

**END THE GENOCIDE  
FREEDOM FOR  
Palestine!**

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**CUPW strike  
and building the  
labour movement**

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Photo: Michael yc Tseng

# Socialist Worker

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## Fight racism, war and corporate greed



# IT'S RIGHT TO RESIST

It is clearer every day that capitalism is leading us into ever greater crisis.

Endless war, genocide, racism and scapegoating of immigrants, environmental destruction and corporate greed plague the world. The ruling class billionaires and politicians have no desire to change the way the system operates.

They are making too much money off of the misery of millions.

At the same time the volatility of the political situation grows. We are watching as governments crumble from Korea, to Syria to France.

The politics of the centre-right, Biden, Trudeau, Macron, Starmer have been discredited as they offer no solutions. In fact, their adherence to laws of the market have emboldened the forces of the far-right. Their adoption of racist policies has only fuelled Trump and, in Canada, Pierre Poilievre.

The social democrats like the NDP are too closely linked with that discredited centre and show no signs of being able to meet the challenges facing the world.

Yet the working class is not taking this lightly. Millions in Canada and around the world have struck, protested and marched for

a better future.

The recent strike by postal workers gave us a glimpse of workers power and the force that can reshape society.

The fights by migrant workers and students from Brampton to Montreal provide a lead about how to challenge racism and bring workers together for a stronger fight.

The absolutely relentless movement for a free Palestine continues to march, blockade and campaign to end the killing.

In this period it is difficult to look at all the many fronts we have to fight on to build a world of peace, solidarity and justice and

not feel discouraged.

But as the edifice of the system crumbles, millions are looking for an alternative.

Socialists have the ideas and the theory to both understand the system and identify the tools needed to shut it down.

We can unite the forces of resistance we can build the kind of movement that overcomes the hurdles in our way.

In this issue of *Socialist Worker*, we analyse the many forms of resistance and point the way toward the kind of movement that can bring this system of horrors to an end.



# The politics of the Liberal circus

by: Bradley Hughes

**C**ue *Entry of the Gladiators*, as Chrystia Freeland tumbles out of the clown car throwing pies at ring master Trudeau, while Dominic LeBlanc stumbles along trying to catch up. As enjoyable as the Freeland-Trudeau mutual backstabbing was, it reflects a deeper and more serious crisis. Neither Freeland nor Trudeau have any solutions for the problems of affordability, housing, healthcare, and the climate emergency. Trudeau's token reduction of the GST and \$250 cheques are minuscule compared to astronomical food and housing costs.

These circus antics are a reflection of the instability of capitalism. Similar, if less clownish, instability is plaguing governments around the world. The coalition government in Germany has fallen, the Prime Minister of France has been deposed by their parliament, and the South Korean President has been impeached after his attempt at imposing martial law was defeated by mass mobilizations. All of this is due to the combination of the depths of the problems facing workers around the world and the scratching the surface nature of the solutions on offer.

## All Liberals agree on wasteful spending

The spat between Freeland and Trudeau is not due to any real disagreement. They both still firmly agree on the need to defend profit and keep down our standard of living to do so. What they disagree on is how best to do this. Freeland's resignation letter outlines her dedication to using debt and deficits as pretext for austerity measures, "That means keeping our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves

we may need for a coming tariff war." The fall economic statement, that she wrote and is criticizing, predicts a deficit that as a fraction of GDP will be the lowest in the G7 economies. But that is beside

wasted on war machines and the personal to operate them every year. And the Liberals have promised to increase this amount every year for twenty years. There is \$50 billion of the \$60 billion deficit right there. If

his convoy conservatives. No doubt it is, but there is no version of a ruling party at this stage in capitalism that can avoid aiding its rivals.

Any reforms that will make our lives better will require attacks on

back to work at the docks, the airlines and now Canada Post. They agree that wages should stay down while prices and hence profits are allowed to rise. They agree on scapegoating migrant workers for successive governments' failures in housing and healthcare.

In the lead up to the recent election in BC, we saw the rise of the BC Conservatives lead the BC NDP to adopt more and more of the conservative policies around the opioid crisis, homelessness and so on. At the same time the NDP continues to refuse to spend the money needed on healthcare or social housing or to implement rent control. The federal Liberals have already started down this same path with their plans to deport 2.3 million migrant workers and students.

Defending one of the most hated prime ministers in history won't save his government, it only makes it easier for Poilievre to lump progressive policies and the left in with the fun house mirror versions of those policies that the Liberals present.

## Beat the Liberals in the streets

The opposite of the Liberals isn't the Tories, it's mass mobilization and strikes. Pickets to defend CUPW's right to strike could throw the Liberals into even more turmoil. And in this case there is no benefit to the Conservatives, because they also won't support our right to strike. Building actions and mobilizations against Trudeau's attacks on migrant students and workers will increase the pressure on, and dissension in, the Liberal ranks, without benefiting Poilievre. Now that the Liberals are in such disarray it's time for every union and community organization to ramp up the pressure and give them not a moment's rest.



Freeland and Trudeau are in lockstep on most major issues

at the point, spending is out of control in Ottawa. The Fall Fiscal Update includes \$17 billion in subsidies for businesses between now and 2030. The 2023-2024 budget for the RCMP is \$5.5 billion and \$2.8 billion goes to the Canada Border Services Agency. The Fall Update adds another \$1.3 billion on top of that to border services the RCMP and other policing. The second largest federal budget item is money spend on war and preparation for war, consuming more than 6% of spending. Over \$24 billion is

we trim all of that waste, and keep the deficit as is, we would have \$50 billion a year to spend on housing, healthcare, the climate emergency and all the real problems that we face.

## The dead end of electoralism

Watching the Liberals tear themselves apart is an enjoyable, rewarding, and increasingly frequent break from our regular routines. But you may be concerned that all of this is only aiding Poilievre and

profits or taxes on profits to fund them. The parties of the centre, Liberal, NDP or whatever, will never voluntarily put people before profit. Instead they will fail to deal with these problems while grasping at scapegoating migrants and other oppressed groups. This strategy only makes the policies of the far-right sound more legitimate.

The Liberals and Conservative agree on much more than what divides them. They agree on wasting billions on war machines and police. They agree on forcing workers

# Long Term Care workers fight back

by: Kyong Ah

**O**n Friday, Dec. 13, CUPE Local 79 members and allies including OPESU, Toronto Education Workers, and Toronto York Region Labor Council rallied together at the City-run Carefree Lodge LTC in North York to demand better working conditions, respect and fair treatment.

This builds on a previous rally in October in front of the Kipling Acres Long-Term Care (LTC) home in Etobicoke,

Since LTC workers are not allowed to strike, they have resorted to using the grievance process to address their workplace concerns. But this can be frustrating for LTC home workers, as the grievance process is very lengthy which is to the benefit of management. So recently these angry city workers have organized rallies to

shame the City and their management.

In particular, registered nurses

(RN) who work in city-run LTC homes are paid far less than RNs in other settings, such as at

hospitals, Public Health Nurses. Registered Practice Nurses (RPN) are often called in to perform RN

tasks as a result of understaffing. This juggling of roles applies to Personal support workers (PSW) as well, who are asked to perform RPN's task as well. And so on.

City management has used discrimination and racism to divide the workers, instead of addressing the worsening working conditions. Management is making and enforcing their own arbitrary rules that go against the Collective agreement. The worst of this has been ignoring seniority rules in an attempt to resolve scheduling issue because of staff shortages.

As CUPE Local 79 and the City have started to negotiate a new contract, it is very important that LTC workers have organized these rallies, sending a strong message not only to the City that Local 79 members are united to get the fair contract that they deserve, but also inspiring members CUPE Local 79 to take action.



Workers rally for fairness and respect at Carefree Lodge LTC



# Trade, tariffs and international socialism

by: Pam Johnson and Peter Votsch

**D**onald Trump's announcement that he would slap a 25% tariff on Canada and Mexico on his first day in office, has pushed Trudeau's Liberal into crisis mode.

A 25% tariff would have a major impact on the Canadian economy but, the nature of global trade means that the impact would reverberate beyond Canada and possibly boomerang back on the US in the form of high prices and inflation.

But Trump's main impetus for the tariff announcement was political, not economic. His demands are for more border security, more drug enforcement and more military spending to line up with his mass deportation plan and the scapegoating of immigrants.

Premiers have rushed to weigh in: Doug Ford claiming he would shut off hydro power from Ontario and Danielle Smith promising the opposite, to keep oil and gas flowing from Alberta. But, they all came together in December announcing a 'Team Canada' approach to Trump's tariffs.

This sudden nationalist fervour with more military spending and increased policing will not protect Canada from Trump but feed the already rising anti-immigrant sentiment and bolster RCMP and border security that disproportionately targets indigenous and racialized people.

## Tariffs and the working class

For socialists, any discussion of trade and tariffs starts with an understanding that under capitalism, workers and the employing class do not have common interests. Put simply, bosses seek to maximize their profits to better their competitive advantage, while workers seek to better their wages and benefits, so that they and their families can live better lives. To bind us together under a common flag, employers often claim that the greater success for the company, the better wages

which fuels a race to the bottom. Hence the creation of unions by workers, to secure a larger, and growing share of the employers' profits in the form of wages and benefits.

Donald Trump's threat of tariffs against Canada, Mexico, under an "America First" policy, is part of his claim that tariffs protect jobs, and therefore workers. This despite the loss of 2.7 million jobs during his first term. This included job losses in the much vaunted 'rust belt' and also in the coal industry (he claimed he would revive).



Trudeau met Trump at Mar-a-Lago just after the US election

for the worker – and in this they conveniently leave out the competitive drive of the capitalist system,

Not surprisingly, tariffs invite retaliation, and those of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, China, India,

South Africa and more) were particularly damaging to a US economy fully integrated into the world economy. Components for manufacture of consumer goods in particular became more expensive for American companies to buy, thereby making their products more expensive. Couple that with retaliatory tariffs, and one can see how American products became less competitive on international markets, leading to the mass layoffs of 2016-20.

But why would we even entertain the idea that a Trump presidency would be good for workers? He is the head of the Republican Party that brought to numerous states "right to work" legislation, undemocratic rules that allow workers to 'opt out' of their unions, thus ending the closed shop – thus weakening union bargaining power.

The AFL-CIO, the umbrella organization for American unions calls it "right to work for less", as it has lowered wages and benefits wherever it has been implemented. In his first term, Trump vetoed pro-labour legislation, loaded the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with pro-business appointees, and used changes in regulation to lower workers' wages (one egregious example – changing of overtime pay regulations in favour of employers literally robbed American workers of millions of dollars).

## Labour response in Canada

Faced with punitive 25% tariffs from the US, Canada's unions warn of massive job losses if they are implemented, especially in highly union-

ized sectors. While this may well be the case, the Canadian Labour Congress should be wary about supporting retaliation. An international trade war, in which our ruling class could become embroiled, is unlikely to save Canadian jobs – especially union jobs. They should be particularly wary of partnering with the same corporations and governments who contract out our well-paid jobs to the lowest bidder, or eliminate full-time employment by boosting casual, 'precarious' employment arrangements.

As such we would give ourselves no choice but to follow the leads of the like of Doug Ford and Danielle Smith. That's the Ford who scrapped long fought for labour legislation, including minimum wage provisions and paid sick days (remember COVID?), and Danielle Smith, who along with Jason Kenney has overseen anti-worker legislation that has effectively taken Alberta from one of the highest wage provinces to one of the lowest.

Workers have no interest in supporting the trade policies of the employing class, the trade wars that may ensue (that can lead to actual wars). These policies pit us against each other, in our common struggle against employers everywhere. Our alternative is international solidarity, in which we support each other worldwide as we take on bosses everywhere together, and their capitalist system. It is in this way, through our common struggles, that we begin to shape a new world of cooperative exchange that would serve our needs as workers.

# Trump is a friend to the markets—for now

by: Alex Callinicos

**D**onald Trump's election victory has sent stock markets—especially in the United States itself—shooting up. Maybe the removal of pre-election uncertainty was a factor. But undoubtedly the main reason is Trump's promise to give big business more of what he provided in his first term—tax cuts and deregulation.

His picks for jobs in his administration have been full of assorted far right figures. One exception has been the key economic post of treasury secretary. There was a bitter internal struggle within the Trump court over who to choose as billionaires wrestled for the job.

"Trump knew that he could not afford a mis-step," explained the Financial Times newspaper.

"He had to find a person wedded to the populist economic policies he championed on the campaign trail, including sweeping tariffs. But he also needed someone he could trust to protect the metric he cared about most—the US stock market."

So, in the end, and just as in his first term, Trump opted for a Wall Street insider, the hedge-fund boss

Scott Bessent.

In an interview in October, Bessent said Trump's plan to impose higher tariffs on imports was a "maximalist" bargaining tool in trade negotiations. "My general view is that at the end of the day, he's a free trader," he said. "It's escalate to de-escalate."

Trump immediately showed this was wishful thinking. After all, "escalate to de-escalate" is the Israel military's slogan as it devastates Gaza and Lebanon. On Monday he announced he would slap tariffs on imports from China, Canada, and Mexico on his first day in office.

Undoubtedly the threat to raise tariffs is what worries big business most about Trump. Higher tariffs wouldn't just disrupt global trade. They might push up inflation. This is why traders, bankers and bosses are worrying that interest rates may not fall as fast as had been expected. Central banks might keep rates high to counter the inflationary impact of tariffs.

But broader concerns have motivated Financial Times columnist Rana Foroohar to write, "I am already dreading the downturn that must surely come at some point during Trump's presidency." She

points out the shallow basis of the relatively robust economic growth the US economy has been experiencing compared to the rest of Western capitalism.

According to the research firm TS Lombard, "This business cycle has always seemed 'artificial', and it has been powered by a series of temporary or one-off forces, such as pandemic reopening, fiscal stimulus, excess savings, revenge spending and more recently (higher) immigration and labour force participation."

Foroohar also quotes an even more pessimistic assessment from Dennis Kelleher of Better Markets, a foundation critical of Wall Street. "I think we'll get a two-year sugar high under Trump but down the road, we're looking at a potentially catastrophic correction—something much worse than the global financial crisis of 2008. That's because we have a financial system that is essentially extractive," Kelleher writes. The counter-argument to this kind of critique is that financial markets are being driven upwards by a technological revolution, the advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI).

How much AI does raise productivity and profitability remains to be

seen. Even if it does so significantly, this doesn't mean it isn't inflating a financial bubble.

As Aiden Reiter of another Financial Times column, Unhedged, points out, "Railroads and the internet changed everything, too, but their first manifestation was in bubbles that burst. The combination of the fact that AI is obviously an amazing, important thing, and the fact that we don't really understand how it will work as an industry, makes it absolutely perfect bubble fuel."

Indeed, while working on his masterpiece Capital, Karl Marx closely studied the 1866 financial crash. This represented the bursting of a wild speculative bubble in the shares of railway companies. Railways were a technical innovation that transformed but also destabilised the British and, indeed, global economy.

Then, capitalism was in the ascendant. Now it is much more fragile. Like a bull in a china shop, Trump in his second administration will destabilise it even further.

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Trump's second term will destabilise the system further



# How do we build a labour movement?

*The CUPW strike showed a glimpse of what workers power looks like as they shut down postal outlets across the country. But the Trudeau government, once again, sided with the bosses and forced the pickets to end. What would it take for us to build the kind of labour movement that can end the anti-union attacks?*

**T**rudeau's assault on workers rights has hit a new crescendo with the forced shut down of the postal workers picket lines. The Federal Government had already intervened this year to shut down strikes by ILWU organized port workers in BC, Montreal and Quebec City, ordered the Westjet mechanics and railway workers back to work and now they have used a back door order from the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to shut down postal workers' picket lines.

The use of back to work legislation is a slap in the face to the democratic decision by postal workers to take strike action to improve their wages and working conditions – not just in a ballot, but also in the large numbers on picket lines.

In fact, the right to strike itself is being eroded. Section 107 of the Labour Code is being used by a Federal Labour Minister for the 4th time this year to stop a workers' strike.

There is a consistent pattern to this new attack. The bosses refuse to negotiate, then wait for the Federal or Provincial Governments to come in and save them by forcing the workers back to work.

This inevitably benefits the employers in any industrial dispute as momentum in a strike is lost and has to be rebuilt if the fight is to start again at a later date.

## Could CUPW have defied the back to work order?

On December 16, at the very same time that workers rallied outside MP Chrystia Freeland's office, the news came in that she had resigned as Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. The same day, Minister of Housing Sean Fraser announced he was resigning. CUPW members and supporters chanted for Labour Minister Steve MacKinnon to resign. The anger at the federal government for once again heavily tipping the scales in favour of the employer, was palpable.

A sizable minority of CUPW strongly expressed a willingness to defy MacKinnon's back to work order. In fact, workers in locals in many places across the country continued to picket even after the deadline for them to return to work

had passed.

If CUPW national leadership had decided to defy, could this have won support of CUPW members who were pessimistic or demoralized? Could it have forced the hand of CLC and provincial federation leaderships who have talked about "drawing a line in the sand" against the federal government's addiction to back to work legislation, yet have left it at nice words and not action?

It is true that CUPW cannot fight alone. But determined action by one group of workers can tip the balance in mobilizing solidarity and tap into the pent-up anger among large sections of workers.

And the numbers suggest there is a mood to fight. More than 1.4 million workers in Canada have struck since 2022. Cost of living increases have created great hardship for millions and the general public is feeling the pinch. The solidarity on the lines and at rallies shows a much broader range of people want to see some kind of push back against the billionaire bosses.

We have seen many other union

leaders calling for this strike breaking to end.

Rob Ashton, the president of the International Longshore & Warehouse Union Canada (ILWU) said "The federal government is spitting on workers rights and giving a free hand to the employers right now to run roughshod over us all." The union is calling to revoke the federal government's ability to use section 107 to end strikes.

A letter from the Alberta Federation of Labour put it bluntly "Our first demand is for Federal Labour Minister, Steve MacKinnon. In recent comments to the House of Commons, you acknowledged that all Canadian workers have a constitutionally protected right to strike. But then you went on to suggest that four weeks is enough. So, which is it? Do workers have the right to strike or not? With due respect, you may be a Minister of the Crown, but that does NOT entitle you to put a time limit or an expiry date on the rights of Canadians."

And we don't have to look too far into the past to see moments when

workers defied back to work legislation. The Westjet mechanics won after being ordered back to work. The education workers in Ontario were threatened with massive fines if they struck and they walked out anyway, forcing the Ford government to rescind their anti-union laws.

A coordinated push from the CUPW leadership and/or a call from the union federations could have tipped the balance in the case of this strike. Either way, at some point the unions will have to decide if they are going to fight or watch the right to collective bargaining be further eroded.

The CUPW leadership says it will challenge the use of section 107 in the courts, but that process may take many years and the conditions for workers will not improve while the wait for the courts drags on.

## Anti-union laws and privatization

The drive towards privatization is being enabled by anti-union laws. Where unions are banned from

striking, the deterioration of services advances at a much higher rate.

In Ontario, the limits set on health-care workers effectively eliminates their right to strike and the anti-union law 124 savaged the sector helping speed up the process of privatizing services. When members of ATU 113 in Toronto were banned from striking, we saw an increase in the rate of cuts to the system furthering the privatization agenda.

In his referral to the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), MacKinnon announced an Industrial Inquiry Commission under William Kaplan. It will be tasked with examining the structural issues preventing the resolution of the current labour dispute. According to the minister, "The IIC will have a broad scope to examine the entire structure of Canada Post from bottom to top, both at customer and business model standpoint, considering the challenging business environment now facing Canada Post." This will be another opportunity for the bosses to push for privatization of Canada Post.

Indeed, that was the call from the corporate press from day 1 of the strike. They called Canada Post an anachronism that needed to be dismantled and sold off for parts. This directly contradicted the other line main line of attack from the bosses which said that the CUPW strike needed to be stopped because Canada Post was an essential service and the disruption of the strike a threat to business.

What the articles failed to mention is that Canada Post was not set up to be a money making enterprise but to be a service that all people could use. The number of isolated communities in this country and the vast distances that parcels have to travel means that there will be areas outside of population concentrations where delivery will never be profitable.

But as is the case with most public services, they are under threat by privatized models that generate huge profits, like Amazon. But the Amazon workers are treated very poorly and have little or no benefits as they work long hours. If the capitalists look to that model, we will see a race to the bottom as far as workers rights are concerned.



Workers across the country braved bitter cold to hold the picket lines for 4 weeks



# fighting

## CUPW strikers and migrant workers lead the fightback

by: Carolyn Egan

### Class consciousness and the return of the strike

The millions who have gone on strike over the past few years are increasingly clear that the bosses need them more than they need the bosses.

The 'heroes' who kept the profit system moving during the Covid pandemic are angry at their treatment by employers who have reneged on promises for better wages and conditions.

Maha Sawi, a driver at the Gateway Canada Post plant in Mississauga told Socialist Worker "We've been struggling for 4 years without any raise while the management gave themselves a raise. We are not getting any bonuses while the management gets bonuses. When the workers strike, the service has been interrupted and the work stops and the revenue stops. When the management doesn't go into the offices the work is still going and the revenue is still going."

The mood among the working class is potentially explosive – but it is lacking the coordinated direction that could become a serious fight-

back. What is urgently needed is to build rank and file networks that are not beholden to the indecision at the top of the trade union apparatus. The strike by postal workers shows how such networks can be built.

Evident at the Toronto support rally December 16 were reps and speakers from Toronto and York Region Labour Council, Steelworkers Toronto Area Council, IATSE, ETFO, Education workers and many others. In Montreal, local union reps like the FTQ Construction union members picketed at the Leo Blanche processing plant in solidarity. This local aspect is important for members in one union to connect with local members of other unions. Militancy at the local level of a national union has the potential to spread across the country, putting rank & file members in communication with each other – rank and file organizing inside their unions and with other unions.

Also, in many places local community organizations and unaffiliated activists also showed up, such as the Immigrant Workers Centre in

Montreal.

CUPW top leadership is focused on negotiations and legal challenges, as they have to. But the militancy on the ground was not mobilized in ways it has been in the history of postal workers strikes. Mobilizing was too focused on support for the negotiators and negotiations. But the mobilizing also took on a more militant dynamic too, at each local across the country. There were so many committed union members. The potential for a win through rank and file mobilization was there, but not realized. Learning the lessons and applying them in the struggles ahead is key to ensuring that fierce class anger is not channeled to the right.

Building the working class movement is the antidote to the many crises of capitalism, from the cost of living crisis to the climate crisis to the rise of the racist far-right. Labour holds all the keys when it comes to the real power in society. All the wealth used by the billionaires to keep us down comes from the sweat of the working class.

country was strong with many union members coming out. They were fighting for decent wages and against the reorganization of Canada Post with the use of many more part time workers, using the Amazon model. The Minister of Labour ordered strikers back to work through the Canada Industrial Relations Board but many initially refused the order in St John's, Halifax and other cities across the country.

Local labour councils organized support on the lines and at MP's offices building public support but the Canadian Labour Congress and provincial federations of labour could have done much more. There should have been a call out for a mass rally in Ottawa against Canada Post and a united stand against the back to work dictum. We saw that happen in Ontario when the provincial government ordered education workers back threatening a \$4000 a day fine for each member, but they defied it, and the labour movement threatened a general strike if the legislation wasn't rescinded. The government backed down. The postal union was born out of a wildcat strike in 1965 and the members on the line showed the same courage and resistance. They went back angry but with their heads held high. It was the bureaucracy of the trade movement that let them down.

### Migrant workers and students fight back

Another example of workers fighting back is the encampment set up by international workers and students who are being threatened with deportation by the federal government. Canada promoted the international student program as a pathway to permanent residency in this country. "Study, Explore, Work, Stay" was the slogan used to attract them. They worked through the COVID pandemic in essential jobs that kept the economy going and now, pandering to the anti-migrant rhetoric on the rise, the federal government wants them gone. They contribute \$31 Billion a year to the Canadian economy working in construction, retail, trucking, warehousing and food services. The minister of immigration even blamed them for the housing crisis and high rents, leaving the developers and government's lack of action on affordable housing off the hook! Rents rose 20% in the last two years while the population grew by only 3.9%.

They are demanding an immediate extension of their work permits and a fair pathway to permanent residency as well as other support for international students. They took up the model of the Palestinian encampments on campuses across North America and have gained support in the labour movement and the broader community in Brampton. Rallies, marches and press conferences have taken place and they are braving the Canadian winter in tents to show their resolve. These young workers must be allowed to stay in this country and are putting up a strong fight. We must all rally around them and fight back against anti-migrant racism while we build the fight for all working people!

We enter the new year with many challenges. We are seeing the far right organizing around the world. Many who are fed up with the misery of their day to day lives are, unfortunately, opting for what they see as the only alternative on offer - an alternative which will only bring more misery for the working class and the poor in all our diversity. They are using scapegoating, racism, sexism and homophobia to divide us one from another, blaming each other rather than the corporations and governments who are making life harder and harder for all of us. It is only the billionaires and the millionaires who will benefit while they increase their profits on the backs of the vast majority.

We are seeing the rise of the Alternative for Deutschland in Germany, the strength of Le Pen in France, Tommy Robinson leading thousands of neo Nazis into the streets in the UK far right governments in Hungary, the Netherlands, Argentina, the Philippines, and of course the victory of Donald Trump in the recent US election.

In Canada we have seen much the same thing. A right wing Conservative party went from nothing to almost toppling the New Democratic Party (NDP) government in British Columbia because of the deep dissatisfaction among voters. Poilievre is leading the polls to be the next prime minister, pandering to his far right base. The Trudeau Liberals left the door open for them because of their anti worker and anti-immigrant policies, with the NDP propping them up.



A striking postal worker brings solidarity to the encampment

The NDP, the official opposition in Ontario, also angered both party members and the broader public by tossing MPP Sarah Jama out of the caucus when she spoke her mind supporting the Palestinian cause. She is running as an independent candidate in Hamilton Centre in the next election, and the party is refusing to agree to stand down and allow her to run unopposed. Riding associations are in a furor, and unions such as the United Steelworkers are speaking out strongly in her support.

At the same time we are seeing the working class on the move. More than 1.4 million workers have struck since 2022. More than 55,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers fought a month-long strike against Canada Post. Solidarity on the picket lines and at rallies across the



Solidarity is key. ATU members join postal workers on the line



# Jubilation and trepidation as Assad falls in Syria

There is jubilation in much of Syria now that the government of Bashar - Al-Assad is overthrown. Hundreds of thousands are joining celebrations in cities across the country. This isn't surprising. He was a deeply unpopular dictator who killed tens of thousands of people and disappeared many tens of thousands more in his torture prisons.

Watching the scenes from the prison breaks, particularly the notorious Sadnaya prison, gives a sense of the nature of the Syrian state under Assad. Many of the prisoners are women and we even saw children as young as 2 years old being liberated. According to Amnesty International the regime executed 13,000 people between 2011 and 2015 at the prison.

Assad routinely worked with the US and other NATO countries during the war on terror - including torturing Canadian Maher Arar. At least 700 of the prisoners that have just been released are Palestinian - including many resistance fighters.

He also oversaw a vicious neoliberal attack on the country's infrastructure while hoarding billions for himself. He was no anti-imperialist and no friend of working people.

The rapid collapse of the government is testament to the lack of popular support. Soldiers abandoned their posts with little fight.

Any socialist should support the fall of a dictator. The people who are arguing that this was just imperial interference are wrong. It was a state on the verge of collapse for many years.

As has been the case since the initial uprising against the Assad government in 2011, there are 'campist' positions that confuse the situation and lead to really bad political takes from different groups.

On the one hand you have the line that wholeheartedly supports Assad and believes any action against him is orchestrated by the US and Israel - denying any agency for the Syrian people. On the other there are those who uncritically support the opposition and are purblind to the contradictions, complexities and context of the current state of the resistance.

Our position is based on the bedrock of socialism from below. We recognize the imperial and regional powers are doing all they can to manipulate the situation to their advantage - it would be shocking if they weren't - but the distortions that creates does not negate the genuine desire by Syrians for a liberation from a brutal regime. This sometimes means we will get into disagreements from both sides.

## Axis of resistance?

Assad is held up as a beacon in the fight against Israel but without any real evidence. Yes, he allowed weapons to be shipped to Palestinian resistance groups but he did so

to maintain power which involved deals with Iran, certain Iraqi factions and with Hezbollah, who all supported the regime. There is, as yet, no indication from any of the groups that have taken Damascus that this will change. We simply don't know yet.

And Palestinian resistance groups are applauding the overthrow. Hamas released a statement that read "The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, congratulates the brotherly Syrian people on their success in achiev-

leaders were part of Al-Qaeda until 2016. They may have "moderated" their positions on many fronts but that was mainly to gain a semblance of a base in Syria. We should expect their commitment to real democracy to be shallow.

And different groups operating within the borders of the state are backed by various local and imperial powers who are more interested in using the political vacuum that has been created to gain an advantage.



ing their aspirations for freedom and justice. We call on all components of the Syrian people to unite, enhance national cohesion, and rise above the pains of the past."

But the Israeli state is concerned. Assad was a known commodity but this new leadership in Damascus is a wild card. Israel is currently moving more equipment to the Golan Heights to thwart any potential attack and has started moving into the country to build a 'buffer zone' to protect Israel's borders.

## Differences from 2011

But at the same time we need to be clear that the groups that won on the battlefield this time - chiefly the Turkish supported Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) - bear little resemblance to the mass popular mobilization that occurred during the Arab spring in 2011. The

Turkey, as a sub-imperial power in the region, has multiple motivations: controlling Kurdish forces in northern Syria, sending Syrian refugees back, and being a strong party in the reconstruction of the new regime with an expanded economic power. The new political authority will also diminish Turkey's dependency on Russia against the Kurdish forces.

Turkey might also seek a new Syria with territorial integrity without giving autonomy to Kurds or anything that would resemble that. However, like all the powers, they don't know what this new episode will generate - a renewed mass mobilization or restoration of capitalism from above.

There are of course, US backed and Russian backed groups and bases in the north and east of the country that will try

and vie for expansion at the expense of the new Syrian state in whatever form it takes. There will be a push towards a sectarian conflict by countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel is looking for advantage to expand into the areas south of Damascus to expand the Zionist state.

But there is reason for optimism and socialists in Syria are hoping this opens space for more political activity. The release of tens of thousands of opposition activists could be decisive in the next weeks. Syrian refugees are returning to the country en masse and they have high expectations about what the new Syria could look like.

Syrian socialist Ghayath Naisse told *Socialist Worker* (UK) "It is a great moment in the history of Syria. There's joy because no more do we have this Assad regime—that authoritarian, bloody, dictatorship. But, alongside this joy, we have some fears because the agent of change is not the one we want it to be. There is so much fear because of HTS and what it is."

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We know that what happened in Syria last month has two dimensions. A leadership which pretends to carry the soul of the uprising 13 years ago although it merely uses its historical legitimacy. People in the street, on the other hand, are real and their memory matters more to us than the Turkish backed forces.

As yet, we simply don't know what the future will bring in Syria but as revolutionary socialists in Egypt wrote in a statement:

"This fall will only be a victory by rebuilding the popular movement that challenged the Syrian regime in the 2011 revolution. A mass movement that transcends sectarianism, participated in by all of the Syrian people."

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# The fight for democracy in South Korea

## Statement from The Coordination of the International Socialist Tendency

1 We salute all those who took to the streets in South Korea to oppose President Yoon Suk Yeol's attempt to impose martial law and forced him to withdraw his declaration six hours later.

2 The incompetence with which Yoon and his cronies conducted the coup is no reason for complacency. This was a serious attempt to silence the opposition majority in the National Assembly and to suppress all political activity. It was directed particularly against the workers' movement, with clauses in the declaration banning strikes and protests and ordering striking medical workers to return to work. If they are allowed a breathing space, Yoon and his right-wing supporters may learn from their mistakes and come back for a second try.

3 Korea has been a bitterly divided society ever since the civil war that followed the Second World War. This is expressed in the partition of the peninsula between North and South. The South Korean right continue to look back to the military dictatorship of 1961-87. Martial law was last imposed by General Chun Doo-hwan when he seized power in 1979 and brutally repressed the Gwangju uprising. Mass strikes by railway workers were needed to force out in 2017 the corrupt right-wing President Park Geun-hye, daughter of the original military dictator, Park Chung Hee.

4 Even after a workers' and students' revolt ended military rule in 1987, the threat from North Korea has been used to justify extensive restrictions of civil liberties under the National Security Law. Yoon played on the threat from the North in his speech last night,

denouncing 'the threats of North Korean communist forces and... the shameless pro-North Korean anti-state forces'. He has been a loyal ally to the United States, escalating the very dangerous confrontation with North Korea, supporting the containment of China, and

sending aid to Ukraine.

5 The attempted coup is of global significance. Other neoliberal presidents – Emmanuel Macron in France and Javier Milei in Argentina – are struggling to implement their policies without parliamentary major-

ities. If Yoon succeeded, this would be a tempting precedent. When Donald Trump returns to the White House in January, the Republicans will control all branches of the US government. But if things start to go wrong for him, he will be tempted to resort to directly anti-democratic methods. The storming of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, which Trump encouraged, failed when the national security apparatus finally intervened to stop it. We can't count on being so lucky again.

6 Yoon's incompetence has encouraged some on the left to say coups are outdated. This is foolish. The most important mass rising of the 21st century, the Egyptian Revolution of 25 January 2011, was crushed by the bloody military coup mounted by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on 3 July 2013. There has been a series of failed coups in Latin America, where murderous military regimes ruled within living memory.

7 The martial law declaration in South Korea is yet another symptom of the destabilisation of mainstream bourgeois politics since the global financial crisis. It must be utterly crushed and Yoon and his cronies driven from office and imprisoned as soon as possible. The indefinite general strike called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions must be prosecuted all-out till the Yoon administration is utterly ousted. If Yoon tries to hang on, then we will help build a worldwide protest movement in solidarity with the struggle to defend democracy in South Korea.

The Coordination of the International Socialist Tendency



Millions hit the streets to protest the attempted coup

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Late last year, Environment Minister Stephen Guilbeault announced that the carbon emissions for Canada in 2023 had dropped by 1% from the previous year. While admitting that this did not meet the targets for reaching stated medium and long-term goals, he expressed optimism that Canada was moving in the right direction. But to believe this is to live in a multi-dimensional fantasy world.

Firstly, there is no way of tracking actual emissions due to burning fossil fuels given the impracticality of direct sensing on exhaust pipes and smokestacks. These figures are actually calculated based on estimating the carbon impacts from different sectors of the economy and adding them all up. This can result in major discrepancies from the real figures.

Furthermore, this approach does not count other emissions, such as methane released as a result of fracking, gas pipeline leaks and melting permafrost. And most dramatically it fails to account for the immense emissions from wildfires, which in the record 2023 season was estimated to have emitted more than 4 times as much as the official numbers - a number more than emissions from many nations.

Crucially, the Liberal climate plan also relies on market forces to drive reductions, through subsidies, tax breaks and the like that purport to create the conditions for a transition of the economy. A centrepiece of these policies is carbon pricing - a tax on the quantity of carbon in various fossil fuels at the source combined with rebates to all

families that benefits those that use less fossil fuels.

In the context of the cost of living crisis, Polievre's conservatives has seized on the carbon tax to great political effect through their "Axe the Tax" campaigning. While Polievre's campaign is full of misinformation about the impact of the tax, it has galvanized

because it redistributes 90% of the money generated to individuals and households, not enough funds are made available to fund the real climate action we need - it leaves the onus for driving the transition we need on individual consumption of "planet friendly" commodities and cannot address the very real infrastructure changes needed for a real



Flooding in Spain killed hundreds and devastated whole regions

support amongst some layers of workers.

Many in the climate movement see it is a solution, but even with its redistributive aspects kept in mind, it is a regressive tax for many workers. Furthermore, precisely

transition.

The failure of the NDP to differentiate itself from these Liberal climate policies, as well as the role that provincial NDP governments have played in pushing similar

policies, means that the only opposition to the Liberals is coming from the right. While it is good that the NDP has ended the deal to prop up the hate Trudeau Liberals, that they did not do so on the basis of Green New Deal policies or when the Liberals denied workers the right to strike four times in 2024 means that they will struggle to provide a pole of attraction for people in the election that seems to be coming sooner rather than later.

The crisis in the Liberal government is part of a global crisis for the status quo worldwide. France, Germany and the US have seen the rise of the far right and populist right that will deny any need to transition away from fossil fuels, attacking immigrants and refugees to drive a wedge between workers who have an interest in confronting the system driving the multiple crises we face.

We can see this clearly in Canada, with the Liberal government responding to racist anti-immigrant rhetoric by changing the rules for migrant workers, international students and post-graduate work permit holders in a bid to lift their flagging electoral hopes. As long as the NDP sees the status quo as something to defend they will not be seen as an alternative by those left behind by anti-worker, inflationary policies that have done nothing to solve the climate and ecological crisis.

We need a politics of climate justice that sees the struggles of migrant workers and immigrants (whether or not they are fleeing climate crisis back home), Indigenous peoples asserting their inherent rights to the land and workers fighting for wages and working conditions as connected to the fight for a livable future.



## Keep fighting for Palestine

Israeli terror knows no bounds. The recent attacks on Kamal Adwan Hospital—the last functioning hospital in Northern Gaza—prove that the goal is the total destruction of the Palestinian people in the strip.

The hospital was under siege for weeks with bombings of patients, healthcare workers and anyone who lives near the site. The Israelis have blown the entire area to rubble and kidnapped any remaining staff and patients.

The media has gone silent on the continued killing. Gaza health officials put the number of dead at 45,000 but the death toll is likely much higher. There is no longer capacity to verify how many are killed each day.

The genocide has been so thoroughly normalized that war crimes such as the destruction of a medical facility don't even merit a mention in the mainstream press.

Each day we hear of more journalists, healthcare workers and aid workers being murdered but we have to find sources from within Gaza to verify the truth.

In the south, the situation is little better. Famine continues to grow as aid is stifled. According to a recent Oxfam report "Of the meagre 34 trucks of food and water given permission to enter the North Gaza Governorate over the last 2.5 months, deliberate delays and systematic obstructions by the Israeli military meant that just twelve managed to distribute aid

to starving Palestinian civilians. For three of these, once the food and water had been delivered to the school where people were sheltering, it was then cleared and shelled within hours."

Sally Abi-Khalil, Oxfam's Middle East and North Africa Director said "Gaza has been widely destroyed and the entire population is

suffering. The public sector has collapsed and the humanitarian system is on its knees. We plead with the entire international community – stop this, now. You have the diplomatic and economic levers to make Israel stop. Every day that passes without a ceasefire is a death sentence for hundreds more civilians."

More and more human rights groups are calling the killing what it is—a genocide.

Human Rights Watch released a study that details the deliberate Israeli policy of denying water to the people in Gaza. "This isn't just negligence; it is a calculated policy of deprivation that has led to the deaths of thousands from dehydration and disease that is nothing short of the crime against humanity of extermination, and an act of genocide."

Amnesty International has also come to the same conclusion. Agnès Callamard, the secretary general of the group said "Our damning findings must serve as a wake-up call to the international community: this is genocide. It must stop now."

The imperial backers of the Israeli state, the US, Canada and some European nations continue to turn a blind eye to the calls for justice and to end the killing.

For them, Israel is key to controlling the Middle East. They will never give up that advantage over potential imperial rivals.

The movement for Palestine must remain steadfast. It is a crushing to watch the horror unfold each day but there are more and more people who want to see an end to the genocide. They may not yet be on the streets with us but if we are relentless in broadening the movement we can and will stop Israeli terror.

Until victory and liberation!



## Environmental crisis: tasks for the movement in 2025

by: Brian Champ

As we head into 2025, solutions to the global climate and ecological crisis remain elusive despite the escalating and multi-dimensional impacts globally. 2024 witnessed the continuation of a new normal of rapidly strengthening hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico that ravaged the Caribbean and southern states of the US. A similar pattern emerged in the west Pacific as Typhoons devastated the Philippines, Vietnam and China. Bolivia and Venezuela recorded record wildfire carbon emissions and the west of North America was overwhelmed once again, exemplified by the town of Jasper, Alberta being overwhelmed. Heat domes created brutal conditions in North and Central America, North Africa and Southern Europe at various times through the year. Drought conditions in the Amazon and Zambezi basins affected agriculture and access to water for millions. Severe rainfall led to floods in Brazil, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kerala and Spain.

This is only a global snapshot of disasters that have led to direct deaths and injuries while also undermining the food, water, health and economic infrastructures for many millions of people.

The COP 29 meetings held in Baku, Azerbaijan late in the year failed once again to meet the challenge, with no agreement made to phase out fossil fuels. While a target of \$1.3 trillion was announced for public and private investments to be made in "climate positive" industries by 2035 in developing countries, it is only slightly more than half the amount their own economists say is necessary - in reality developed countries that are most responsible

for the unfolding crisis only pledged \$235 billion by 2035. The dominance of the proceedings by oil company executives, lobbyists and representatives from oil producing nations ensured the outcome that dooms current and future generations to continuing catastrophe.

The failures of these international meetings has driven local and global protests that have come in waves over the past 30 years, the strongest of which came during 2019 which saw global climate strikes that mobilized millions to confront the crisis. During that same wave Extinction Rebellion (XR) stormed onto the scene in the UK, shutting down the city of London for 11 days to demand solutions to the

crisis with popular participation by ordinary people in developing solutions. One of the XR demands raise was "Net Zero by 2025" which demonstrates how far actual solutions are from the aspirations of the movements. Unfortunately, the only piece of this demand that has been taken up is net zero - which serves to delay and undermine real action to reduce carbon emissions through the promotion of fraudulent and destructive carbon offsets and false solutions like carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS).

While most political forces and even the oil and gas industry pays at least lip service to addressing the climate crisis, the far right

continues to push climate denial and assert an anti-science worldview. When Hurricane Helene ravaged Florida and cause widespread destruction in the Carolinas, right wing conspiracy theories circulated claiming that the Democrats caused the storm to target Trump voters in swing states.

The far right at the centre of the "Freedom Convoy" that occupied Ottawa in early 2022 has a deep connection to the fossil fuel industry and was a key force re-asserting a proud affirmation of settler colonial ideology in the wake of the 2020 Shut Down Canada movement in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en land defenders and a 2021 that saw widespread questioning of the "moral authority" of the Canadian state after the confirmation of the thousands of graves of Indigenous children on the sites of former Indian Residential Schools.

The Trudeau liberals exemplify a particular approach to the climate crisis. While claiming to champion action on the climate crisis, funding for their climate programs was dwarfed by continuing subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. They bought the TMX pipeline when it was in trouble, outrageously claiming that its revenues would fund further climate action. Their policies deliberately obscure the differences between real climate solutions such as renewable energy production and false solutions such as improved fossil fuel efficiency and carbon capture and storage. At the international level continuing to ramp up oil and gas production and building pipelines for export shows that they are gaming the system to be able to claim reductions in emissions domestically, while actual emissions continue to rise.



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