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In 2019...

Take the path of most resistance



Vancouver action in solidarity with Unist'ot'en camp.

Photo: Michael yc Tseng

The fault-lines are clearer than ever. In 2018, the world got a lot more dangerous – but it also offered a glimmer of hope.

The far right is rising, emboldened by Trump and his political friends like Steve Bannon who are spreading hate in a way we have not seen in decades. From Bolsonaro in Brazil to Tommy Robinson in the UK to the nascent racist movements and parties in Canada, there is an unrelenting assault on solidarity and an increase in scapegoating of people of colour, immigrants and anyone who does not fit into the narrow box of the far right's ideals.

The gap between rich and poor grew wider providing a possible cadre for these new right forces. Fascism thrives on despair.

The economic crisis in 2008 lent justification for a renewed assault on working people's standard of living. Austerity is biting and people

are fed up. Rising rents, lack of good jobs and economic turmoil are forcing people to be dislocated from their communities.

The climate crisis is accelerating. We need to radically change the way the world operates to stave off environmental collapse and we only have a few years to make significant changes. The recent International Panel on Climate Change report essentially stated that we need to dismantle the capitalist system as it exists, but in response global leaders put forward the same failed policies.

Polarisation

Political polarisation has resulted in the collapse of mainstream political parties and brought out new right and left forces. Where liberal and social democratic parties embraced neoliberalism, they have been decimated, opening the door to the far right. Where they have moved left, they

have shown the possibility of a better world.

In Canada, the Trudeau liberals have failed to address the key issues of poverty, racism and environmental destruction. They instead are spending billions to build pipelines and to force them through Indigenous lands. But their reckoning is coming. The heroic stand of the Unist'ot'en people is a beacon to people throughout the country and will be a massive thorn in the side of the Liberals.

Fighting mood

This year there is a federal election in Canada. Anti-Liberal sentiment is, at this point, being captured by the Conservatives – unfortunately, the NDP seems incapable of providing the kind of bold policies that would be a pole of attraction for those who want to challenge the status quo.

But the resistance will not happen in Parlia-

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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.

ment. If we are going to challenge this downward spiral, it needs to be by building grassroots movements for change.

And the nucleus for that change is visible. The recent postal strike and the rank and file response to the back-to-work legislation proves that there is a mood for a fight. The movements such as the Fight for \$15 have drawn thousands into the resistance to austerity. The pipeline protests and the Extinction Rebellion blockades are bringing a new generation into the streets.

The “yellow vest” revolt in France shows that there are millions who are looking for a chance to challenge the system. But it is contradictory. The collapse of mainstream politics can move to the left or the right. To move it towards the left, to solidarity over division, we need to organize. Join us and help make 2019 the year the people fight back.

Climate action: governments stall while the people rise up

by **Valerie Lannon**

In a recreation of Nero fiddling while Rome burns, governments stand still while the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change points to the need for staying at or below a 1.5°C temperature increase by slashing global greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050.

BC NDP

While the BCNDP might want to lay claim to part of the victory around the halt to the TransMountain pipeline (even though the heavy lifting in court was done by First Nations, municipal and environmental groups), they showed their true colours with their enthusiastic support for the LNG Canada project, including TransCanada's Coastal GasLink pipeline.

The BC NDP climate plan announced in December has a goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, which is far too little, far too late.

Alberta NDP

NDP Premier Notley has never met a pipeline she didn't love, which means the ongoing expansion of the tar sands.

Alberta has not accounted for the \$260 billion liability to clean up the oil patch's disused wells, pipelines and toxic tailings ponds that store the waste from the mining of bitumen. The government has only collected \$1.6 billion in liability security from the companies.

In mid-December the federal government said it would provide \$1.6 billion in financial support to help Alberta's oil and gas sector expand into new markets. International Trade Diversification Minister Jim Carr said "The workers in this sector are valued parts of our national economy." The trouble is, the workers won't be seeing any of this money.

Notley announced she was impos-



Extinction Rebellion activists occupy a bridge in Victoria in December

Photo: Patrick Schreck

ing an oil production cut and has also floated a plan to buy more rail cars to ship more oil. "I hate to break it to you, but the whole world wants our product" Notley said. Sorry but not only does "the whole world" not want tar sands oil, the biggest hoped for market, China, is reducing its commitment to Alberta oil, as it remains cheaper for China to buy the lighter oil refined and shipped out of the U.S.

DoFo in Ontario

Ontario's Doug Ford got to work immediately, firing the province's Chief Scientist, taking the federal government to court to contest the latter's carbon tax, cancelling programs to help individuals and communities install solar panels, which had a disproportionate effect on First Nations looking to save energy expenses and lessen their carbon footprint. He cancelled the previous government's cap and trade

program. While that program did not really penalize the biggest emitters, the \$800 million in annual revenues would have retrofitted buildings and improved infrastructure.

Ontario's new "climate plan" instead of even minimally taxing big emitters now sees the public subsidizing industry for making minor reductions in emissions.

Hope in Quebec?

In the 2018 Quebec election, Québec Solidaire ran on a climate justice platform "transition énergétique", built on the success of the people of Quebec's opposition to fossil fuels, including forcing TransCanada to withdraw its application for the Energy East pipeline from the National Energy Board in 2017.

La planète s'invite has organized demonstrations measuring in the tens of thousands. And, as we have reported elsewhere, in November

of 2018, 500 major cultural, artistic and scientific personalities in Quebec signed a Pact for the transition to "save the planet" (www.lepacte.ca/english.html).

Environnement Jeunesse has launched a lawsuit against the federal government for setting inadequate carbon-cutting targets and failing to take the necessary action to meet them.

This means that the newly elected right-wing government of the Coalition Avenir Québec has been forced to maintain Quebec's cap and trade program and sound like a veritable champion of climate justice.

What else is happening on our side?

We need to strongly support the Unist'ot'en land and water defenders who are defying the TransCanada injunction for the LNG Canada project. More people are demanding

government action to immediately massively reduce our use of fossil fuels. In the UK Extinction Rebellion organized 5,000 people to occupy major bridges in London to draw attention to the issues. This was echoed in Victoria BC where a heavy-traffic bridge was occupied during rush hour with hundreds taking part. Starting in Sweden, school students are holding regular school walk-outs and rallies outside their legislatures to demand action.

Youth are mobilizing around the PowerShift 2019: Young and Rising conference to be held this February 14-18 in Ottawa (<https://power-shift-youngandrising.ca>)

In the U.S. young people are active the Sunrise Movement's Green New Deal (see sunrisemovement.org). The group is demanding the Democrats in Congress take up a much more aggressive climate justice position.

What's missing?

To win, we need the working class to be central and we need to respect Indigenous sovereignty. But labour is not sufficiently organized or mobilized around climate justice.

Demands around just transitions will only come from fossil workers if they are centrally involved in saying what the transitions should look like, as happened in Spain where coal miners were consulted and agreed to the government's plan to close all coal mines with adequate compensation and retraining for the workers.

We can also help by pointing out that oil, gas and pipeline companies are not the workers' "friends" but are as exploitive as any other boss. We can point to the government subsidies to industries, while there is nothing for the workers.

We need a socialist economy where we have direct control over energy, while respecting indigenous sovereignty, and where workers decide what will be produced and how, to ensure a sustainable future.

ODSP cuts: Ford's attack on Ontario's poorest

by **Melissa Graham**

Just a couple of months ago people in Ontario living on social assistance were waiting with bated breath while Ford's Social Service Minister, Lisa McLeod, spoke the words that would lay out their fate during this administration.

After months of drumming up fears that the social assistance programs of more than 1 million Ontarians might be gutted, what came out was a carefully worded script of poverty shaming and workfare. As expected, they're making Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) more restrictive and precarious.

The first line of attack will be to change the definition of disability, most likely to the definition used by CPP. Though the Ford government claims this will not affect current recipients, it still means that current applicants for ODSP with



Photo: Tracy Cory Mead

HIV, addictions, and mental health impairments may be forced to look for work when they are unable to do so, and try to survive on significantly less funds. For most, it's the difference between being able to afford a tiny one-bedroom apartment, and trying to survive in the shelter system. McLeod would offer no comment on whether any increases

in social assistance rates can be expected over the next three years.

The government also indicated that it will soon be harder to access supplementary benefits as well. Many people on social assistance rely on these supplementary benefits to be able to afford to eat.

No timeline

McLeod tried to cushion the blow by announcing changes to the amounts of money that people on OW and ODSP can keep when they work. However, these changes benefit people who work less rather than more. No timeline was given for when these changes will start.

Without any increase coming from the program itself, the announcement not only sets up a further divide between those who can work and those who can't, but is essentially asking people living in poverty to cover the difference in the cost of living themselves.

Suspiciously, the Ford government is allowing people on ODSP to keep more of their own wages than people on OW. When you combine that with a proposed change in definition that suggests people with disabilities are disabled because they are unable to work, as the CPP definition does, this poses the question as to whether people with disabilities might find themselves off the program for trying to use this "benefit".

All those who are deemed capable of working and on OW will be expected to comply with individual action plans using Ford's "Open for Business" website. Local municipalities will be financially incentivized to create a revolving door of temporary employment, pressuring people into the worst jobs to keep their statistical success rates high. The door is certainly open to the privatization of delivery and services as well.

Social assistance has long been a vulnerable program in Ontario, having never fully recovered from the cuts under Mike Harris.

ODSP and OW are the only benefit programs in the province not connected to a person's employment, making social assistance an easy scapegoat for the declining state of capitalism.

Forcing people off of social assistance and into precarious employment in the midst of a housing crisis won't move people out of poverty.

As we ring in 2019, it's important to remember to resist on behalf of those most vulnerable among us.

Ford wants "the people" to see social assistance recipients as a collective burden. In reality, these cuts are part of an ongoing attack they have already carried out on the minimum wage, workers' rights, and job protections.

In the coming months, we must continue this fight together.

Yellow vests in revolt

The yellow vest movement burst onto the streets of France in November and has been causing headaches for French president Macron ever since. Hundreds of thousands of people joined demonstrations, blockades and pickets. They were met with brutality by police.

But the revolt spread. Students and workers joined the demonstrations, each bringing a new set of demands. Disability rights activists stormed the runway at Toulouse airport, calling for greater accessibility and higher incomes.

The spark

The movement started as a revolt against a proposed gas tax, but quickly turned into a much wider uprising against austerity.

The mobilizations were nebulous, with different forces trying to put their stamp on the movement.

That the revolts would have heterogeneous demands is not uncommon. As Leon Trotsky said of the early stages of revolution in Russia, “The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime.”

The far right National Front initially supported the protests, but could not control them.

There were clashes between the far right and anti-fascist groups.

There was some debate about who was leading the demonstrations, but de-facto leaders emerged. And those leaders were clear about their opposition to the far right.

A statement issued by the Yellow Vests co-ordinators said, “It is important that every person who wishes to participate in this movement be able to do so, no matter their skin colour, country of origin, sexual orientation, gender or religion. The Yellow Vests are not the sheep of nationalists, fascists and other extremist movements.”

As the police repression increased, the demands of the movement radicalized and Macron had to back down. He stopped the gas tax and made other concessions. The uprising proves that protest works.

Yellow vests globally

The uprisings in France provided an inspiration for people globally – but the forces that have tried to seize the mantle of the revolt have been all over the map.

In Canada, the far right have attempted to create a yellow vest group. Their protests have been tiny, but they are relying on confusion about the nature of the protests to gain some traction for their ideas. They have seized on Trudeau’s carbon tax as a basis for their groups. The problem is that the gas tax in France and the carbon tax in Canada are one and the same. They are both an attempt to push the costs of the climate crisis onto working people.

Liberals are in no position to challenge the far right in this or any other circumstance, because it is their neo-liberal policies that have caused the kind of inequality that the yellow vests are opposing.

This is why as socialists we need to be clear about why we need to stop capitalism from pushing the cost of the system’s crisis onto workers.

Turkey gains from isolationist Trump

by **Alex Callinicos**

Just before Christmas Donald Trump took an important step towards controlling his own administration. By announcing the withdrawal of US troops in Syria he provoked the resignation of his defence secretary Jim Mattis.

Mattis immediately became a hero to Trump’s domestic opponents and the European media. This infuriated Trump, who vindictively reacted by bringing forward Mattis’s departure by two months.

Mattis and outgoing White House chief of staff John Kelly were the last of the generals with whom Trump initially stuffed his cabinet to make it seem respectable. But the outrage at Mattis’s departure shown by many liberal Democrats and European social democrats is puzzling.

As an article in Foreign Policy magazine pointed out, “It is often overlooked that Mattis oversaw a growth in the wars that he inherited from the Obama administration. There was a steady growth in airstrikes in declared warzones (such as Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan), as well as in non-battlefield settings (Somalia, Yemen, and Pakistan). There was also an expansion of the US military footprint in the Middle East, from 40,517 troops in mid-2017 to 54,180 by September.”

Perhaps worst of all, Mattis continued Barack Obama’s policy of providing in-air refuelling for Saudi warplanes carrying out their barbaric bombing campaign in Yemen. Some liberal hero. The widespread con-



Donald Trump

Photo: Gage Skidmore

demnation of Trump’s decision to cut down US military involvement in the Middle East is also bizarre.

The international relations academic Stephen Walt comments, “This situation reminds us how stupid it was for the United States to have invaded Iraq back in 2003. Had there been no Iraq War, there would have been no US occupation, no anti-American insurgency, no ‘Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia’, and therefore no Islamic State. Yet the strategic geniuses (including current US National Security Advisor John Bolton) who promoted this ill-fated scheme keep recycling new versions of the same policies today.”

But Walt goes too far in concluding that by pulling out of Syria, Trump “did the right thing in the wrong way”. Trump’s decision partly reflected his campaign promise to reduce

US involvement in foreign wars. But it also involved a strategic bargain with Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Support

US forces in Syria have been operating in support of the Kurdish nationalist YPG. YPG fighters provided the ground troops to drive Isis out of its Syrian strongholds.

But the YPG is politically aligned to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a long war to assert the national rights of Turkey’s Kurdish minority.

The US policy infuriated Erdogan, who has in recent years strongly backed the efforts of the Turkish military to crush the PKK. Turkish troops have been in Syria fighting the YPG for more than two years. Now Trump has given them a free hand against

the YPG, who may align with Syrian government forces. In exchange Erdogan has promised, patently insincerely, to “eradicate whatever is left of Isis in Syria”.

Trump will visit Turkey this year. This is a big success for Erdogan. He has also used the murder of the Saudi opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Kingdom’s consulate in Istanbul to strengthen Turkey’s position in the region.

In his resignation letter Mattis declared, “One core belief I have always held is that our strength as a nation is inextricably linked to the strength of our unique and comprehensive system of alliances and partnerships.”

He probably prefers the alliance with the Saudi dynasty to relying on the cunning and independent Erdogan.

More fundamentally, Mattis was reaffirming the traditional strategy of US imperialism since the 1940s of enhancing its power through the web of alliances that bind all the leading capitalist states to the US.

Trump is a vocal critic of this strategy, and has targeted the Nato alliance and Germany in particular. He tweeted in response to Mattis, “Allies are very important—but not when they take advantage of US.”

Mattis’s departure removes one more restraint on Trump pursuing the policy of economic nationalism that is the core of whatever ideology he has.

Expect the ride to get bumpier still.

This article is reprinted from Socialist Worker UK.

Trudeau’s warmongering in Yemen

by **Sid Lacombe**

Saudi Arabia is using Canadian made weapons in their war in Yemen.

The government of Canada wants us to think that they are monitoring the sale of weapons to the Saudis to make sure that they are not used against civilians. But researchers in Canada have found otherwise.

Anthony Fenton, a graduate student and author at York university, has been monitoring Saudi social media accounts which are routinely posting pictures of Canadian made weaponry in the field. This includes the Light Armoured Vehicles made by General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada that are being built in London Ontario and sniper rifles made by Winnipeg based PGW Defence Technologies.

In one video posted by Fenton, Saudi troops are seen riding a huge convoy of LAV’s in the Hajjan province in Yemen. In another picture a Saudi soldier is sitting with a sniper rifle in front of a portrait of the Saudi King Mohammed bin Salman.

These are a small sample of

the dozens of pictures that have been found. It is increasingly clear that Canadian made weapons are being used widely. And the weapons are not just “a few jeeps” as Justin Trudeau said publicly but are heavy assault vehicles



A Sky news report showing a Canadian “Bison” LAV in Yemen

designed for war.

Humanitarian crisis

The war on Yemen is being led by the Saudi government with the help of regional partners such as Egypt. More than 50,000 civilians

are 22 million people in need of humanitarian aid.

The UN has also accused the Saudi led coalition of war crimes citing reports of air strikes targeting civilians and confirmed attacks on residential areas,

markets, funerals, weddings, detention facilities, civilian boats and medical facilities.

Liberal response

The government of Canada, in typical Liberal fashion, is saying one thing and doing another. They have announced that they are greatly concerned by the humanitarian crisis and have, therefore, sent \$65 million in humanitarian aid to the country.

Of course, they have also sent \$285 million in weaponry to those causing the same crisis since 2015.

As Cesar Jaramillo of Project Ploughshares told the Toronto Star, “It’s a bit like helping pay for somebody’s crutches after you’ve helped break their legs.”

Given that the LAV deal is shrouded in secrecy at the behest of the Saudi government, it is unlikely we will hear any details of what is actually being sent to the country.

But if the Saudi military and soldiers themselves continue to post on social media, we may get a better sense of exactly how much blood is on the hands of the Trudeau liberals.

THE WORKING CLASS AND REVOLUTION

The centrality of the working class

by **Tom Leonard**

Under capitalism the working class has a great political advantage compared with the exploited classes of any previous economic system, such as feudalism in medieval Europe or the slave societies of the ancient world.

Capitalism concentrates workers together in great cities and towns. It has forced them together into factories, offices, warehouses and call centres. And it has educated workers far beyond the average level of culture of even previous ruling classes.

As a result, capitalism has made the modern working class a force that can organize into unions, parties, co-operatives, and other bodies and networks. Never has any exploited class in history had such a capacity to (potentially) take over and run society.

The very people whose lives are currently dominated by the fact that they produce the wealth and power of capitalism are the key to its transformation.

Socialism involves the great majority taking back, under their own control, the wealth they already produce. No vision of ‘socialism’ is worth anything if it leaves out the working class, actively organizing itself, taking control of the means of production and distribution from the capitalist class and setting out to remake society on the basis of real human need.

The road to socialism and the goal of socialism are inextricably linked.

Socialism cannot be achieved by acts of parliament or any kind of dictatorship or minority action. We completely oppose all those ‘top-down’ accounts of the way to achieve socialism that suppose that some small group of clever people - intellectuals, party leaders, MPs, guerrilla army leaders - can somehow emancipate humanity from capitalism.

For this reason, the International Socialists has always opposed the traditions of social democracy (embodied in Canada by the NDP) and Stalinism alike. Both involve a politics of ‘socialism from above’.

Socialism is only possible when millions upon millions of ordinary working people - women and men, black and white, gay and straight -

organize themselves democratically ‘from below’ and set out to take all forms of decision-making power away from the minorities who rule us today, and to impose their own collective power over every aspect of social and productive life.

The founding principle of a socialist society is the most extensive democracy, going far beyond the limited principles of ‘parliamentary democracy’ today. In order to secure and extend its rule the working class needs the active involvement of the masses of people who are currently excluded from decisions about the matters that shape their own lives.

Capitalism has a combination of two drives, both of which are direct obstacles to democratic popular control over social, economic and political life. The first is exploitation. The second is competition.

Exploitation – the extraction of surpluses from the labour of the majority by a minority – necessarily rests on hierarchy and lack of democracy. To maintain the flow of profits to a few,

cessity of competition between rival companies and states. Indeed, that competition compels the capitalist class to seek, constantly, to step up the rate of exploitation and to devise ever new methods of keeping control over labour. Competition drives capitalists to accumulate, to exploit.

Competition and the market also produce a world that nobody controls, that develops through convulsive crises. Private profit dominates, and general interests take a back seat - as a result the capitalist class has no effective answer to ecological threats like climate change.

Capitalist production, driven by competitive accumulation, rips the heart out of established communities, and today threatens the very existence of life on the planet. It prevents the rational collective harbouring and development of resources.

The sole practical alternative to the anarchy and destructiveness of capitalist competition and exploitation is the development and extension of cooperative and democratic planning.



Workers on general strike in Nigeria in September 2018 Photo: SWL

the social power of private and state property over us is upheld by whole armies of supervisors, foremen, managers, police, jailers and (ultimately) soldiers.

Replacing production for profit with production aimed directly at satisfying human needs means breaking these hierarchies and substituting direct democratic control over society’s means of production and distribution.

Capitalism, though, is not only marked by class exploitation. Its other core feature is ‘the market’ and the ne-

How, in the end, can human needs and wants be met unless human beings themselves choose - democratically - what their needs and wants are and where their priorities lie?

How else can plans be sensibly evaluated and changed unless the majority can engage in debate and decide how to alter things?

Such a world only becomes possible when workers organize themselves to take that world back from their ruling exploiters and place it under their own collective power.



National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa strike against Glencore mining

Workers create all the wealth under capitalism

There is a powerful myth in our society, promulgated by politicians of all major parties, by most of the media, by many economists and other academics, that businessmen (and occasionally women) are ‘wealth creators’. We’re told that without them there would be no investment, no jobs, no economy.

Using this same logic, if we imagined a feudal system, but without any lords, there would also be no land, right? Of course not.

What is true in current-day society is that the means of wealth creation are in the hands of a small class of people – capitalists, the famous ‘one percent.’ They own and control the major means of wealth creation, of production - the factories, offices, warehouses, roads, railways, docks, airports, and so on.

Often, indeed increasingly, through privatization, they own these resources privately. Sometimes nation-states own them. But in both cases, access to and decision-making control over these facilities is out of the hands of the mass of

the population.

So what about the rest of us? A minority still own or control the means of making a living - small farmers, shopkeepers, some of the self-employed (particularly professionals). The old term for these is the ‘petty bourgeoisie’. A few of them do quite well, but most scratch along putting in long hours and earning no more than average wages. Often, they move in and out of the working class.

The majority of us – the working class – can only make a living if they work for someone else, in return for a wage or salary.

The working class, though, are the key wealth creators. They produce most of the goods and services society needs - in workplaces that they neither own nor control.

In principle it makes no difference whether they work for private corporations or the state. In either case, they work under bosses they don’t choose, and they are paid only enough to live on, not to get ahead.

As every slave was made aware,

being a wealth creator doesn’t make you wealthy. The goods and services that workers produce belong not to them, but to their bosses. In the very process of producing things, the working class also reproduces the wealth of the capitalists. Microsoft workers don’t just develop software, they also develop Bill Gates’s immense riches, and thus his power over themselves. Workers’ daily activity under capitalism reproduces the ruling class, its profits and its control.

That’s what the term ‘exploitation’ means. Workers produce huge surpluses, which end up in the hands of those who rule over them, in the economy and in the state alike. The more workers work, the richer and more powerful their exploiters become.

Daily robbery

Capitalism is a system that depends on this daily robbery, carried out in every workplace every minute of every day. At its heart is the activity of the working class.

The working class, in this crucial

sense, has continued to expand as capitalism has developed across the world.

At the time that Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, the working class was still a tiny proportion of the world’s population, chiefly concentrated in a few countries in Western Europe.

Today, however, the working class in just a small country like South Korea is probably bigger than the entire world’s working class a century and a half ago.

Sometimes you hear it argued that the working class is shrinking, because ‘manual work’ is declining.

What a bizarre argument! ‘Manual’ means ‘by the hand’ – but somehow it’s supposed the nurses and computer operators, office workers and call centre operators don’t need hands. It’s not the colour of a person’s collar that determines their class, but their relationship to the means of production.

Nor do consumption patterns determine class. If they did, then we’d have to agree with the 19th century Lancashire commentator who sighed that the

working class was disappearing because shoes were replacing clogs.

Capitalism is the most dynamic system of production in history, and it constantly changes the make-up of its own workforce.

In 19th century Britain, the biggest sources of employment were agriculture, textiles and coal. As those sectors shrank in importance, the metal trades grew. In turn, these have been partially displaced by electronics-based industries and massive just-in-time international supply chains that depend on huge logistics hubs employing tens of thousands.

The composition of the working class has changed and will continue to do so, but the changes haven’t meant the working class has shrunk. Quite the contrary, it has continued to grow.

As the key exploited class in capitalism, the working class also possesses immense potential power, not just to halt capitalist production, but to transform society. That power is the key to the possibility of socialism.

Reviving lost labour traditions

by **Carolyn Egan**

As we begin 2019, we see the incredible polarisation between left and right around the world. There is the growth of the hard right in countries like Hungary, Austria, Poland and the election of Bolsinaro in Brazil. The tragic attack on Jewish worshippers in Pittsburgh horrified people everywhere by the depth of anti-semitism, which goes hand in hand with Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, homophobia and bigotry of all sorts.

But we are also seeing working people and the poor in all their diversity rising up in local and national struggles. In British Columbia, Indigenous people are making a courageous stand on Unist’ot’en lands against a new pipeline project. Trade unionists and other supporters occupied Liberal MPs’ offices and blockaded postal plants across the country in solidarity with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), and we have witnessed the gilets jaunes or ‘yellow jackets’ who took to the streets across France proclaiming that enough is enough, and they will no longer be treated with continuing and profound disrespect, as the rich get richer.

The intensifying attacks by neo-liberal governments and corporations have been creating an incredible volatility. Fear and anxiety for the future are being felt by so many. Parties of the centre are no longer drawing the support they garnered in the past and so many are looking for alternatives.

As a friend from Paris said, “the yellow jackets are amazing: ordinary people, not amongst the ‘poor’ but just above, who are tired of taxes the end of which they never see, and all these families with two earners can’t even buy gifts for their children’s Christmas. They want the law that suppressed taxes for the very rich to be annulled, among other things... They hate Macron, his arrogance, his contempt for them...so do I.” 84% of the French people support them. This speaks to a demand for something fundamentally different.

Trying to take advantage of this sentiment, white nationalist Steve Bannon, formerly an adviser to Donald Trump, is speaking internationally and has set up a headquarters in Belgium to co-ordinate the growing movements of the hard right in the lead-up to May elections to the European Parliament. 1500 people demonstrated against him when he spoke recently in Toronto, and local trade-unionists and community members are organizing against this move toward bigotry.

But as a Greek anti-fascist, anti-racist organizer I heard speak at a recent conference said, “They can be defeated. A number of years ago the Golden Dawn (a neo-Nazi organization) had seventy-six centres across Greece. Now there are only ten and they are no longer attacking immigrants and refugees in the streets.” This is because both local and national united fronts of trade unionists, anti-racist groups and organized socialists worked together and were able to build strong popular support against them.

These struggles are taking place all around us. When people start fighting back as the postal workers did in late 2018, it was critically important that cross-union solidarity erupted across the country when they were legislated back to work. This is a tradition the labour movement has lost, and we have to start standing in solidarity whenever people are fighting. College faculty won their demands following a cross-Ontario strike in 2018 because of their militancy and the support of students, other trade unionists and campaigns such as the Fight for \$15 and Fairness.

When anti-semitism, Islamophobia or racism show themselves as happened horrifically at the synagogue in Pittsburgh or the mosque in Quebec City – where Jewish people and Muslims were shot and killed by bigots emboldened by a right-wing movement – we have to stand up and say no to this hate. There is a struggle going on worldwide between the forces of the left and the right, and the intervention of organized socialists can make a difference giving hope that a better world is possible.



BOOK LAUNCH

Indigenous Sovereignty and Socialism

by **Jesse McLaren & Valerie Lannon**

Thursday, January 31, 2019 @ 7:00 pm
Another Story Bookshop
315 Roncesvalles Ave.
Toronto

Featuring Chief Myeengun Henry of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

Where we stand

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world’s blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital’s assault on the planet affect the world’s most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of “just transition” for affected workers.

Socialism and workers’ power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth’s resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Oppression

Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real, social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a “colony” of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec. We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples’ original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers’ revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Elections and democracy

Elections can be an opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. But under capitalism, they can’t change the system. The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class against the workers. These structures cannot be simply taken over and used by the working class. The working class needs real democracy, and that requires an entirely different kind of state—a workers’ state based upon councils of workers’ delegates.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers’ unity and solidarity. But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The revolutionary party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed. If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project, and join the International Socialists.

Challenging back-to-work legislation

by Pam Johnson

In December, Doug Ford called an emergency session of the Ontario legislature to pre-emptively legislate power workers back to work before they even went on strike. Shamefully, the Liberals and Green Party member voted with the Tories. Less than a month earlier, the Trudeau government legislated postal workers back to work to end their strike. An angry striking postal worker raised the very legitimate question, “Do we have the right to collective bargaining anymore?” Indeed, legislation to end strikes is becoming a theme of both Liberal and PC governments: Trudeau legislated postal workers in November. Ford legislated York University workers in July, Kathleen Wynne legislated Ontario college faculty in 2017. Harper’s Tories legislated Air Canada, CP Rail and Canada Post workers back to work in 2011 and 2012. Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government imposed a contract and banned strikes for teachers in Ontario in 2012.

Rand Formula: historic compromise Back-to-work legislation has been used by federal governments more than 30 times since 1950 and numerous times by provincial and municipal governments. This tactic arises from the historic compromise of the Rand Formula that set the terms for industrial unionism in Canada following the 1945 autoworker wildcat strikes in Windsor. Judge Rand, the arbitrator brought in to find a solution to the strike, ruled that unions had the right to collect dues from all workers who benefit from collective agreements, a victory for union rights. But, he also ruled that unions could only legally strike at the end of a contract. Any strikes not conducted in this framework were ‘illegal’ with heavy fines and penalties as the consequence. The Rand formula compromise was insurance for the employer against wildcat strikes. It has also had a

dampening effect on the trade union leadership. Although labour leaders were already disinclined toward militant action without a push from below, the Rand Formula fortified that position. Still, back-to-work legislation rarely survives a legal challenge because the law requires proving that the effected workers provide an ‘essential service’. Yet, this did not deter current Labour Minister, Patty Hadju from arguing that the CUPW strike posed ‘an emergency for many small firms and for Canadian consumers’, an implausible argument that the need for holiday deliveries trumps workers’ health and safety. But back-to-work legislation has increasing become the norm when employers have not been able to starve out workers on a strike or lock-out. The impact is a complete undercutting of the bargaining process taking the incentive away from the employer to negotiate when they know the government will step in.


New mood of solidarity The frustration and anger at this attack on workers’ rights hit a boiling point when postal workers were legislated back in November. A burst of actions across Canada and Quebec by trade unionists shows a new mood of solidarity to challenge anti-union actions by governments and employers not seen in decades. It also exposes the collusion between governments and employers that is undermining workers rights and threatening to dismantle decades of struggle. The NDP has stuck to its principles and voted against back-to-work legislation, but its numbers cannot carry the day. Trade unions have relied on the courts to challenge legislation but even when they win, it is always a matter of too little and too late. **Limits of the law** It will take the militant action and engagement of rank and file members to push real action forward. There is a history of labour struggles that pushed



Solidarity at South Central

past the limits of the law to fight for workers: • It was a postal worker wildcat strike in 1965 that led to the unionisation of the entire public sector. • In 1978, postal workers went on strike and defied back to work legislation. CUPW leader, Jean Claude Parrot went to jail for defying the law. • In 1999, Saskatchewan nurses stayed on the picket lines for a week after the province passed legislation ordering them back to work. • 38,000 B.C. teachers launched a wildcat strike on Oct. 7, 2005 that lasted 10 days. • In 2012, a wildcat strike broke out at Pearson airport when three Air Canada workers, members of IAM, were suspended for ‘slow clapping’ Labour minister Lisa Raitt. • Recently, 2,000 crane operators in Quebec walked off the job in June and GM workers in Oshawa walked out the moment the plant closure was announced in November.

Building the Resistance now The continuing lack of militant leadership by trade union leaders has created a vacuum that will be filled either by workers’ despair or workers’ struggle. But the postal worker strike points to the willingness to fight against the continuous attacks by employers and governments on working conditions. The solidarity with CUPW by the labour movement and community shows that there is a mood for solidarity to match the mood of resistance.



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What ties together these job losses and the hundred thousand jobs lost in Alberta over the past year is the huge sums of taxpayer money that have been handed out to these companies, like the \$4.5 billion bailout of Kinder Morgan, by Liberal and Tory governments provincially and federally. Billions have been handed out to hugely profitable companies and their filthy rich CEOs by governments of all stripes in the name of “saving jobs”.

GM received over \$10.8 billion from the Harper Tories and never paid back over \$2.8 billion of it. If given directly to the 2,500 losing their jobs they each would have received over \$1 million. Instead, Doug “open for business” Ford hasn’t raised a finger to help the workers or offer them a bailout, and Trudeau has offered little but a meagre possibility of an increase in EI.

Bombardier received \$372.5 million from Trudeau and over \$1 billion from the Quebec government to keep or create jobs. In response, Bombardier CEOs gave themselves \$10 million in raises, and then announced this current wave of layoffs.

Maple Leaf announced its new poultry facility in London with Ontario Tory premier Doug Ford gleefully announcing the Government handout of \$34.5 million, or \$115,000 for each worker Maple Leaf CEOs are throwing to the curb. Not to be outdone, Trudeau handed over \$28 million to the hugely profitable company that made \$164 million last year alone.

The current union leadership seem unwilling to meet these attacks by mobilising and organising rank and file members. In Ontario, the OFL has responded to Ford’s attacks with press releases and UNIFOR’s leadership has asked members to call Doug Ford to stop GM from shutting down. Such initiatives are woefully inadequate and will not stop the attacks on workers rights.

Previous attacks such as these have been stopped. Plant occupations at the GM plant and others in the 1990s stopped closures and cuts. Where they couldn’t stop the closures, they exacted a steeper price from the companies for severance.

The GM plant in Oshawa has billions of dollars of equipment that can be used as leverage and open the door to demanding the government nationalise the facility to create green technologies. This is what Caterpillar workers in Mississauga did in the late 1980s. They occupied their plant to protest its closure and demand it be converted into a green vehicle facility.

Beyond such important actions, it is clear that the labour movement needs a new radical strategy to combat the employer offensive. The current strategy by some of looking to Trudeau has been shown to be an absolute failure and we can’t afford to just wait until the next election to get rid of Ford.

The strategy by some unions of calling for bailouts of corporations to “save jobs” is also clearly a failure, as the current wave of layoffs shows.

There is an appetite to fight these attacks. On the day after Trudeau ripped away the right of CUPW to strike, workers from other unions set up an illegal picket line in Vancouver and shut the Pacific sorting facility down. In Hamilton, activists from the IWW and other unions shut the city’s east end sorting depot down in solidarity. The labour movement needs to build on this type of solidarity and spread it across the country to make a shambles of Trudeau’s anti-union legislation and force Canada Post to the table.

When workers in Ontario faced the prospect of the Tories forming a government under right-to-work supporting Tim Hudak, the OFL organised huge cross-union meetings to mobilise and co-ordinate a response on the shop floor and in communities to stop Hudak. In a short period, Hudak fell massively in the polls. We need local labour councils to be calling similar emergency stewards’ forums to mobilise union members and begin to organise our workplaces and neighborhoods to take on both Trudeau and the Fords of the world.

This album kills fascists: Songs of resistance

by D’Arcy Briggs

Marc Ribot may not be a household name in the music world, but fans of rock and the New York avant-garde music scene have surely heard his work. With a career almost hitting its 5th decade, Ribot has released 25 solo albums, was the frontman for both Los Cubanitos Postizos and Ceramic Dog, and has been a session musician for Tom Waits, Elvis Costello, and the Black Keys, just to name a few.

His latest album, ‘Songs of Resistance 1942 - 2018,’ is both a bleak and inspiring and guitar-driven folk dive into the rich canon of protest music that exists internationally, as well as a few original pieces. The album was inspired by the rise of Trump, as well as the far right seen around the world. “I am alarmed by Trump and the movement he’s part of,” Ribot reports in a press release for the album. “I’ve spent a good chunk of my life running around the world on tour—I’m kind of an accidental internationalist—and I see that he’s not an isolated phenomenon. And if we don’t deal with what is going on, it is going to deal with us.”

For Ribot, songs can be a key marker in creating a unified voice. “Songs can also remind us that we’re not alone spiritually or historically.” Much as we are seeing the rise of the far right in Brazil, Canada, Britain, the US, and many other countries, it is important to listen to those voices who sang before and use them to help build for today’s struggle.

As mentioned above, the album draws on international musical traditions of anti-fascist anthems. The handful of interpretations are drawn from US civil rights and gospel hymns, the WW2 Italian partisans, and Mexican anthems. The album opens with the US-rooted, and decidedly free-jazz inspired “We are Soldiers in the army,” in which vocalist Fay Victor seemingly



announces her dedication to the movement over a cacophony of drums and saxophones.

Bella Ciao

The next track is easily one of the highlights of the album, a haunting rendition of “Bella Ciao” featuring Tom Waits. The sparse banjo and guitar ebb and flow between Waits’ rattling performance. The song was also chosen as the album’s first single. “Mussolini’s voodoo economics led Italy into a generation of poverty and a senseless war with hundreds of thousands of Italian casualties—including over 30 thousand Partisans,” Ribot explains of the song’s origins. “This song tells the story of one of them. At a tender moment when he or she is saying goodbye to her lover (Bella Ciao=goodbye, beautiful) and trying to imagine what it means to fight for freedom.”

Other album highlights include a version of “Rata de dos Patas” which takes the original Spanish lyrics in which a spurned lover is comparing their ex-lover to all kinds of untrustworthy animals, and adds in rap sections targeting Trump as well as soundbites featuring many

of Trump’s racist remarks. The impactful “The Militant Ecologist” is based on the Italian work “Fischia Il Vento,” and features beautiful vocals in which our hero marches on for her greater cause. Another amazing track is “Knock that Statue Down,” which focuses on the progressive removal of statues commemorating racist US figures. “We heard some fool shouting something about the heritage of a Mr. Robert E. Lee,” sings Ribot in the song’s first verse. “I said you better find someone else to be proud of because we’re sick and tired of white supremacy.” The chorus changes with the song’s progression, but generally carries the lyrics “We’re gonna knock that statue down / we’re gonna knock that no good statue down.”

There simply isn’t a weak track on the album, all due to the inspiring content and inspired arrangement and care given to each song. Some songs are quiet and focus on the emotional weight of fighting for freedom, while others are energetic and act as musical lightning-rods for inspiring action. A portion of the album’s proceeds are donated to The Indivisible Project, an organization that helps other groups resist and fight the Trump agenda through social and legislative efforts. Ribot has been an activist and musician for many years, and hopes that this album can help inspire new people to become involved in anti-fascist resistance and help keep the flame burning for those who continue the fight. “When democracy is threatened, people who value it need to work together to defend it. When basic human rights are threatened by racists, sexists, and homophobes, we need to respond. I don’t know what ‘the answer’ is: but I know this: If we’re not able to work together, we’re going to get our asses kicked separately.” Songs of Resistance serves as an inspiring piece for those who shout “No platform for racists, no platform for fascists!”

Roma speaks to today

by Michelle Robidoux

The opening shots alone make it worth seeing *Roma*. In just a few minutes, this extraordinary film manages to pack in a universe of place and time. And it just gets better from there.

Roma is a largely autobiographical film by writer/director and cinematographer Alfonso Cuarón (*Gravity*, *Y tu mamá también*). Set in 1970 in Mexico City’s Colonia Roma, a well-off neighbourhood, it is the story of a middle-class family told mainly through the eyes of Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio). A domestic worker from Oaxaca, she performs all the drudgery work of the household – but she also tucks her employer’s kids in at night, and gently wakes them up in the morning. She is ‘part of the family’ – except that she is not.

In subtle and brutal ways, we are reminded throughout that although she tends to every need of the family, the family does not tend to her every need. As she and her fellow domestic worker Adela quietly talk, switching from Spanish to their native Mixtec, she learns that her mother will lose her home to landlords stealing the land. She lives this torture in isolation, unbeknownst to her employer’s family. This private drama is situated in a broader context of the battle between Mexico’s impoverished Indigenous and Mestizo population and the very rich, who are primarily of European ancestry.

Some of the scenes are surreal, tragic and comic at the same time: at Christmas, a wealthy family and its entourage tromp uselessly about,

trying to put out a fire that has been mysteriously set on their estate. Allusions to peasant resistance to land encroachment hang in the air.

Cuarón’s film is dedicated to Liboria Rodríguez, the Indigenous woman who raised and cared for him in a dysfunctional family. It also weaves throughout a subtle homage to other childhood influences, with nods to the fascination with the “space age” that captured the imaginations of children – rich and poor – in that era.



Gender, race and class

At first, *Roma*’s slow pace is almost unnerving, as sounds (in Dolby Atmos) literally surround you. Filmed in black and white in 65 mm, with sparse dialogue, it is a visual and audible immersion.

What is successively revealed, from the first shots of a paving tile washed in soapy water, to the household, to the cityscape and beyond, is a society with its colonial past and tension-

filled and violent present. In the process, a multilayered picture emerges of the intricate interconnections of gender, race and class.

One of the most exciting aspects of the film is the performance by Yalitza Aparicio, a pre-school teacher from Tlaxiaco, in Oaxaca state. This was her first time acting, and she drew on her own experience and roots to play this role. Aparicio’s mother is a nanny, and Aparicio herself has experience as a domestic worker.

Reflecting on the film’s portrayal of the Corpus Christi massacre of 120 students in 1971, Aparicio explained in a recent interview how her own experience as a student-teacher in Oaxaca connected with these events: “I was able to relate to the time happening in the film because unfortunately there are lots of things happening that are very similar, even today. There was recently the case of the teachers, from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College. They [43 student teachers] disappeared, which is so horrible and terrifying. I was able to witness many of these tragedies as a student. I was there.”

Roma is steeped in the political turmoil of the era and society it portrays. But it speaks to so many of the issues we confront today, from the treatment of domestic workers, to the impunity of governments, to the suppression of Indigenous language and rights. If you can, do yourself a favour and see it on the big screen, to truly experience the foregrounding of the domestic worker who is too often – almost always – unseen and unheard.

Mobilizing wins a victory for renters in Vancouver

by Lisa Descary and Bryan Jacobs

On Tuesday, December 4th, something unprecedented happened: renters won a significant victory against big business landlords in Vancouver with the passing of COPE city councillor Jean Swanson's motion to protect tenants from renovations.

Despite the efforts of several councillors (including NDPer Kennedy Stewart) to water down some of the protections by referring them for "further study," the most important section of the motion protecting renters from renovation passed with a unanimous vote. It is a testament to the power of the tenants' rights movement that it was able to bring out more than a hundred renters on multiple days to rally in the rain and speak to the motion in council chambers. Apparently, even City Hall staff commented that they'd never seen such a large crowd there before. In the end, mobilizing won the day: even the right-wing NPA city councillors ended up voting for Swanson's motion.

Renoviction: nightmare for tenants

As renters know all too well, Vancouver's dysfunctional housing market, with its sky-high rents and less than one percent vacancy rate, encourages landlords to turf out long-term tenants, since current weak rent control laws allow landlords to vastly increase rent once a tenant leaves. While eviction was supposedly carried out to allow landlords to complete renovations, the real goal was to raise their income by jacking up the rent.

This loophole led to landlords' agents pressuring tenants to leave, sometimes offering them lump sum "cash for keys" payments to vacate their units on the spot. However renters quickly discover there is nowhere for them to go.

Swanson's motion will protect many (but unfortunately not all) renters from renovation.



Stop renovations now!

Photo: Nat Lowe

It states that landlords will now be required to allow renters to temporarily vacate their unit during renovations, and that the renters will have the right to come back to their unit with no increase in rent after renovations are completed. While much of the credit goes to Swanson for putting forward this motion and refusing to back down or water down her proposal, she has been adamant throughout this fight that without the movement of tenants' rights activists, most of them members of the Vancouver Tenants Union (VTU), she couldn't have achieved this win.

How did COPE and the VTU do it?

This movement for tenants' rights didn't appear overnight; it is the result of over a year of mobilizing people, both as part of Swanson's city council run and the VTU's door-knocking in apartment buildings that has built up its profile and its roster of activists. Many of the dozens

of renters who shared their stories in speaking to the motion at city council explained that they joined the VTU after it helped them deal with issues with their landlords. One tenant explained "I have developed an anxiety disorder as a result of the harassment and continuous eviction notices served by my landlord," while another explained that they had been hospitalized twice for exhaustion because of dealing with their landlord's mistreatment. Many shared stories of being afraid to ask for repairs to be done or to protest illegal rent hikes, lest they be evicted and have nowhere else to go. Thankfully, Swanson was able to push for firm start times for this motion and for time to be allocated in council for these renters to speak, something that not all councillors supported.

Greens and NDP exposed

While Pete Fry of the Greens was a surprise ally

in the fight to pass this motion, the other Greens on council, Adrienne Carr and Michael Wiebe, were not as supportive. Carr was happy to side with Mayor Kennedy Stewart in watering down the motion by referring the section that would give more teeth to rent control to council staff "for further study." This seemed like a move to appease landlords who want the right to jack up rents between tenants and don't want rent control tied to the unit. Councillor Wiebe went even further, making a pathetic speech that argued the measures would have "unintended consequences" for the "good landlords". He went further to criticize the exuberant VTU members in the audience who were cheering Jean and booing her opponents, suggesting we were acting "against democracy!"

The Greens' true colours were revealed a few weeks later when they voted alongside the NPA to pass a motion criticizing the new provincial housing tax on mansions worth over \$3 million. Swanson's lone voice also wasn't enough to defeat a proposed \$10 million increase to the Vancouver Police budget.

What's Next?

While the activists in COPE and the VTU deserve a chance to rest and celebrate their win, they aren't likely to rest for long. The fight for renters' and working class folks' rights isn't over. The landlord lobby was taken by surprise by the swift and effective mobilizing of Swanson's supporters, but it is no doubt preparing its counterattack. Activists meanwhile have pledged to be ready to converge on City Hall again when the referred sections of Swanson's renovation motion return to council for another vote. In the meantime. You can bet that COPE and VTU activists will continue to mobilize, and now that they have a win under their belt, they're going to be even harder to defeat!

If you are in Vancouver, why not join the VTU? Find the group on Facebook at @tenantsunion.yvr.

Corporate Canada wages war on workers

In the span of a month, Corporate Canada and their political allies, the Liberal and Tory parties, have waged a war on working people in Canada.

In just 30 days CEOs have announced the slashing of 6,500 union jobs, Trudeau has ripped the democratic right to strike from 64,000 postal workers and Doug Ford has slashed the minimum wage, rolled back workers' rights in Ontario, and pre-emptively, legislated power workers back to work.

The announcement by General Motors saw thousands of GM workers walk off the job and shut production down for the day before being instructed to return to work by the UNIFOR leadership. At the same time this was happening, members of CUPW were staging last ditch actions to protest Trudeau's back to work legislation against them.

These two days, and the previous rotating



Scabby the Rat joins pickers at the IATSE line

Photo: Michael yc Tseng

strikes by CUPW showed the possibility of resisting the renewed employers' offensive, and the willingness of workers to fight when given a lead in Canada and Quebec.

The announcement by General Motors to shutter its Oshawa Assembly plant as part of its plan to shut production down at 5 plants cut thousands of jobs, 2,500 in Oshawa alone. This from a company that made \$2.8 billion in the past 3 months.

This news came on the heels of Bombardier announcing it was slashing productions and cutting 2500 jobs in Quebec and another 500 in Ontario on top of thousands of redundancies at other facilities globally.

As if this wasn't enough, Maple Leaf announced it was closing three facilities and building a new production facility in London at the cost of 300 total jobs, and possibly causing hundreds of workers to face relocation or job loss.

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