CEO salaries expose how much money the rail monopolists are making on the backs of rail workers.

Rick Creel the CEO of CPKC took in \$20.1 million dollars in salary last year, while CN doled out \$14 million to its CEO Tracy Robinson.

These profits and fat cat salaries

workers and safety in communities and areas that the nearly 42, 000 KM of rail lines go through. In 2023 there were a reported 87 rail accidents involving 'dangerous goods'

Already this year there were 2 derailments within 2 days in BC, a derailment at a huge rail yard in the densely populated Scarborough neighborhood of Toronto. Since the Lac Megantic disaster the federal government has continued to allow rail companies to gut safety provisions.

The strike by engineers, conductors and yard crews is about



Air Canada pilots voted overwhelmingly to strike

Saskatchewan: will lacklustre NDP hand victory to Scott Moe?

by: Christine Wiercinski

On or before October 28, 2024 there will be a provincial election in Saskatchewan. After 17 years of Saskatchewan (Sask) Party rule, perhaps people in Saskatchewan have had enough.

The Sask Party was formed after the disastrous reign of Grant Devine and the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, which almost bankrupted the province. It was made up of both disillusioned conservatives and liberals. Suffice to say the Sask Party is just a regrouping of the Conservative Party.

The Sask Party under Scott Moe follows the Ford government in Ontario and the Smith government in Alberta in privatizing healthcare, denying trans rights, denying climate change and not giving a damn about the homeless, the poor and workers' rights and conditions.

According to recent data from Angus Reid, two issues stand above all others among Saskatchewan voters: the state of health care, and the high cost of living.

CUPE 5430, a healthcare union, has shown their wages have only increased by 14% while inflation has increased by 27% since 2018. In Saskatchewan, the cost of living for an individual per month is \$1097 without rent, and for a family of four it's \$3848 without rent.

Rent has increased from \$800 a month for a bachelor suite to about \$1500 in the same time period. For people on Social Assistance in 2018, a single person received only \$375 a month, excluding money for rent. In 2024 social assistance recipients were given a 3% increase to \$386.25. If you want more there is much paperwork to fill out and many people to see and convince

that you need the extra money.

Right now, healthcare workers, from housekeepers to doctors, are at the mercy of a computerized system called the Administrative Information Management System (AIMS) to get paid. It not only gets your pay wrong, it often does not pay you at all. So, recruitment to healthcare is dismal and definitely continuing the strain on healthcare workers due to staff shortages and a freeze on hiring until the problems with the system are fixed. These problems have been ongoing for six months since the AIMS system was reintroduced.

Sask Party Schmooze

This government spent a million dollars to schmooze Dubai businesses to invest or come to Saskatchewan. Nice holiday for the Premier and other cabinet ministers and staff! At the same time, they cannot guarantee monies to aid teachers to reduce class sizes and purchase extra resources for schools. They will not let the teachers have language in their contracts to ensure dollars won are kept and won't disappear after the election.

Food Banks are used by more and more people and this increase has been happening in large numbers since COVID. However, only recently has the government decided to give Saskatchewan Food Banks extra funding— \$1 million this August and another million in 2025-26 after the election. Hopefully it won't be like education funding where the monies disappeared after the Sask Party got re-elected.

They don't care about the homeless, who are predominantly Indigenous. In Saskatoon, 90%, in Regina, 79%, and in Prince Albert, 99%, of people experiencing homelessness are Indigenous.

There are very few well-run shelters. In Saskatoon, residents are in an uproar about a shelter that accommodates many inadequately without proper facilities that people can use. During the day people have to find places to be. Many wander the streets in the neighbourhoods. If a person has addiction problems, they are not even allowed into the shelter. They are left on the streets, vulnerable to weather or violence.

Community Support Workers and Fire Support Workers know of well-run shelters but there are not enough of them to meet the need. In a CBC interview, these workers expressed their disappointment, not understanding why financial resources are not being directed to this kind of shelter. One in particular offers resources and support to individuals in health and mental

fund safe injection sites. Their answer is to give more funding to the police to only build rehab centres that people have agreed to go to, with no thought of how they will integrate back into the community.

Community workers also suggest that a few more shelters would save much money instead of only putting "bandages" on the problems. People experiencing homelessness could find places to live and regain dignity in their lives with adequate funding of good shelters.

More cops and scapegoating

The other item Sask Party spends money on is a separate police force from the RCMP and local police. So there will be a third police force that is entirely run by the government of Saskatchewan. The NDP has fought this on the grounds there should

before students have a right to use their preferred pronouns. They can't change them unless their parents are consulted. Students put up a valiant fight, but the legislation went through. However, at the Pride Parade Sask Party officials were not allowed to participate because of their draconian legislation.

On climate change, there really isn't much done. Drilling for more oil and gas is one of their answers. Adding small nuclear reactors in communities is another answer.

However, the NDP is not seen to be a viable solution to help the homeless or to improve healthcare and education. When they speak, they often don't have solutions to the problems. They reiterate the problems but are only interested in solutions that speak to the middle class, such as lowering gas prices or interest rates.

They don't stand firmly with the working class, demanding better conditions and cost of living indexes. No talk about what they would do for the homeless, Indigenous communities, and people with multiple health problems.

This explains why many see little hope in an NDP government. For those who aren't aligned to any party this may mean people not bothering to vote, feeling that having an NDP government in power will make little difference.

This absence of a credible alternative to the left could mean forces further to the right capture the discontent—namely, the far-right Saskatchewan United party.

Not only might the lacklustre NDP hand over another victory to the vicious politicians of the Saskatchewan Party—their failure to offer a serious alternative could push the political spectrum even further to the right.



Saskatchewan teachers are on the front link against Scott Moe

health. If there were more shelters like this one, there would be less strain on hospitals, businesses and neighbourhoods, and people would get the help they need.

The government also does not

have been more consultation with the people of Saskatchewan about the creation of a new police force.

On gender and trans rights, this government brought in legislation that teachers have to consult parents

LCBO workers show it's right to strike

by: Pam Johnson

LCBO workers, members of OPSEU, ratified a new contract with the LCBO on July 21 after an historic two-week strike. The workers pushed back on the Ford government's agenda to bust their union and completely privatize the LCBO.

Picket lines around the province were solid and the strike got huge support from the community and the labour movement. Both public and private sector union members helped shut down retail and warehouse operations foiling Ford's promise to get LCBO products to retailers, despite the strike.

The strike exposed the privatization agenda of the Ford government. It ignited a public debate about why it matters to save the LCBO—which brings in \$2.5 billion in revenue to Ontario's coffers a year—and again exposed Ford's connections with the billionaires. It compounded public

anger and frustration at a Ford government that is actively handing over public assets to his corporate buddies.

The mood was upbeat at the final picket line shift as people awaited the results of the ratification vote. Strikers were feeling very positive about the experience of the strike, the camara-

derie on the lines, the solidarity from the public, and standing up to Ford.

But, they also recognize the shortfalls of the deal. Wages increases of 8% over three years for example, are better than what the employer initially offered, but still below inflation. 'This is what we felt we could get' was a

comment by many people on the line.

LCBO workers pushed back what they believed to be an existential threat to the LCBO and their livelihoods, an important win. But, Ford, was able to hive off one section of products, premixed cocktails, that had been exclusively handled by the

LCBO for the big grocery wholesalers and retailers.

Under the terms of the early end of the large brewers' Beer Store monopoly, they will be able to get a wholesaler discount of 10% on LCBO products, which will undercut the LCBO retail stores, but also the mom and pop stores and independent grocers who won't be able to buy wholesale. So Ford's government has been slowed down but not stopped in its plan to privatize this public asset for the benefit of the big grocery oligarchs.

The lesson is that it is absolutely right for the workers to use the strike weapon to try and save decent jobs and public services. Yet there was the potential for much more if the union leaders and the OFL could unite strikes to create a larger front against the bosses.

As Ford continues to attack workers and the public sector, uniting the fightback will be of utmost importance in the days ahead.



Unifor and Scabby the Rat join the picket line!

Fighting the far right: What can we learn from the French elections?

by: Chantal Sundaram

The political centre is collapsing. The left in France recently pulled victory from the jaws of defeat against the far-right National Rally (RN) despite huge pressure for the left to strategically support the discredited centre of the “macronie.”

As we go to press, Macron is refusing to recognize the vote result and has rejected the Front Populaire choice for Prime Minister. The left are calling for mass movements to stop Macron from stealing the victory.

Either way, the French election is instructive for those fighting to push the far-right back in Canada and around the world.

The far-right

Some claim the RN is a “new workers party” because it challenges the neo-liberal, pro-boss politics of Macron. Others see it as just another capitalist party. In reality, it is a party based in the middle class that is trying to build a mass audience among workers by redirecting legitimate anger over the status quo towards the politics of hate. And it has grown from 50,000 to 100,000 members this year.

Challenge from the French Left

The RN were successfully challenged by a coalition of the left, the Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP, named after the “Popular Front” that confronted fascist forces in France in the 30s).

This New Popular Front alliance brought together NDP-type socialists, Greens, Communists and France Insoumise (France Unbowed), the anti-neo-liberal party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The pressure for the coalition came mainly from below, with youth, immigrants and workers demanding their leaders come together to fight the RN.

From the start the alliance was based on unity around the vote. This meant leaving aside the most important struggles outside of elections that can really challenge the growth of the far right. It reflected the desperation to find a short-term solution at the ballot box, since the RN was largely projected to win.

In the lead up to the second round of voting the NFP withdrew from contested ridings where they were behind the centre “macronists,” in order to concentrate the anti-RN vote. This was many more races than the centre “macronists” were willing to cede to the left: they did not heed the same call to withdraw in favour of the NFP to defeat RN candidates. The NFP ceded 29% of races while the “macronie” only ceded 24%. After a second round of voting, it was the NFP that carried the day with the largest share of seats.

Any electoral pact around strategic voting between the left and centre only gave the RN ammunition to paint the left as allies of Macron and therefore the fascist right as the only alternative for real change to the status quo. In many run-offs, the call to vote for the centre instead of the left to stop the right resulted in a record local vote for the fascists.

In the US, Bernie Sanders echoes

the same wrong conclusion that will cripple the fight against Trump: “It’s time to learn a lesson from the progressive and centrist forces in France” who “despite profound political differences came together to soundly defeat right wing extremism.”

By “coming together” and withdrawing their candidates the NFP lined up behind politicians who support assaults on both workers and migrants, and have undercut the fight against the ongoing fascist threat in the long term.

A gamble by the left

In the second round of voting, in less than 48 hours, 224 candidates withdrew from the second vote, with 306 three-way run-offs projected (out of 577 seats). The NFP won 180 seats, followed by the Macronists at 168. The fascist RN won only 143 seats. However, the RN nearly doubled the 88 MPs they had in the previous assembly.

This was a dangerous gamble by the NFP. The fact they won nonetheless is a huge vindication of the movements on the ground, which in the lead-up to the two rounds of voting were able to vastly outnumber any RN rallies and also mobilize vast numbers in the streets against attacks on immigrants, women, and trans people. This was the “Popular Front” from below, and these mobilizations, not the electoral manoeuvres are really the ones who pulled victory from the jaws of defeat.

The Macron government had already been rocked by protest in France. They presided over the raising of the state pension age from 62 to 64, following massive and multiple protests in early 2023, with fires set across Paris. But despite the incredible movement of millions to defend

unable to mobilize their supporters of far-right hate in the street on the same scale as their opponents, and so while the growth in the fascist vote should not be underestimated, their inability to out-mobilize the left must be maintained.

A vote can be soft support for the far right, not a hardened allegiance to their full politics of organized violence against progressive values. The real battle is won outside of elections. And that battle can only be won on the basis of a direct confrontation with what is fuelling the right and far right, whether attacks on trans people or immigrants.

So far the NFP’s propaganda has been all about the RN’s pro-boss and anti-worker policies, but has shied away from confronting the racism that is really allowing them to grow. There are differences within the alliance, with Mélenchon and “France Unbowed” supporting Palestine resistance, but with the politics of the NDP-like Socialist Party predominating, which has fuelled arguments to put aside “divisive” issues like Palestine and opposition to genocide.

Between the two votes, The Marche des Solidarités anti-racist group said: “We need a response that goes beyond petitions and calls for votes. What we need is unity against racism and fascism, unity between anti-racists, those who fight for Palestine and against French colonialism in New Caledonia, between those who rose up a year ago against police violence and the millions of workers who fought against the attack on pensions. To drive the fascists out of our neighbourhoods, do not let them prosper in this breeding ground of despair and atomisation created by the powerful. Let’s build what blocks the way to

goating solutions of the right.

The centre and right work together

The Macron government is connected with the anti-immigrant border closure policies that legitimize fascist ideas. In the two weeks leading up to the election, Macron spent most of his time not attacking the RN, but denouncing the New Popular Front’s program as “totally immigrationist”. The same day he tried to attract transphobes by commenting that some NPF policies were “grotesque, like the fact that you’ll be able to just go down to the town hall and change your sex.”

There is evidence that the Macron entourage was hob-nobbing with the RN leadership in the lead-up to the elections. Now, the “macronie” are calling for everyone to rally around them to maintain a balance of power in the new government against the left. So the bait and trap that was set for the left before the election continues.

There is no guarantee that some or all of Macron’s coalition wouldn’t join a government with the RN to maintain some power. But whether or not they do, they were never an ally to the left, but in fact always an enabler to the RN with their politics of scapegoating.

Suggesting that the “macronie” is an alternative to the far-right plants the seed to either kill the NFP or strengthen the most conservative elements within it, and they will undermine the real anti-fascist forces that can be built outside of elections. At this point, the RN may not have yet won but Macron is gaining control of the situation and the NFP may have already lost ground. Next time, the RN can present itself as “anti-estab-

that the side of anti-fascism is not weak. Fascism is also not growing on the back of a defeated working class, as the pension fight shows. It just takes more than that to stop head-on the attempts by the right to drive class anger in their direction. The key is confronting hate and scapegoating through struggle, solidarity, self-defence and organization outside of elections.

How to stop the right at home

Like in France, the openings for fascism here come from mainstream capitalist politicians – not only Poilievre and Doug Ford, but also Trudeau and Eby.

Like Macron, Trudeau has presided over the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and has fueled the climate crisis. His government has done nothing to create or defend affordable housing, public healthcare, or education. In British Columbia, the NDP government led by David Eby has also failed to deliver affordable housing, has not implemented effective rent-control, refuses to move to a safer supply in the deadly opioid crisis, sent the racist RCMP to attack land defenders in Wet’suwet’en and has passively supported the genocide in Palestine.

Their policies of the centrists have driven racialized people disproportionately into poverty and desperation. At the same time these policies help legitimize the arguments of the far right that lead to racialized people and migrants being targeted as the problem.

During the pandemic we’ve seen the rise of the forces of the far right and a hardening of Poilievre’s entourage, which met with the organizers of the “Freedom Convoy” occupation of Ottawa in 2022, and continues to flirt with far-right scapegoating.

Macron was never a block to the fascists in France but neither is Kamala Harris a real block to Trump. And Trudeau is not a block to Poilievre and the even more far right forces that wait in his wings. It is under Eby’s watch in BC that the formally fringe part of the far-right BC Conservatives went from winning less than 2% of the vote in the last election to polling neck and neck with the BC NDP.

The millions of people who showed in France that they want a clear choice against the politics of hate show the way, and we need to mobilize that here, in streets and workplaces and schools. And not just on bread-and-butter issues, but on Palestine, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant racism, Indigenous sovereignty, and trans rights.

The Tories are the ones that are gaining from justifiable anger at Trudeau and the crisis working class people are facing. Every recent by-election shows this. And “F*CK Trudeau” should be a slogan of the left, not of the “Freedom Convoy” and their fascist friends. Any Liberal leader that might replace Trudeau will be no more an alternative to Poilievre than Justin is.

When the Liberals are under attack for policies that drive down living standards, we should kick them when they’re down, not try to save them. And build movements that can stop the growth of fascists here before they can get anywhere near their size in



Front Populaire supporters celebrate the election results

pensions, this was not enough to stop the rise of the far right, which feeds on scapegoating and the ability to deflect working class anger towards it.

In fact, far right support saw an increase during this very same period of the pension uprising, in the absence of an equally large challenge to the politics of hate.

Despite this, the rise of the RN has also met huge opposition within France, with hundreds of thousands in the streets. For now, the RN is

fascism, to Le Pen and Bardella.”

On Bastille Day, July 14, thousands heeded this call by marching against fascism, colonialism and racism.

But will the new NPF government bow instead to managing capitalism, and call on workers to avoid strikes and protests and just trust them to govern? If they do, it will only undermine the very support that got them there and cause despair over their inability to solve the cost-of-living crisis and drive people to the scape-

ishment,” the only force that is truly against the status quo of the system. And the “macronie” can present themselves as the only credible alternative to the RN.

This is the bitter lesson: despite the desperation people feel to keep fascists out with a vote, the reality is that the centre, center right, and centre left all help the growth of anti-immigrant, anti-trans and other ideas that the far-right feeds on.

But the protests of July 14 show

The lies and bigotry of the BC Conservative party

by: Bradley Hughes

In the 2020 BC election the BC Conservatives got less than 2% of the vote. The last time a Conservative was elected to the BC legislature was in 1956. (Seven years before the current leader was born.) In the intervening 68 years occasionally an unhappy Liberal or Social Credit MLA has left their party to join the Conservatives, but this has never led to electoral success. Right now five MLA's have left the sinking ship of the BC United (formally Liberal) party to join the BC Conservatives and an August poll has them tied in popularity with the governing NDP. The provincial election is on October 19.

The BC Conservatives are solidly a party of the convoy and the alt-right. Their current leader, John Rustad, was kicked out of the ordinary right-wing BC United party for being too much of a climate denier even for them. In a recent CBC interview he said, "Climate change is not an existential threat. We are not in a crisis." The Conservative party platform proudly attacks Indigenous rights, trans people, climate action, and public funding for health and education.

Rustad has equated gender education in public schools with the residential school system and if elected will remove sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) from the school curriculum.

The Conservative platform promises to dramatically expand fracked gas extraction and to build more pipelines for fossil fuels. They also promise legal and financial penalties for activists organizing to oppose "resource development." They promise to defund universities and colleges that do not "defend freedom of expression" on campus. No doubt this will be used to further crack down on opposition to the genocide in Palestine. Funding for public education will be "re-allocated" to "essential fields such as medicine, engineering, and skilled trades." Which simply means more funding cuts.

Rustad will also attack our already failing health care system. Privatization and funding cuts will be introduced as "choice and competition."



Rustad and Poilievre: We can beat the far right in the streets and workplaces

The opioid crisis will continue if Rustad wins. He also promises tougher judges, no more tent cities, more rigid drug prohibition, mandatory "drug rehabilitation" and more cops.

He also makes a point of defending statues in his platform. No more toppling of the statues of the racists who built this fine country.

How did a fringe party that champions what used to be fringe ideas come to be a viable contender in the BC October election? Clearly they are riding on the coattails of the convoy movement and Poilievre's federal Conservatives. But the NDP has also helped to make these ideas mainstream. They have done this by ruling in favour of profits over people on numerous occasions. Thus making our lives worse and helping to justify the messages of the far right.

Instead of championing a just transition where we wind down the oil and gas industry in the province while involving those workers in the process of creating better green jobs, the NDP has dramatically expanded fracked gas extraction. Fracked gas extraction has increased by nearly

50% since they took office to over 75 billion cubic metres of gas in 2023. When burned that increase in natural gas production is the equivalent of adding 10 million cars to the roads. In BC there are less than 4 million gasoline and diesel road vehicles.

In order to defend this expansion of fossil fuel production the NDP government sent in the racist RCMP with machine guns and attack dogs to arrest land defenders in Wet'suwet'en.

This justifies the jobs vs environment myths of the right and undermines Indigenous sovereignty.

At the same time as the NDP subsidizes the fossil fuel industry to record levels of production they are sticking with a carbon tax as a climate remedy. While wages fail to keep up with inflation and housing costs continue to spiral ever upwards, this is an easy target for the real climate deniers in the other parties to latch onto.

Housing costs have been out of control for years, and yet the NDP refuses to enact meaningful rent control. The limits on rent increases set by the government do not apply

to new tenants. Which encourages landlords to kick people out so they can raise the rent. Average rent in Vancouver has nearly doubled since the NDP took power in 2017. This leads into right-wing "solutions" about reducing building regulations and making it easier for developers to profit. Especially when the Premier is quoted in government press releases making the same argument, "Anyone looking for a place to live in a community they love knows how hard it is – and outdated zoning rules are making that even harder." Tough rent controls and billions for public housing will solve the housing crisis, but that threatens the profits of the housing industry.

Poison drugs kill seven people a day in BC. The NDP frequently and publicly opposes a safer supply. They have sent in the police to arrest members of the Drug User Liberation Front who were working with university labs to test drugs for safety before selling them on to their compassion club members.

"Non-prescription models for the delivery of pharmaceutical alternatives are not under consideration," according to BC's Minister

of Mental Health and Addictions, Jennifer Whiteside. This is despite several reports from the BC Coroners Service and the Provincial Health Officer recommending a safer supply. They also backtracked on a limited program of decriminalization. All of which plays into right wing "solutions" that ramp up the war on drugs.

The bind that the NDP finds itself in is that the only reasonable solutions to the multiple crisis we face are radical solutions. We need a just transition that quickly starts winding down the fossil fuel industry while providing good union jobs for those workers. We need a safer supply of opioids now. We need a massive expansion of the health care system and money to provide free public post-secondary education. All of this is nearly impossible under capitalism and so the NDP will always work against us in solving these problems. And in doing so build legitimacy for the polices of the right and the far right.

The NDP will not help in the fight against Rustad and the BC conservatives. Their policies help legitimize his. As the election gets closer we can expect that the NDP will move to the right, just like they have done on drug policy already.

We can beat back the Conservatives and push for real solutions only if we rely on our own power. In the lead up to the BC provincial election there will be migrant rights rallies across the country on September 14 and 15. (See migrantrights.ca for details.) The next climate strike is called for September 20. There is an international call for action against the genocide in Palestine on October 5. And no doubt there will be several times when we'll need to rally to defend Drag Queen Story time and calls to defend LGBTQ+ rights. Making these actions as big and as bold as possible is the key to undermining the Conservatives.

At the same time we need to connect all these issues and point to capitalism as the underlying cause. Our system relies on profit and the lies and bigotry needed to defend it. Only the end of capitalism can bring true liberation and solidarity. Every battle against bigotry opens the door a little wider for socialism.

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Fred Hahn, as our President, is obligated to support the decisions of our members, and has consistently done so. As a result, Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) issued a strong statement in support of Fred, re-iterating that Fred and CUPE have been under attack since last October by Zionist organizations such as CIJA (The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs), which is calling for Fred's resignation.

CIJA speaks of "racism, hostility and discrimination" against Jewish members. Yet the adopted motions as above were crafted and supported by Jewish members, in concert with IJV

(including this writer again).

Why did CUPE National's Executive Board calling for Fred's resignation, in the face of massive support from members. What are they afraid of? It's called 'the power of a good example'.

Fred, as a progressive voice in CUPE, has long supported anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-oppression campaigns inside CUPE and beyond. In CUPE Ontario, it meant supporting crucial initiatives such as the Anti-Racism Organizational Action Plan (AROAP), to make sure workers of colour are represented at every level of CUPE Ontario. Special positions on CUPE Ontario's provincial executive are reserved for

workers of colour, Indigenous workers, women, 2SLGBTQ+ members, workers with disabilities and young workers. Far from being invisible, these members have demanded to represent CUPE Ontario at every level – an ongoing struggle, which has been with Fred's support.

Fred has also 'put his money where his mouth is', joining demonstrations and picket lines, and actively opposing bigots from the far-right. This was never more evident than last Fall, when CUPE Ontario actively supported 'Drag Queen Story Time' events all over the province when they were under attack. Fred was prominent in this, and subsequently received a torrent of abuse from the

far-right. While anti-semitism was clearly on display with the participation of neo-nazis in those hate attacks, the Zionists saw no need to defend either Fred, or their Jewish members. Shortly after October 7, when Fred first stood in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, they simply piled on with the far-right.

The claims, emanating from outside CUPE, that Fred is "anti-semitic", therefore a racist is disgusting. When a selection of members of CUPE National's Executive Board called for his resignation, they opened the door to the hard right, not only in the Zionist movement, but also Ontario's viciously anti-worker Ford government, who have also

jumped in again to attack Fred.

Socialists will always have our criticism of union leaders particularly on the right, but also sometimes on the left – as workers can only win our battles when organized from below, at the rank and file level. But the removal of Fred Hahn from his position on our National Executive Board would weaken that fight, and weaken the fight against racism and all forms of oppression. It would be an open the door that anti-gay bigots, white supremacists, and neo-nazis will attempt to walk through. Let's make sure it doesn't happen.

Please sign the petition to support Fred at: labourforpalestine.com/statements/stand-with-fred

Student revolt in Bangladesh

by: Rohit Revi

Over July, students took to the streets across Bangladesh in a massive protest against the Sheikh Hasina government and the country's quota system for distribution of government jobs. In response to the mass protests, the government gave free reign to the country's police and security forces to attack the students and repress the protests, resulting in appalling levels of state violence. The ruling Awami League's affiliated groups, including their student-wing of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), empowered by the police and security forces, carried out brutal violence on oppositional students organized under Students Against Discrimination banners.

At least 600 protesters were killed in this violence, hundreds injured, and hospitals have begun to overflow with injured protesters. Despite these brutalities, the protests only galvanized further, inspiring more and more people to take to the streets, resulting in a wider section of Bangladeshi society joining the students in the struggle.

Finally, in a massive win for the people, the movement managed to overthrow the Sheikh Hasina government, with the prime minister having to flee the country in a helicopter. In the boiling pot of massive transformation, multiple forces have been seeking to consolidate power. But in the absence of a revolutionary party led by the working class, a new interim government was restored, which is now on its way to re-establish a different ruling class in Bangladesh. Although the mass movement was able to demonstrate the strength of the people on the street, overthrow a dictatorial regime, the ultimate victory still eludes Bangladeshi workers.

The new government now has Nobel prize winning liberal economist Mohammed Yunus as its political advisor. The interim government is now working on "vital reforms" to the state infrastructure, and talks of a new election are underway.

What was the Quota System?

Under the current quota system, more than 50% of all government jobs, some of the most well paid, are reserved. The biggest chunk of this res-

ervation, a massive 30%, was accorded in 1972 to the descendants of those who participated in



Millions took to the streets in Bangladesh photo: Rayhan9d - CC BY-SA 4.0

the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. The remaining portions are much more marginal when compared: 5% to minorities and 10% to women. The students are asking for a reform to this system, by scrapping the portion afforded to the descendants of the independence war, while maintaining the reservations for minorities, including oppressed peoples, and women.

The problem with the 30% being cut out for the veteran families is squarely political. Most of these families are directly connected to, or affiliates of, the erstwhile ruling Awami League which was the leading front during the Independence movement. As such, this reservation functioned as a means for the government to entrench undemocratic powers over the state apparatus and maintain its authoritarian hold.

In a political context where youth unemployment has skyrocketed in Bangladesh, with 40% of the youth either at universities or unemployed, even as inflation continues to plague food prices, the students began to call for these jobs to be democratized, and a merit-based system to be put in place instead that is not biased towards to Awami League sympathizers.

A previous wave of student protests in 2018 had caused the Hasina government to scrap this

quota for veteran families, but in June of this year the High Court ordered for the quota to be reinstated and fast-tracked a return to the previous system. It is this decision that triggered the mass movement we are seeing currently.

Counter the strategies of the state

In response to the brutal state violence, the protesters did not back off an inch. In fact, the movement only grew stronger, galvanizing more people, including workers and the general public, to take to the streets and challenge the authoritarian Sheikh Hasina regime. The issues at the core of the protests widened, to include the government's inability to curtail inflation, the skyrocketing of food prices, the rampant targeting of minorities, and political corruption in the ruling party who have also been accused of holding rigged elections. As the movement widened, the court was forced to scrap the quota system and offered to hold diplomatic talks with the protesters to try and arrive at a compromise. The protest leadership, who have already faced the brunt of state repression, declined to participate in these dialogues which are by then widely

recognized as 'too little, too late'.

On July 18th, the government shut down all internet connectivity nation-wide to try and prevent communication and curtail mobilization, banned all public rallies, and the very next day it imposed a nation-wide martial curfew, essentially holding the 170 million people hostage to the government's political whim. But the protesters clapped back at the telecommunication shut-down, with a group called 'THE R3SISTANC3' successfully hacking the top government websites, including those of the prime minister's office and Bangladesh's central bank. The official website of the Hasina's office welcomed visitors with a message "Stop Killing Students. It's not a protest anymore. It's a war now".

And the war was won. As a massive people's march took the capital city by storm, the military leadership was forced to withdraw its support from the Hasina regime, leaving the prime minister with no way out but a helicopter that would take her out from the country.

What next?

Now that an interim government is formed, the streets are clear from protesters. Unfortunately, in the absence of a revolutionary party of the working class, the mass class anger and revolutionary interests of the common people could not be converted into a new system that is run by the workers themselves. In this vacuum, some of the old forces – from the military to the liberal economists to some religious groups – were able to bring together an alignment that prevented the ultimate victory of the movement. Now they seek to pass some democratic reforms and stabilize the market, before handing over the fate of the Bangladeshi people over to a new ruling class. However, the momentum of this partial victory means that we now have an entire generation in Bangladesh who have a living memory of insurgent mass movement, resisting oppression and exploitation, and winning back their power on the streets. As we continue to see these struggles transform in the region – from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh - that have overthrown dictatorial regimes, the lesson is once again clear.

It is possible.

Pandemics, mpox and capitalism

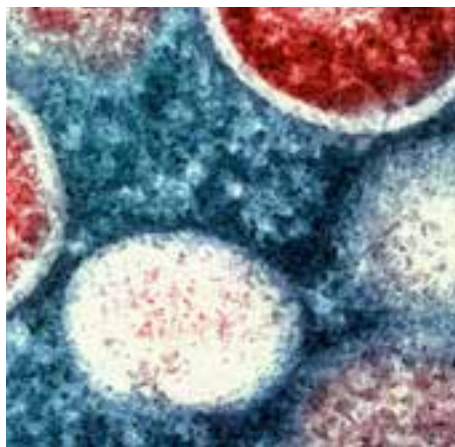
In August the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that a new strain of mpox, clade I, creates a public health emergency of international concern. "So far this year, 15 664 cases of mpox, with 537 deaths, have been reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, already exceeding last year's total, which was itself a record," WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reported at a special meeting on August 14.

The first human cases of Mpox were discovered in the 1970s in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then it has been circulating between humans and other animals. The disease causes a rash that forms into blisters and lesions. Until 2022 the variants that were circulating created an unpleasant but mild illness.

The virus is related to smallpox and smallpox vaccines are effective against mpox as well.

In 2022 a new strain began circulating world wide. The death rate of this variant was around .16%.

A new outbreak of a more transmissible and more deadly variant began last year. According to Africa CDC by the end of July there were cases of mpox in Burundi (8 cases; 0 deaths), Cameroon (35; 2), CAR (213; 0), Congo (146; 1), DRC (13,791; 450), Ghana (4; 0), Liberia (5; 0), Nigeria (24; 0), Rwanda (2; 0) and South Africa (22; 3). "This represents a 160% and 19% increase in the number of cases and deaths respectively in 2024 compared to the same period in 2023." The fatality rate is nearly 4% and children now account for 60%



of the cases.

Africa CDC has determined that 10 million vaccine doses are needed to control this new outbreak. There are two vaccines approved in many countries. They are produced by Bavarian Nordic in Denmark and KM Biologics in Japan.

The European Union has provided 200,000 doses, and the US will donate 50,000 doses from its supply. Canada has so far refused to send any vaccines to Africa or even reveal how many mpox vaccine doses it is hoarding.

Just like in the ongoing COVID pandemic, the rich countries are hoarding vaccines and the technology to create them. And just like with COVID, the opportunity to control or even eliminate the virus will be squandered.

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Territorial Acknowledgment

As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.

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From Jasper to Kerala: Climate chaos and capitalism

by: Brian Champ

Sunday, July 21st was the hottest day ever recorded at 17.09 degrees Celsius, calculated by averaging thousands of global land and sea temperatures. But the next day broke the record again, at 17.16 degrees.

Last year was the hottest year on record too, a mark that seems likely to be broken again this year. Such records will continue to be broken unless the world stops burning fossil fuels and starts taking concerted action to ensure a livable future for generations to come.

Sea surface temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico are the hottest on record at almost 32 degrees.

The surface of the Persian Gulf is even hotter at 35 degrees. Almost 40 degree air temperatures combined with high humidity has made going outside unbearable where heat index readings are close to 65 degrees.

The greenhouse effect traps more of the sun's energy, raising temperatures but also increasing wind speeds, raising the capacity of the air for water vapour and increasing electrical discharges. These contribute directly to the various extreme effects of the climate crisis in "heat domes", rapidly developing hurricanes, increasingly frequent tornadoes, atmospheric rivers and flash flooding. Still other parts of the planet suffer from drought, famine and desertification.

In North Korea, powerful summer floods prompted the rescue of close to 5,000 people in July according to the state news agency.

In Kerala, over 300 people were killed or are still missing and 3000 displaced on July 30th by mudslides caused by torrential rains made 10% more intense by climate change.

22 people in Hunan province in the southeastern region of China were killed in mudslides caused by winds and rains from the remnants of Typhoon Gaemi at the end of July. This extreme weather also displaced 300,000 people in China after causing death and destruction in Taiwan and the Phillipines where authorities were struggling to contain an oil spill after a tanker ship capsized.

Burning sugarcane plantations in northern Brazil are currently burning out of control and the widespread smoke is so thick that cattle have died due to inhalation and outdoor sporting events have been canceled. State highways are closed due to low visibility.

Hurricane Beryl cut a swath of destruction through the Caribbean in early July. People living on the islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines are in the midst of long term recovery.

Wildfires on Turtle Island

Closer to home the impacts are clear for all to see. Extreme heat across the southern and western U.S. has been devastating. In California, the Park fire is now the fourth largest wildfire recorded, consuming almost 430,000 acres – the 3 larger wildfires have all occurred since 2018. Extreme heat in Death Valley has seen air temperatures of 50 degrees Celsius and sand temperatures close to 70 de-

grees – a Belgian tourist who lost his flip flops suffered severe burns to his feet.

It is no different in Canada. Last year saw the most destructive wildfire season ever recorded, with almost 18 million hectares of forest burned, tens of thousands of people evacuated and cities across North America blanketed in dangerous smoke. While this year's wildfire season hasn't been as destructive overall, in BC and Alberta the past two months has seen the rapid expansion of huge wildfires. The town of Jasper saw a third of all structures in the town destroyed as two separate wildfires laid waste to this tourist centre. Alberta premier Danielle Smith was very emotional when talking to the media about the scale of the destruction, but maintains her climate denial – last year she called climate change a "conspir-

acy theory", instead putting forward her own conspiracy by blaming unnamed arsonists with no evidence. But it is dry and hot conditions that are responsible for rapid wildfire growth regardless of how they were set.

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Devastation in Jasper

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Defend Fred Hahn

by: Peter Votsch

Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario, and General Vice President on CUPE National's Executive Board, is once again under attack for denouncing the genocide in Gaza, and standing with the Palestinian people against the violent apartheid state of Israel.

At a recent CUPE National Executive Board meeting, Fred was asked for his resignation by some members of the Board. This was after posting a video showing an Israeli athlete diving into images of bombs dropping in Gaza. It questioned why Israel was allowed to send athletes to the Olympics, while Russia was not. Fred refused to resign – and he had good reason.

At the last CUPE National Convention in October 2023, Fred was once again elected as a General Vice-President (Ontario) by the Ontario attendees. But that was not the only decision made by convention. Delegates, duly elected from their locals, voted to:

“Demand that the Canadian government call for an immediate ceasefire in Israel/Palestine,



an end of its sale of arms to Israel, an end to diplomatic immunity for the state of Israel, and an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza and the restoration of aid and the basic necessities of life”.

In a separate motion, “Conduct member education about the history of Israel's occupation and colonization of Palestine, Canada's complicity, and what trade unions can do to support

a just peace”.

These motions are binding on CUPE National's Executive.

Fred was once again elected as President of CUPE Ontario, at its annual convention this last May. Pre-dating Fred's original election in 2010, was the “Boycott, Divest, Sanctions” (BDS) position taken by CUPE Ontario in 2006, and upheld every year since then with new resolutions by members re-affirming CUPE Ontario's opposition to Israeli apartheid and support for the Palestinian people.

At this same convention, led by a strong delegation of CUPE members who were part of a joint Labour4Palestine/Independent Jewish Voices grouping, delegates supported a motion reading, in part: “CUPE Ontario will commit to work alongside with and continue strengthening our working relationship with Palestinian Youth Movement, Labour for Palestine, and Independent Jewish Voices to call for the immediate ceasefire, the end of Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the end of Canadian arms trade to Israel”.

continued on page 5...

Imperialism and genocide in Palestine

The terrorist Israeli state is ramping up attacks on Palestinians as new reports show a much higher death toll than previously reported.

The attacks are unrelenting. The Israeli bombs have targeted UN schools where people are sheltering. They have bombed hospitals and infrastructure - clear war crimes.

There are no safe spaces anywhere in Gaza. The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) seize areas and then abandon them. As Palestinians return, the IOF unleashes new horrors on those that are trying to find some shelter.

Despite assurances that these corridors will be safe there are many reports of machine gun fire, bombings and drone strikes against the fleeing civilians.

A new article, written by doctors who joined an emergency relief team in Gaza describe unimaginable horrors. Mark Perlmutter, an orthopedic and hand surgeon with decades of experience in war zones spoke about the number of injured children he saw while there. “I saw more incinerated children than I have ever seen in my entire life combined. And then there's sniper bullets. I had children that were shot twice. No toddler gets shot twice by mistake”.

Famine

The famine is growing with the UN special rapporteur on the right to food describing the scale of crisis. A document issued by the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner was blunt,

“Over the past 7 months in Gaza, Israel has been starving 2.3 million Palestinian people at a speed never witnessed in modern history. Never have this many civilians been made to go hungry so quickly and completely with the first reported deaths of children by starvation dating back to January 2024. Today, all of Gaza is in famine, a situation which will have irreversible consequences especially for children. But even if the conflict were to end today, food systems in Gaza are in shatters. At least one third of Gaza's agricultural lands, the fishing fleet and irrigation systems are de-

stroyed. In Gaza, starvation is being used as a weapon of war, which has unleashed violence at a genocidal scale.”

Lancet study

A new report from the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet* has revealed that the death toll in Gaza may be much higher than previously estimated.

The Lancet has done studies like this before. For example, they released a comprehensive report investigating the numbers of dead in Iraq after the US invasion in 2003.

They count not just the people who have been killed by direct fire but also those who die because of lack of medical treatment or by disease caused by the conditions of the war.

They estimate that as many as 186,000 Palestinians, or eight percent of the population, may have been killed in the past 9 months. That is likely a conservative estimate.

The complete destruction of the main hospitals is key to the research and findings but they also took into account things like the spread of infectious diseases—made worse by the destruction of sanitation infrastructure.

The Israelis long ago banned many cleaning supplies from going into the strip and these shortages continue to grow more acute.

That lack of healthcare and sanitation has unleashed a new horror—polio—a disease thought to have been eradicated but it is being used now as a weapon of war against the Palestinians.

And a recent Save the Children report estimates that the remains of 21,000 children are likely still buried under the rubble in Gaza. This is on top of the more than 15,000 children known to be killed by Israel.

Meanwhile Western governments and the corporate media continue to gaslight people with stories of a fictitious ceasefire deal. They complain that Hamas has not agreed to a deal but fail to mention that the Israeli state has publicly said that they will not support any deal that forces them to abandon their genocide. So essentially the Israelis will only support a deal if there is no ceasefire.

This is a pattern that we have seen for decades. Endless negotiations are used to buy time for the Israelis to continue killing Palestinians and seizing more land which

moves the goalposts sufficiently so as to require a new set of negotiating terms.

Imperialism

The Israeli state exists to support the needs of the major Western Imperial powers. From its origins under the auspices of the UK government to recent support from the US, Israel can be relied upon to be the outpost of the Imperialists in the Middle East. As Biden himself said, “If Israel didn't exist we would have to invent it.”

This is behind the foot-dragging on the question of the ceasefire deal and the reason why the US will never truly challenge the Israelis' conduct.

This is why none of the western imperial states will condemn Israel's attempt to expand the war through the region—particularly in Lebanon and Iran.

It is the movements on the ground in both the major Imperialist nations and the resistance in the region that will end the horror.

The Gaza genocide is a central fault-line in our world today and is reshaping political consciousness on a mass scale. The direction of the struggle will have repercussions for decades to come.

Israel is key to Western dominance of the Middle East, which means that the apartheid state has unlimited support.

The reduction in coverage of the genocide and the onslaught of pro-Israel propaganda in our mainstream news shows that the ruling class is united in their support for the Imperial project.

And the Canadian government is in lock-step with the US and the other Western Imperialists. That means we must continue to focus on Trudeau's support for the genocide in Gaza and up the pressure to stop both arms sales to the Israelis and to stop buying Israeli made weapons.

Please sign the petition and send a message to your MP calling for an arms embargo now.

You can do so at:
<https://armsembargonow.ca/>

