

# SocialistWorker

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## NEW YEAR'S REVOLUTIONS



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Facts & figures

**1**  
Number of degrees Celcius of global warming since pre-industrial times, which has already produced climate disasters

**1.5**  
Number of degrees Celcius of global warming that the Paris climate talks called for as a limit

**3.5**  
Number of degrees Celcius of global warming that that government’s current climate action plans guarantee, which would be catastrophic

**700**  
Number of recommendations from previous investigations into missing and murdered Indigenous women

**110,000**  
Number of dollars raised by the people in Peterborough to help the Muslim community rebuild its mosque after it was burnt by racists

**400,000**  
Number of workers in the Common Front who went on strike December 9 against austerity

In their own words

*“We have seen Trudeau use a lot of positive language on taking strong action on climate change, and not give a lot of details. We’re really worried we’ll see a lot of strong language without the strong action to back it up.”*  
—Canadian youth delegate Sophie Harrison at the Paris climate conference

*“The Paris accord is a trade agreement, nothing more. It promises to privatize, commodify and sell forested lands as carbon offsets in fraudulent schemes such as REDD+ projects. These offset schemes provide a financial laundering mechanism for developed countries to launder their carbon pollution on the backs of the global south. Case-in-point, the United States’ climate change plan includes 250 million megatons to be absorbed by oceans and forest offset markets. Essentially, those responsible for the climate crisis not only get to buy their way out of compliance but they also get to profit from it as well.”*  
—human rights lawyer Alberto Saldamando

*“The transition to an equitable, sustainable energy system can only occur if there is decisive shift in power towards workers, communities and the public.”*  
—Trade Unions for Energy Democracy



Justice for Indigenous women

by VALERIE LANNON

**On December 8, 2015, the Liberal government launched the planning phase of its inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. What can we expect to see? What would Indigenous people like to see in this inquiry?**  
*Socialist Worker* interview with Magen Cywink of the Whitefish River First Nation, whose sister was murdered in 1994 in London Ontario. She has volunteered with It Starts With Us and No more Silence.

**SW: What will you be looking for in the inquiry process?**  
Firstly, don’t just do the inquiry to gain voter support. Action, should happen along with the inquiry but begin by looking at prior reports, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s, and identify immediate action items. I will look for:  
• Action right away... there have been 700 recommendations from previous reports and they are very doable. For example, the BC government is now (finally) putting in a shuttle bus on the Highway of Tears in northern BC. The government needs to look at these previous reports’ recommendations and see what we can do tomorrow and in the next few months. Just get it done!

• Earmarking the use of most of the government’s \$40 million budget for implementation, because if they ask for additional funds later, it could be a problem. If no action is taken after the inquiry, it will just be a bunch of paper on the shelf.  
• Be financially accountable e.g. where is the \$40 million being spent, and on which phase? Is the money going on lawyers or on travel costs for families? There needs to be financial reporting along the way, to avoid government waste. Again, most funds should be spent on implementation of recommendations.

**SW: What problems do you foresee?**  
When the Ministers announced the inquiry last week, they also said they will meet with families that week. But most families were not given any prior notice of this; so whoever could afford to be in Ottawa could go. They will go across Canada, but lots of women and families in northern Ontario and elsewhere can’t easily get to Ottawa. Who will pay their travel costs? What about remote communities?  
(SW: on a related note, other families are concerned that the Justice Minister has not confirmed whether families will be given legal standing at the MMIW

inquiry hearings or be funded to participate. The unwillingness to do so for BC’s 2010 Missing Women Commission of Inquiry—conducted in the aftermath of the Pickton murders—headed by Justice Oppal, severely undermined community confidence in its process.)

**SW: What are some of the actions or recommendations you would like to see?**  
• I would like to see police services overhauled because of their racism, which even the RCMP has admitted. But how do you really investigate this given that police officers have both public and private identities?  
• Secondly, we need programs that can make a difference for girls and women and keep them safe. Have the programs created by the families, because we know what went wrong, e.g. a toll-free hotline to help people get through trauma.  
• Create programs for children, help them understand that touching is not acceptable, and make it child-friendly  
• Train family members who are healthy, who have dealt with trauma, and make them available for other families to talk to, e.g. about expectations and to give guidance

• Justice system—total overhaul because there is no deterrent to not murder, e.g. appeals, poorly handled investigations, so the murderers get off  
• Everyone wants a quick fix but there is no easy fix to colonialism and trauma; it will take 30 years to fix (or more)  
• We need to stay vigilant, so we need a review process e.g. every five years to make sure the process stays on track and is working, or revise the process  
• There has to be a watchdog to ensure government does what they said they would; what happens if the government changes? What’s the insurance we have that this inquiry will be completed and implemented? Who can guarantee that?  
• Have a grievance claim liaison for families who have inquiries or complaints about the process.

**SW: Are you optimistic about this inquiry?**  
It is going to take time, and the numbers of missing and murdered women will keep climbing for awhile. But we’ve got to stay on top of it and what how we’re doing and how we’re doing it, to ensure we have healthy families and communities.

Labour against climate change

by LISA DESCARY

**Trade Unions for Energy Democracy is trying to build a movement to take action on climate change.**  
Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) includes unions and trade union federations from 17 countries, including Canada. The TUED website explains their goals, and why unions must be involved in the fight against climate change:  
“We are facing an energy and climate emergency that amounts to a planetary crisis. The growing levels of fossil based energy are stretching planetary limits by raising greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution to alarming levels. This is affecting the health and quality of life of millions. The power of fossil fuel corporations has made it practically impossible to protect the health and safety of workers and commun-

ities, and union representation is under attack across the globe. It has become increasingly clear that the transition to an equitable, sustainable energy system can only occur if there is decisive shift in power towards workers, communities and the public.”  
This partnership between unions and climate activists is encouraging to see. While the 1% try to sell us the idea that we must decide between jobs and the environment, we know this is not the truth. Working people must push for a just transition to clean energy, and trade unions can be part of demanding that governments act on such a plan.  
**Labour against fracking**  
One of the concrete actions that TUED has recently undertaken that is of

particular interest to us in Canada is a campaign called Trade Unions Against Fracking. Their statement calls for a global moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for shale gas, coal seam gas and shale oil, as this fracking is hazardous to the health of workers and people living in communities near the fracking wells.  
Their website summarizes the effects of fracking; it depletes aquifers and contaminates water supplies, as well as releasing large amounts of methane trapped in the shale. This release of methane makes fracking worse than coal in its effect on global warming, since methane is such a potent greenhouse gas.  
This campaign has recently been endorsed by several Canadian unions, including PSAC, CUPE, ATU (Amalgamated Transit

Union) and the Canadian Labour Congress.  
Building connections between the trade union movement and the climate justice movement is essential if we want to fight to stop climate devastation. It’s not just that there are no jobs on a dead planet; collective action, through our unions and social movements is our best chance for forcing our government to act now on climate justice.

*If your union would like more information on the campaign, or would like to endorse, you can contact Unions Against Fracking at <http://unionsagainstfracking.org/contact/>*

Canadians with Disabilities Act

by MELISSA GRAHAM

**Canada has a new government, and with that new opportunities for change, new potential, new possibilities. Among those possibilities is the Canadians with Disabilities Act.**  
It seems that Trudeau has taken up the call, and made this potential Act a part of the mandate for our new Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Carla Qualtrough.  
But what does this mean in terms of real change in the disparity of equity that disabled people face across this country?

There are some promising points here, Minister Qualtrough has a background as a human rights lawyer and Paralympian; this suggests that she is familiar with the struggles we as disabled people face.  
Unfortunately, this potential legislation is already being framed in terms that will favour some of us over others. There are people who firmly believe that this national idea should follow in the path of provincial legislation that came before it, such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

This legislation was not so much focused on preserving our rights, as it was about getting disabled people involved in the economy, employment and industry. These are still important points, but sometimes the more privileged disabled people tend to forget the many other hurdles that keep so many more of us behind:  
• The need for accessible, affordable housing.  
• Protection of the rights of parents with disabilities.  
• Accessibility in health-care, including Indigenous Peoples and refugees.  
• Police training in effectively and sensitively working with disabled people.  
• Distribution of Health and Social transfers to address the inequities in the systemic barriers that exist between provinces and territories.  
These are just a few examples, I’m sure there are many more. This is why I’m asking all disabled people in Canada and their allies to make their voices heard.

*Share the campaign #AccessibleCanada4All to remind the Liberals that real change is not a continuation of the status quo, where only the most advantaged of us move forward. This is our time. Let’s make it count.*

Socialist Worker

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## Don't let Paris tragedy produce war and racism

**The appalling killings in Paris are horrific. Our sympathy is with the victims and their families and friends. But we must not allow this atrocity to fuel racism and Islamophobia.**

Racists and right wingers will seek to use these deaths to justify more imperialist interventions and whip up Islamophobia. We must not let them be exploited to give a boost to the far right.

Some politicians will try to put up extra barriers against refugees. We should remember that many refugees are fleeing violence and war. They are not the perpetrators of murder, they are the victims of it.

In these dark times, more than ever, we say refugees welcome here, open the borders.

There is no excuse for the mass killings of innocent people on a night out in Paris. Such killings are not by any genuine definition a

blow against imperialism or capitalism. They will make life harder and more dangerous for Muslims and black and Asian people. They will encourage the warmongers.

There is no excuse, but there is a context for what has happened. Two and a half centuries of colonialism and imperialism have left a bitter legacy of hatred across much of the world against the West. More than 15 years of the “war on terror” have killed over a million people and driven millions more from their homes. There is bound to be a response.

The horror in Paris last night is replicated on a brutally regular basis in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine and Yemen. Western governments or their allies have wrecked such societies and presided over mass murder. Western intervention, and its support for counter-revolution in the Arab

world, produced Isis. French planes have been bombing Syria and Iraq for nearly two months.

When French forces invaded Mali in 2013 it was the eighth country where Western powers had taken military action in just four years.

Before the Paris attacks David Cameron and the British media were celebrating the claimed drone killing of “Jihadi John”. We can now see how little protection the West’s wars in the Muslim world offer its own citizens.

Ultimately those who died in Paris are themselves further victims of Western-backed wars and the reaction against them.

Further bombing, drones, repression and killing will only prepare the ground for more awful terror in reply. Even the former head of MI5 said in 2010 that the British invasion of Iraq had increased the threat

of terrorism “substantially”.

The state of emergency in France—which allows curfews, searches of private homes at any time, press censorship, house arrest without trial, closure of public places and much more – will increase the repression. It will not bring safety.

We call for no backlash against refugees and migrants and Muslims. We say no to war in Syria or anywhere else.

We further commit ourselves to united working class struggle internationally against imperialism and a capitalist system that creates the conditions for such horror as we saw in Paris.

*This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*

## French fascists make gains

**The fascist Front National (FN) won its highest ever in the second round of France’s regional elections.**

Some 6.82 million people backed the FN—almost one in six eligible voters. It came first in swathes of constituencies in every region.

The FN led the first round in six of France’s 13 regional councils. But a surge in turnout in the second round blocked the FN from winning the presidency of any regional councils.

This mostly benefitted Nicolas Sarkozy’s centre right alliance. The centre left around president Francois Hollande’s Socialist Party (PS) was also boosted.

The surge underlines a widespread and persistent hatred of the fascists. But the FN has cemented its place as the driving force in French politics.

It gained over 350 regional councillors and became the main opposition in four regions. And it set the agenda for mainstream parties.

In the north and south east, the Socialists ordered all their candidates to step down.

These regions, previously run by the centre left, now have only fascist and Tory councillors.

Left wing opposition parties in many regions merged their lists with the Socialists against the right.

But the main parties are responsible for the FN’s growth.

Rallying to them vindicates its attempts to pose as the only alternative to a hated political establishment.

And it risks further demobilising a diverse working class under attack from those very politicians.

Better—if sporadic—responses came from anti-fascists who covered FN offices with their posters, and college students who walked out and struck in Rouen.

*This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# International statement against dictatorship, imperialism and ISIS

**Over recent months, people across the Middle East have been hit by an intensification of conflict in Syria and Iraq.**

That escalation has been sponsored both by global imperialist powers—chiefly the USA, Russia and European countries—and regional imperialist actors including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Iran. These conflicts are the product of two distinct forms of counter-revolution: local dictatorships and counter-revolutionary regimes on one hand, and reactionary Islamic forces like Daesh (ISIS) on the other. The determination of major international and regional powers to impose their political and economic hegemony over the region is also a central cause of the current tragedy.

In Syria, the first form taken by the counter-revolution is support for the Assad regime. Russia’s deadly raids and the intervention of Iran, Hezbollah and sectarian Iraqi militias champion this profoundly reactionary, anti-democratic project. Assad is fuelled too by the mistrust Western powers routinely demonstrate towards democratic and revolutionary forces in Syria, including Kurdish forces.

Those fighting for a democratic and socially just future are the first targets of the Syrian regime, imper-

ialists and their allies in the region. Syrian democratic forces are also the target of Islamic forces playing a counter-revolutionary role, supported at one time or another, directly or indirectly, by the Gulf monarchies and Turkey.

As always, women are the first victims of war. Rape, abduction and even the sale of women are gruesome outgrowths of the conflict.

What is Daesh? It is the creation both of international and regional imperialist aggressions and of the dictatorial, sectarian nature of regimes in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria. The rise of sectarian tensions in the region is also the consequence of this deadly compound of domestic repression and external aggression.

It is in this context that we should understand the recent attacks in Ankara, Beirut, Paris, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, and the attack on the Russian aircraft in Egypt. These attacks only strengthen the evil that spawned them – state terrorism.

The rhetoric of the “War on Terror” finds material expression in the ramping up of authoritarian state security policies, in war and in racism. Racism, particularly Islamophobia, has increased exponentially and has become state

policy across Europe. Imperialist powers have used the rhetoric of counter-terrorism to justify their support for dictatorships and their restrictions on freedoms, while regional dictators have used the same language to defend their own repression.

Now it is this same overarching worldview that unites France, Russia, the US, Turkey and the Syrian regime—though each has its own particular interests – such that they coordinate, directly or indirectly, their strikes and military manoeuvres in Syria.

In the name of a war “against terrorism”, today the French state demands the power to terrorise. In the name of so-called “French values,” freedoms are being attacked. In an authoritarian headlong rush, François Hollande bombs Syria and Iraq while all the talk of war and noble “values” is unable to provide answers to the political and social aspirations of the French working classes. Meanwhile, undocumented migrants, refugees, Muslims, veiled women, the Roma, foreigners and others are all prone to being designated “enemies within.”

Throughout the wider Middle East, state repression of political opponents and social movements is on the rise; in Egypt and elsewhere,

hundreds of death sentences have been issued in recent months.

In the face of the temporary demobilization and disorientation of large sectors of the oppressed, we must step up to the challenge with constructive initiatives. In practice that means:

- Oppose draconian policies; defend the democratic rights of everyone.
- Oppose all imperialist aggression, alongside implacable opposition to dictatorships and counter-revolutionary regimes.
- Oppose the Western military campaign in Syria, which includes bombing and other direct participation of Western military forces and also includes the armed participation in the conflict of forces supported by the West.
- Fight against all forms of counter-revolution in the Middle East and the Maghreb, as elsewhere.
- Fight repressive security policies, racism and austerity – whether in Europe, Asia or Africa.
- Fight “fortress Europe”; demand the opening of borders and decent living conditions for all refugees and migrants.
- Strengthen solidarity with people fighting for their liberation and emancipation in the Middle East, the Maghreb and around the

world.

• Solidarity with democratic and progressive anti-imperialist forces throughout the Arab region.

• Solidarity with the people of the Middle East and the Maghreb in their legitimate struggles for emancipation and against foreign aggression: we insist that the emancipation of the people of the region will be the work of the people themselves.

Signed by:  
Revolutionary Left Current – Syria  
Socialist Forum – Lebanon  
Revolutionary Socialists – Egypt  
Workers’ Left League (LGO) – Tunisia  
New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) – France  
Socialist Workers Party (SWP) – Britain  
revolutionary socialism in the 21st century (rs21) – Britain  
The Editors, Salvage – Britain  
Revolutionary Communist League-Socialist Workers Party (LCR-SAP) – Belgium  
SolidaritéS – Switzerland  
International Socialists Scotland (ISS) – Scotland

*This is shared from revolutionary socialism in the 21st century*



# War, what it is good for?

For those born at the beginning of the new millen-nium, all they will ever have known is a backdrop of Islamophobia and war.

The rhetoric of the so-called “War on Terror,” which the West has been waging now for well over a decade, targeted and continues to target Muslims, since this is the West’s justification for dropping bombs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Securing oil resources and more importantly profits for Western-based oil companies, was certainly one of the considerations of the US and other western powers when wars were launched in Iraq and Afghanistan. But much more than this it was about the war of position and endless jockeying for control that has been a feature of imperial-ism since Lenin and other writers first described it at the beginning of the last century.

## Imperialism

As Lenin wrote “the ‘booty’ is shared between two or three powerful world plunderers ... who are drawing the whole world into their war over the division of their booty.”

Lenin argued that “capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and the financial strangula-tion of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of ‘advanced’ countries.”

To understand the dynamics of imperialism you need to understand the dynamics of capitalism. Marx described capitalists as a “band of warring brothers.” This is true both nationally and internationally. Inside each country, capitals compete with each other for profits. On a global scale the capitalist classes are engaged in a scramble to control the resources and wealth of other countries. Their respective states defend the interests of the particular capitals and this competition on an international scale inevitably leads to armed conflict and war.

Sometimes it has been possible for the big imperial-ist powers to wage these wars as proxy wars, involving populations other than their own and thereby avoiding destruction on their home turf, such as the long period of the Cold War. But the imperialist powers cannot always control the forces they unleash and we are living through a period now of this kind of instability.

Russia’s intervention in Syria, just like that of the US and other western countries, has nothing to do with the best interests of the Syrian people. It is about a failing imperial-ist power (Russia) trying to assert its imperial interests in the region, as against the interests of the US, a fading imperialist power, but still king of the heap in terms of its military and arms buildup.

The slogan “Neither Washington nor Moscow” is regaining all its old relevance in the current context. In a like manner we should resist the temptation to align ourselves with any of the other sub-imperialist powers intervening in Syria, such as Iran or Saudi Arabia. They are also interested in jockeying for position in the region and their machinations have nothing to do with defending the interests of ordinary Syrians.

## Support revolutions: stop our own state

The best hopes for a better life were represented by those revolutionaries and freedom fighters inside Syria who were opposed to Assad’s dictatorship, but also opposed to Western intervention. Unfortunately their heroic struggles have been squeezed between the overwhelming destruction caused by Western bombing, the attacks of Assad’s govern-ment, and sectarian violence from ISIS.

If Western countries were truly opposed to barbarism they would not support so wholeheartedly the reactionary regime of Saudi Arabia, which routinely sentences its citizens to beheadings and other draconian punishments. Nor would they continue the bombing of innocent people in Iraq and Syria, which will only drive desperate people to either risk their lives as refugees, or to be drawn to group-ings like ISIS and the politics of sectarianism and despair.

The alternative is rebuilding the anti-war movement and stopping our governments’ participation in the ongoing bombing campaigns in Iraq and Syria. It is good that our new Prime Minister has chosen to be photographed with Syrian refugees coming to Canada and that the Liberals have committed to accepting more refugees by the end of this year.

But we can’t just let this issue be a photo op for Justin Trudeau. Trudeau had also promised during the election that his government would no longer lend support to the bombing missions that are creating the refugee crisis in the first place. He has remained silent on this question and we need to force him to take the real stand for peace, which would be ending Western military intervention (including both troops and “advisors”).

The British Stop the War Coalition has come under attack lately and it’s a testament to their effectiveness as an anti-war force in that country. The mainstream media have been attacking Stop the War as a way to attack new Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, because he refuses, unlike his shameful predecessor Tony Blair, to condone British participation in the bombing of the Middle East.

Ultimately imperialist war can only be defeated for good by getting rid of the system of anarchic competition, cap-italism, which underpins it and threatens the ability of all of us to live truly human lives. This was true when Lenin wrote about the outbreak of World War I in 1914 (ironic-ally ‘the war to end all wars’) and it is true of the ongoing War on Terror which Western governments are waging for hegemony and which is causing death and destruction abroad and misery, austerity and racism at home.

# INTERNATIONAL



# Greece strike provokes crisis

by PANOS GARGANAS, ATHENS

As Greece’s parliament debates its budget, workers held the second general strike in a month today, Thursday. Again it was very success-ful. Transport was widely affected—there were no trains. There’s a lot of pressure on the union federations to call a third general strike if the govern-ment pushes a vote on its pensions bill before Christmas.

People are looking for ways to escalate. This isn’t always straight-forward. For example many unions relied on their pensioner branches to build for the strike rally. In some ways it was impressive, with pensioners very visible. But it was also smaller.

Workers in a number of sectors have taken encouragement for their own fights. Hospital workers struck for two days, with a very impressive rally yes-terday against understaffing. Dockers, rail and public transport workers are coordinating for a demonstration against privatization. The dockers say they will call strikes themselves if the union federations don’t. Others include temporary workers in local government.

All this has very quickly had polit-ical implications for prime minister Alexis Tsipras. Recent resignations brought his majority in parliament down to just three MPs, and as many as ten could vote against the pensions bill. It is so unpopular that no-one

wants to be blamed for it. Even the pro-austerity opposition parties don’t want to vote for it—they’d rather leave it to Tsipras. They also see the government on the edge and are look-ing to what will happen if it falls.

A recent council of political leaders was ostensibly called at Tsipras’ initia-tive to get a consensus on national issues—the refugee crisis and pension reform. Behind the scenes they were wheeling and dealing about a possible new government. Would that be a grand coalition between Tsipras’ left wing party Syriza and the Tory party New Democracy? Would it mean the smaller opposition parties propping up the existing coalition? No-one knows.

## Divided

New Democracy itself is divided. Its election for a new leader has stopped, apparently for technical reasons as its IT company let it down. But its real problem is that members are increasingly polarised between two wings. One wants to rebuild through tough opposition to Syriza. The other would rather make sure the austerity package they voted for in summer is implemented.

This all creates an air of political crisis. It’s clear that Greek politics has no “quick fix” to offer. And that encourages people to push for strikes.

At the same time the traditional left

wing of the unions are in disarray. Those linked to Syriza will back token action to avoid being isolated, but nothing serious. That’s not surpris-ing. The strange thing is the Popular Unity party. It split from Syriza in the summer and stood against it in September’s election—but continues to organise alongside it in the unions. Its political rhetoric is about smashing austerity and throwing out the bailout agreement, but the industrial strategy doesn’t match. Their eyes are on union elections next year, not on organising struggle.

Workers on the other hand are generalising. The strike rally was full of slogans against bombing Syria or in solidarity with refugees. They are pushing for action—and looking beyond their own particular problems.

We need coordination at the rank and file. The campaign over state broadcaster ERT, where workers’ occupation inspired rallies and even solidarity strikes, must be our model. It’s not an easy strategy. There are steps in the right direction. But getting there will be a fight.

*Panos Garganas is editor of Workers Solidarity, Socialist Worker’s sister newspaper in Greece. This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# South Korea: stop the repression

**On 14 November 2015, about 100,000 people, most of them trade unionists, took to the streets of Seoul in response to a call by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) for a national day of protest (N14).**

The main focus of the protest was opposition to proposed labour “reforms” by the Park Geun-hye government, which includes measures that would reduce wages and make it easier for employers to fire workers.

Many of those on the protest were also enraged by a recent policy to force schools to adopt Korean history textbooks produced by the government.

Despite the just and democratic causes of the protest, the government responded with harsh police brutality. More than 20,000 police clashed with the protesters, firing over 180,000 litres of water in a single day and leaving dozens injured, including one protester who is in a critical condi-tion. Shamelessly, the government blames the KCTU and other groups

that organised the N14 protest for the violence and is demanding the leaders present themselves to the authorities.

The KCTU’s president, Han Sang-gyun, is now on the police’s wanted list and had to seek sanctuary at a historic Buddhist temple. On 21 November the government raided the main headquarters of the KCTU and seven affiliated trade unions. More than 2,000 police were mobilised for the raids. If all this wasn’t enough, the government also physically shut down the Mapo branch office of Korean Government Employees’ Union (KGEU) on 23 November.

The latest attack against KGEU was to forcefully shutdown their branch offices within governmental buildings. Mapo branch was the most militant within the KGEU and had previ-ously blocked the government from shutting down its office by staging two-week sit-down occupation. As the only KGEU branch office left open, Mapo branch office and its leader Park Cheon-seok had become beacon of struggle for trade unionists. The

government could not withstand such militancy any longer and physically dragged trade unionists out of the Mapo office in order to close it.

We condemn the conduct of the government as an unjustifiable attack against workers’ rights in South Korea.

We demand the following of the Park Geun-hye government:

- Immediately withdraw the arrest warrant issued for the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) president, Han Sang-gyun.
- Stop repression of the KCTU and its component trade unions.
- Reinstate the trade union status for the Korean Government Employees’ Union (KGEU) and Korean Teachers’ and Education Workers’ Union (KTU).
- Restore KGEU Mapo branch office and return all the property force-fully taken from it.

*To add your name to the signatories, please email: mail@workerssol-idarity.org. This is shared from the International Socialist Tendency*



# Capitalism and the fight against oppression

*Anton Cu Unjieng examines why capitalism depends on oppression, and how to fight both*

**Capitalism is not just an economic order, it is a political order because class rule is always and everywhere about the exercise of power.**

As Marx and Engels pointed out in the Communist Manifesto, capitalism has not done away with oppression, “It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle.”

## The creation of the working class

Capitalists did not gain their immense wealth as the result of the operation of the indifferent laws of the market. They gained their wealth by violently forcing workers to make their wealth and by stealing anything they could.

The first big capitalists used military force in order to enclose the commons—monopolising woods, lands, waters, and wastes previously held in common by the peasantry. Extreme violence was used to enforce this new monopoly, resulting in a massive internal migration into the cities, where, unfortunately only poverty and more violence awaited them. This process turned the peasant population into what we now think of as the working class.

While workers produce goods and services, the capitalist class take for themselves the vast majority of these goods and services. They are able to do this because they own the means of production. In a sense, the capitalist class owns the workers themselves. We can try to choose whom we work for, but we gotta work for somebody.

## The ruling class rules

The position of the capitalist class depends upon their ability to successfully cultivate the conditions that allow them to rule. This, of course, involves reproducing exploitation and the immense accumulation of their private wealth—but it also involves strategies of repression, violence, ideological control, and social manipulation.

The working class as a whole, and each individual worker, needs to be beaten, moulded, coerced, and manipulated into staying in their place and accepting the control which our rulers exercise over society. For the ruling class, this involves an extremely complex social machinery: schools, churches, the media, the police, government institutions, the medical establishment, and commodity production itself.

This “machinery” is not perfectly controlled by the ruling class, but is also the site of struggle: teachers don’t always pass down white-washed history, low-level government employees sometimes try to work the system for the benefit of the poor. More systematically, there can be wide challenges to things like school dress coding for girls or to draconian immigration laws.

In other words, oppression defines the position of the working class. Every worker no matter their sex, orientation, race, or abilities remains subject to the arbitrary power and authority of the ruling class. This becomes clear as soon as we enter into struggle: bosses fire workers for



organizing a strike, or the police attack protesters. To paraphrase Rosa Luxemburg, it is when we move that we really feel our chains.

## Oppression

All that being said, clearly workers do not all experience the fact of being ruled over in the same way. While the ruling class might generally oppress the working class, it also reproduces specific forms of oppression—racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, disability oppression. Each form of oppression has its own history and dynamic and so also needs to be studied in their own right.

Still, if we continue to think of oppression as the way in which a class rules over others then this suggests that in order to begin to understand differences in oppression we need to begin from the strategic needs of the capitalist class as a ruling class. In other words, different forms of oppression have their root cause in the power of the capitalist class to shape society in order to maximize their strategic interests.

Divisions in the population, then, in part reflect the attempts of our rulers to carve communities up in ways that serve a social division of labour that keeps the bosses on top.

Frequently, the result of such divisions is that certain sectors of society are particularly vulnerable. This makes them easy victims for things like budget cuts, the dumping of pollutants, or, in the case of the First Nations peoples, outright theft. Moreover, keeping the position of a particular segment of the population low also allows the ruling class to lower the ceiling for those segments of the population not picked out for similar levels of oppression. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, oppression allows the ruling class to divide us against each other in order to keep us from uniting against them.

For example, anti-migrant racism creates a pool of super-exploited labour that drives down wages and uses nationalism to divide the international working class. The purpose of anti-

immigrant racism is not actually to keep all immigrants out. The West relies on the cheap labour it extracts from immigrants who are often too unsafe and insecure to demand decent wages, humane working conditions, or dignity. If they ever managed to completely stop illegal immigration, the effect would be disastrous for most western capitalisms.

In other words, anti-immigrant racism is a tool by which the ruling class manages the labour force which is available to it. And it has historically been a very effective tool, simultaneously keeping immigrants down and binding other workers to their masters with nationalism.

## Internalized oppression

Clearly, though, the complicated system of oppressions that we are all born into is not exclusively enforced by the ruling class. It is plain as day that workers can be and frequently are full of all kinds of bigotry. For example, workers are just as capable of slut-shaming women as bosses are. And not just male workers, women also absorb the gender order.

It is precisely in the pursuit of narrow self-interest that we bind ourselves to the rule of the capitalists most thoroughly. So white workers, simply by enjoying their status, can assume that the current racial order is good without even thinking of themselves as racist. But this racial order is part of the way capitalism rules all of us, so when we defend it we only bind ourselves more tightly to our own subjugation.

## Struggle

The thing which most consistently serves to blast open the field of the possible under capitalism is in fact the struggles of the oppressed and exploited.

We saw something like this in relation to the refugee crisis. For years and years and years, the ruling classes have relied on anti-immigrant racism, but there has been a surge in resistance sparked by the refugees themselves. The enormity of their struggle—not merely their suffering, but their massive attempt to do something

about it—has also forced us to confront our own common sense about migration.

The tens of thousands of people who have demonstrated for refugee rights, the many more who have donated or signed petitions, the brave people who have actually snuck refugees past border guards are having to ask a serious but extremely basic question: are our rulers correct when they say that we cannot take these refugees in? If we admit that they must be let in, then we must question the policy of Fortress Europe and Fortress Canada that has doomed thousands to death at sea.

While some people have responded to this situation by turning to fascism and clinging all the more to nationalist myths, many people have begun to look for left wing alternatives.

## Liberation

The ruling class has attempted to make workers pay for this crisis, and immigrants, disabled people, women, people of colour, trans people—people who historically have been the most vulnerable, the people whose place in society has been the beachhead for every ruling class offensive—were once again marked out to feel the brunt of the ruling class’ violence, austerity, and neglect. But in many cases, these same historically vulnerable communities have been leading the fight back. Oppression has been the breaking point of ruling class hegemony.

These challenges to oppression are a vital part in exposing capitalism as a total system of rule and the power of the capitalist class at the heart of it. This is why Lenin argued that a revolutionary had to be “tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation.”

Working class self-emancipation requires breaking the chains of every form of oppression that the ruling class uses to divide us.



# Quebec against austerity

*Chantal Sundaram traces the development of struggle in Quebec, culminating in the December 9 general strike, and interviews Quebec activist Nora Loreto about what lessons we can learn.*



## Students and workers united

On November 5, ASSÉ, the main student union behind Quebec’s “Maple Spring,” held a Quebec-wide student walkout and rally in Montreal in solidarity with Quebec’s “Common Front” of public sector unions.

While the Common Front—which represents almost all the major trade union federations in Quebec, including about 400,000 provincial government workers and broader public sector workers like teachers in CEGEPs and schools—is taking legal strike action as part of negotiations with the Quebec government, it is also staging these job actions as a general campaign against austerity.

It is this fall campaign by unions that was at the centre of a strategic debate last spring amongst Quebec students about how to reignite the “Maple Spring,” which in 2012 included widespread grassroots support in neighborhoods and communities.

### A new “Maple Spring”?

Some students wanted to initiate a struggle against austerity through a renewal of their own strike activity by taking strike votes in the spring, while others wanted to wait for the fall when the unions might take up the torch—and take the fight against austerity to a new level.

Both strategies had risks. Some students did vote to strike and walked out last spring, and there were large popular protests to support them—more than enough to show that the movement was dormant but not dead. However, there had been a generational turnover in the student movement, a fragmentation of the former broad leadership, and less time to build the movement from the ground-up.

But most importantly, there wasn’t a specific focus in the spring of 2015 as there had been in 2012, when the fight targeted a specific tuition hike and a specific law against dissent: the campaign of 2015 was waged as a general fight against all the impacts of austerity. This did put thousands of students and supporters in the streets, and even inspired strike votes and some illegal job action by CEGEP teachers—against austerity itself.

But with no specific target or goal to come out of the struggle, motivating hundreds of thousands of students to take strike action, and to stay out indefinitely with potential risk to their term, as they had before, was just not possible.

The argument to wait for the fall, however, meant banking on an unknown: would the unions deliver on the fight they seemed to promise? Would they fight at all, and if so, would the campaign be confined to narrow bargaining demands

rather than the social struggle triggered by the students?

### Common Front

This fall, the Common Front has at least demonstrated that it is a force to be reckoned with. They mobilized 150,000 people in the streets of Montreal on October 3 in a show of force, and since then have engaged in a number of job actions. So far this has consisted of rotating strikes, a common tactic in Quebec.

They have varied in size and impact, but the October 29 strike by health, education, and Quebec human rights commission workers in the Montreal region was quite large. Although rotating strikes are not as sustained as the months-long strike by students in 2012, the Common Front has focused their message on linking this legal strike action to the more general sentiment against austerity.

ASSÉ spokesperson Hind Fazazi, in the lead-up to the November 5 protest said that students now “get” austerity in the same way they understood what the impact of the tuition hikes would be in 2012. Quebec colleges have seen \$149 million in budget cuts in the last five years (about \$70 million was cut from Quebec universities in 2015-16 alone. ASSÉ calls for higher taxes on large businesses and fighting tax evasion to reinvest in the public sector.

On November 5, around 50,000 students represented by close to 20 student associations staged actual walkouts from class with official strike votes in hand—against government austerity in general. Around 5,000 marched in Montreal, and CEGEP students in other parts of Quebec held local actions under the banner “Je sauve mon Cégep” (“I’m saving my CEGEP”).

### The fight for public education

On November 4, the Chicago Teachers Union passed a unanimous resolution to extend “our solidarity to the Common Front, FAE, FIQ, and ASSÉ in their struggle to stop the Couillard government’s program of austerity and defend public services, education, and healthcare in Quebec.” They were naming the coalition of 400,000 public sector union members as well as the teachers of the FAE and the nurses of the FIQ, who are all in a legal strike position in collective agreement bargaining, and students who staged a walkout in solidarity with them on November 5.

In a series of rotating strikes, the Common Front is taking on a provincial wage freeze for all. But the fight is also about class sizes and cut backs on special needs students for teachers (and patient ratios for nurses).

The Chicago Teachers Union knows very well that fighting on these issues requires building long-term support in the community, and in their case, solid support from parents. They share this with the movement in Quebec, where parents of primary and secondary students have been forming “human chains” around schools on the first day of each month this fall to protest the budget cuts and protect their children’s public education.

On November 20, those parents descended on the National Assembly in Quebec City, an initiative of Québec solidaire—the only anti-austerity party in the Quebec legislature—which has declared : “The Minister of Education refuses to set foot in Quebec schools? Quebec solidaire is bringing school to him!” And while parents, students, teachers and supporters from across Quebec rally outside the National Assembly, Québec solidaire has committed the three opposition parties to question the Education Minister about the cuts to schools.

In organizing this action, Québec solidaire has partnered with the parents’ movement « Je protège mon école publique, » the « Coalition des parents pour l’école publique » and the « Coalition des parents d’enfants à besoins particuliers » (children with special needs). You can follow the parents’ movement at [www.Ecolepublique.org](http://www.Ecolepublique.org).

In the wake of teachers’ strikes in many parts of English Canada, and the untapped solidarity that may have existed for them, there may be some useful lessons in what continues to unfold in defence of Quebec schools.

But Quebec parents are not the only ones forming human chains in defence of education: in fact, they have inspired CEGEP (college) students to follow their example.

Members of ASSE but also of the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ, which represents 65,000 students in 21 CEGEPs across Quebec) have started forming their own human chains on the second day of each month: in other words, the day after the parents’ monthly action. They are protesting \$150 million in budget cuts to postsecondary education in the last five years under the banner «Je sauve mon Cégep» (I’m saving my CEGEP).

The students have invited CEGEP employees and the general public to join them in this movement, which they hope will continue to grow in the next academic session.

It seems likely that this parallel fight against austerity, which is against budget cuts to every level of education, will continue no matter what happens with the legal Common Front strikes in the whole public sector. But the two struggles have inspired each other, and in the long run, they are the same.



## December 9, 2015: Quebec’s general strike

On December 8, Jacques Letourneau, President of one of Quebec’s largest union federations, the CSN, said on Twitter: “Tomorrow’s general strike by the Common Front is the most important one since 1972.”

In May 1972, all of Quebec’s major trade union federations united in a “Common Front” and staged a month-long general strike, the largest strike in North American history at the time. It shook the foundations of Quebec society, and led to workers taking over radio stations and municipal government structures in nine cities and towns.

On December 9, 2015, nearly half a million Quebec workers staged a province-wide general strike: 400,000 who are members of a new “Common Front” of teachers, healthcare workers and government ministry workers, plus another 34,000 teachers in a separate union, the Fédération autonome de l’enseignement (FAE).

A march and demonstration of 150,000 clogged the streets of downtown Montreal that afternoon, with picket lines, marches and rallies in regions, cities, towns and villages throughout Quebec, including in Inuit communities in the Arctic. Quebec City also saw a large march and demo in front of the National Assembly, and FAE strikers camped out in front of the Education Ministry in Montreal.

This was the fourth in a series of one-day rotating strikes by the Common Front which took place region by region in

Quebec, leading up to the province-wide escalation. That same week the FAE staged three consecutive days of strike on December 9, 10 and 11, in 800 primary and secondary schools across Quebec. The government was trying to impose a wage freeze, or close to it, on public sector salaries that have been under downward pressure for 35 years, but also to worsen patient ratios and increase class sizes, and reduce the teaching ratio for students with special needs.

The strikes and the enormous public support for them were an important source of pressure on the government in bargaining. The Common Front did delay the general strike and converted it to another one-day strike rather than the three-day province-wide general strike that was planned for December 1-3 when it seemed like progress was possible on the salary issue, but this did not occur. And the government did try to undercut the strike and sow division within the Common Front by offering progress and even settlements on non-salary issues specific to many of the different sectors, which have their own tables in addition to the central table. In the lead-up to the strike, more than 30 tentative agreements were actually signed at sectoral tables like those of the nurses (FIQ) and CEGEP teachers (FNEEQ).

Immediately following the strike there was a blitz of negotiations at the central table, where salary and retirement were being negotiated, and a deal was reached on December 17. The Common Front held a press conference to announce

## Interview: inside Quebec’s struggle against austerity

You wouldn’t know it from the corporate media in English Canada, but Quebec is in the midst of a massive struggle against austerity—including teachers and parents making human chains to protect schools, and the biggest general strike since 1972. *Socialist Worker* spoke with Nora Loreto, an activist in Quebec and author of *From Demolized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement*.

**1. In Quebec, there seems to be a growing public sentiment against austerity, from the Maple Spring of 2012 to the public sector general strike by the Common Front in 2015. Living in Quebec, do you see a real sense of community identification with the legal strike in the public sector, even though one of the key issues is salary?**

The Maple Spring was an important moment where consciousness that usually formed only among student activists expanded to the broader population. After the disastrous 18-month government of Pauline Marois, the Liberals were re-elected. Driven first by unions, it was clear that a confrontation was brewing that would target austerity. In fact, the students started to talk about austerity when it was clear they had won the fight against the Liberals’ proposed tuition fee hike.

The rise of community actions to protect public schools is a good example of this: parents are supporting teachers not because of their specific contractual demands, but because we all see the impact that increasing privatization has on us. At the very least, everyone I talk to knows about what’s going on and are mostly opposed to the Couillard government’s cuts

**2. One of the other key issues in the strike is cuts to public education, and the way that is reflected in the government’s bargaining demands for larger class sizes and reductions in the teaching ratio for special needs students. Some parents have been forming “human chains” around schools each month: is this an indication of wider parent and community support that could be activated?**

The “Je protège mon école publique” movement is really important. It has created a space for parents and community members to get involved in the fight to protect public schools, regardless of where contract negotiations might be. While

these issues are at the core of negotiations, it’s important to move people towards demonstrating their support more broadly so that once the negotiations are over, there’s still a community of activists fighting to defend the public education system.

**3. Does the word “austerity” and resistance to it have wide resonance among ordinary people in Quebec, including those not in unions?**

I think it does, though I’m not convinced that that’s why the movement has been so strong. The nature of public sector negotiations in Quebec, where multiple sectors are negotiating at the same time, means that there has to be a catch-all concept for people to mobilize around. Couillard has been very open about his austerity agenda and has made substantial and significant cuts in all sectors. There’s little else that can better describe massive cuts in the public sector and “Refusons austérité” has been a very good campaign in its simplicity.

**4. In your book about unions, written for young people who don’t know much about them and what they know is mostly negative, you start by talking about the importance of “community” in building a sense of collective interest and collective struggle. Do you see this developing in Quebec right now, and if so, how?**

Community is at the heart of many of the actions that have happened these past few months. From the human chains to the protests and rallies, bringing people together has been really important to build solidarity and consciousness around these issues. But communities remain polarized.

The key to success will be to find ways to penetrate parts of Quebec (here, the suburbs) to raise support there, too. Community is easy to foster in an urban environment, cities were built for that. But it gets harder in the suburbs of any city. Unions are important because it’s their members who live in one area but work in another. They hold the keys to both worlds.

**5. While the English Canadian media has been silent about the Common Front, coverage blaming Quebec for**

that the deal includes salary increases of 9.1 to 10.25 % over five years, and an increase to the retirement age to 61 from 60. They credited both the historic mobilization by the public sector and the strong support of the population for its demands.

But despite the deal, as of the end of December, around 150,000 Quebec public employees, including the 34,000 French-language teacher members of the FAE, were still without an agreement, so further strike days remain possible.

It is a question whether any of the community mobilization that took place all autumn, such as the monthly “human chains” of parents around public schools and of CEGEP students around their colleges, will continue. Even with a deal for teachers, the problem of massive funding cuts to CEGEPs and schools remains.

In a news release, the Common Front stated that the agreement does not spell the end of the unions’ fight against government austerity measures: “We will continue by all means to protect our public services from being dismantled... There are cuts to services, to healthcare, to education, just as to the civil service, and we will continue to fight against all cuts. It is together that we will make the government understand that the road it has taken since it was elected is not ours, it’s not the one we want, and that we think it is not the one that Quebec society wants either.”

**being more racist than everyone else has been overwhelming. Media gave huge play to the recent federal election debate on the niqab, yet ignored the Maple Spring for months in 2012, and now has been silent on the biggest strike in more than 40 years. Is this about two solitudes, or do you think the Canadian state and media is trying to divide people in Quebec from those in English Canada?**

The English press is allergic to covering workers’ stories. In Quebec, negotiations and rallies remain part of the routine business of journalists. Coverage in Quebec hasn’t been very good either, but at least it’s mentioned. Outside of the province it’s been nearly nothing. Part of this is due to the fact that Montreal isn’t a media centre any more (as a place like Calgary has grown in importance) and, of course, the language plays a role. With fewer resources in the mainstream media, these kinds are stories are easier to ignore. During 2012, the only stories that were reported in English Canada related to vandalism, trying to whip up anti-Quebec sentiment. I suspect it’s the same thing that’s happening here, except there’s been very little property damaged, so even less news.

**6. What can progressives in English Canada do to break the media silence, to stop Quebec bashing, and to adapt the lessons of resistance that could be used outside Quebec in a productive way?**

There are stories being written about Quebec. Share them. Be vocal in your support for Quebec workers while always imagining how workers in your own province or region could exert similar kinds of pressure. Don’t but into the narratives that argue there’s a special character in Quebec that means it’s impossible for workers in other parts of Canada to take radical action.

And, be critical. Even during the federal election, where many NDP supporters were praising Mulcair’s position on the niqab “despite what it did to his popularity in Quebec,” a narrative premised on the notion that Quebecers are more racist than people anywhere else circulated. Don’t buy into these false narratives and challenge them when you can.



## Keystone XL rejection: a victory for climate justice?

by Michael Fenn

**Enormous praise should go out to the climate movement for putting pressure on the Obama administration to reject the Keystone XL project. Hopefully this injects new confidence and growth in the movement going forward. But the victory is not without its contradictions.**

According to climate scientist James Hansen, it will be “game over for the climate” if Canada continues tar sands production. These ecocidal pipelines, which disproportionately affect Indigenous communities, include the Northern Gateway and Kinder Morgan pipelines heading west, the Energy East and Line 9 pipelines heading east, and the Keystone XL pipeline heading south.

In the US the climate justice movement has been rising in recent years, with a focus on stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. In 2013 in what was then the biggest climate justice protest in US history, up to 50,000 surrounded the White House to oppose the Keystone XL pipeline. These numbers increased nearly 10-fold in a year, as 400,000 people joined the People’s Climate March in New York City last year. Earlier this month Obama rejected the Keystone XL pipeline, in what constitutes a major victory for the climate justice movement. But like many reforms under capitalism, it also expresses a shift in ruling class strategy.

### Oil economy and US strategy

There has been an enormous expansion of fossil fuel production in the US during the Obama tenure. The Obama regime made a conscious policy decision post financial crisis (through government subsidies, R&D, and tax breaks) to vastly increase domestic production of oil and natural gas from horizontal drilling and fracking, while making US oil and gas cost competitive in global markets. A development that has been dubbed “the fracking revolution.”

The result has been an increase in US domestic production of 3.6 million barrels per day, and 27 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas, since 2006. Obama has been quite proud and vocal of this accomplishment, bragging that a record amount of pipeline has been put down during his presidency to move all this hydrocarbon (for example 1200 miles worth of new oil pipeline, ten times the length of the proposed Keystone line).

This massive increase in US production—along with global production during the energy boom- and decreasing demand during the ongoing economic crisis—has effectively halted the oil boom, driving global crude prices from a peak of \$140 (2009) to the current \$45. That has created an estimated 3 billion barrel surplus of crude in global markets today.

What was the point of this frenzy in fossil fuel production? Clearly, not Obama’s concern for climate justice—and in rejecting Keystone XL, Obama said it “will not serve the national interests of the United States.” Instead, hydrocarbon expansion performed three functions for the Obama administration and the US ruling class. First it improved the US’s geopolitical position, by making America less “dependent” on foreign oil. The second was that by getting in on a resource investment boom prompted initially by record high oil prices in the early 2000’s, this helped buoy the US economy after the sub prime real estate bubble popped 2008.

The third is that, ironically, it has allowed Obama to proclaim himself a champion in mitigating climate changem, despite the fact that he is expanding the production of the very thing causing climate change. Because horizontal drilling of shale oil and “fracking” of natural gas are supposedly “cleaner” and more cost effective than coal, Obama has been able to meet his modest (yet woefully ineffectual) environmental initiative: his Clean Power Plan and the “historic” climate deal struck with China last November. And now, with the rejection of Keystone that was to channel dirty Canadian bitumen, he has been able to add one more feather in his “I am a progressive liberal” cap.

### Real change comes from below

None of this takes away from the role and importance of the climate justice movement. Like all reforms, this victory should increase our confidence about what movements have accomplished, while exposing capitalist contradictions and the next steps going forward—including challenging both fracking and tar sands.

For the climate justice movement in Canada the rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline couldn’t have come at a better time: during the “climate welcome” protest outside of the residence of new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The climate justice movement mobilized against Harper, exposed the lack of climate alternatives from all mainstream parties, and vowed to pressure whoever was elected. For four days at the start of the month climate activists delivered solar panels and demanded a halt to tar sands expansion.

While Trudeau refused to meet with the climate activists, he voiced his “disappointment” that Obama had rejected Keystone, while agreeing to a massive sewage dump in Montreal and heading into the Paris climate talks with Harper’s climate plan. Clearly “real change” won’t come from Obama or Trudeau, but it is coming from the growing climate justice movement.

## ANALYSIS



# What will we strike for? Ontario Public Service ‘No’ campaign

by Pam Johnson

**After almost a year of bargaining, 34,000 OPSEU members who work directly for the government of Ontario ratified two contacts in October—but not without controversy.**

The deals include the “central” collective agreement covering all OPSEU members working in the Ontario Public Service (OPS) and the agreement setting out wages and hours of work for almost 28,000 members in the “unified” bargaining unit. The 6,000 OPSEU members in the OPS correctional unit, who voted strongly against the central agreement, but have not reached a separate wages and hours agreement, could still go on strike.

When the tentative agreements were announced, two of the 15 bargaining team members sparked a major debate by speaking out against the deal and issuing a minority report calling for a “NO” vote. “Even though there are some good improvements in language in the central agreement,” the dissenters wrote, “the impact of the larger concessions causes too much harm to support. We believe that this contract will harm the sick and vulnerable and new workers the most. This supports Wynne’s race to the bottom mentality. Now is the time to protect workers in the OPS.”

This open dissent by bargaining team members, unprecedented in OPS bargaining history, sparked a “NO” vote campaign among a layer of members. Many who supported the NO position, including a strong majority in Corrections, demanded a more militant fight back against concessions. Supporting the deal was the majority of the bargaining team, who acknowledged the concessions but argued they were not severe enough to justify a strike.

Concessions in the new deal include a one year wage freeze and a two year freeze salary progression for new hires and those not at the top of their grids (for the unified unit); and ending accumulation of termination pay for future retirees, and a mandatory rehabilitation program for members on partial disability (across the OPS). This comes on top of concessions in the previous contract that included

a two year wage freeze and a lower starting rate for new hires.

“No” advocates countered that it is time to fight back: “Young workers, new hires, and disability recipients are getting completely shafted in this deal and that’s not something I could ever support. Even though I do not fall into one of those categories, I cannot in good conscious justify screwing over thousands of my OPSEU brothers and sisters in order to benefit myself and the majority of other OPSEU brothers and sisters. Sacrificing the few in order to protect the many is something I would expect from management, not from my union.”

### Mobilize/Demobilize

The context for this round of bargaining was the vow by Liberal premier Kathleen Wynne to achieve “net zero” agreements across Ontario’s public sector. The Liberals’ austerity has also included ongoing downsizing of the OPS through the privatization and contracting out of thousands of OPSEU jobs.

OPSEU leaders strongly condemned Wynne’s austerity agenda. Members responded with a strong strike mandate: 90 per cent average among the different sections of the OPS. This was backed up by member mobilizing that, similar to the fight against Hudak’s anti-union agenda, pushed deeper than usual into the rank-and-file.

Months of workplace meetings, information pickets and rallies focused on local member engagement over media photo-ops. Workers doggedly pursued Wynne at public events. Reports from mobilizers indicated that members were responding, including many who had never engaged actively in union activity. Despite this success, the leadership wound down the mobilization during the Pan Am games in July and did nothing to re-engage members when issues bargaining restarted in early September.

A tentative agreement was quickly reached and touted as a hard fought deal that, while it contained concessions, pushed back even worse ones. The energy and aspiration of members who had agitated for a better agreement was already dissipated at the moment when it could have been used to keep pressure on Wynne for a better deal. But, when the two dissident

bargaining team members spoke out against the deal, it created a brief opening for members to mobilize the frustration and anger that might have otherwise evaporated.

### Trade unions bureaucracy

Although the “No” vote campaign was not broad enough or organized enough to defeat the agreement, it points to a mood among workers that the status quo is not acceptable. It also shows the contradictory nature of trade unionism that can express the aspirations of workers by appearing to challenge the employer’s agenda, while at the same time maintaining the ability to contain workers’ resistance rather than escalating the fight back.

The role of trade union leaders in particular shows that trade unions can be both agents of working class conflict as well as agents of class accommodation. Trade union leaders are removed from the day-to-day experience of the members they serve. They are not subject to employer scrutiny or workplace actions and their standard living is often better than their members. Also their main task—to negotiate between employers and workers—reduces the likelihood that they will take one side, the workers, and lead militant action.

### Building resistance

This contradictory nature of trade unions does not preclude resistance. It is the frame that socialists and activists must work in and navigate so that they can build an effective fight back. A key element is a clear assessment of the mood of workers at a particular moment. Recent challenges to concessions contracts by US autoworkers and Quebec public sector workers who turned back tentative agreements point to a shifting terrain for the space to build this resistance.

But to make real breakthroughs, we need to build stronger networks of activists with roots in each local and workplace, who can translate workers’ frustration with austerity into an organized challenge to concessions bargaining in the workplace—and to keep union leaders’ feet to the fire, to back up their militant rhetoric with militant action.



## REVIEWS



# Climate crisis cause: cowspiracy or capitalism?

### FILM

*Cowspiracy*  
Directed by Kip Anderson  
Reviewed by Jesse McLaren

**Cowspiracy shines a light on the carbon emissions of the animal agriculture industry, but its beam is so narrow that it leaves the rest of agriculture and the economy hidden from view, and elevates dietary choice to political strategy.**

*Cowspiracy* counterposes animal agriculture to the rest of the oil-dependent economy, dismisses the challenge to tar sands and fracking and the need for climate jobs, blames cows and those who consume animal products, shames environmental NGOs instead of agribusinesses, ignores traditional knowledge about how to live sustainably with animals, and calls non-vegan environmentalists hypocrites—while preaching veganism as the panacea for everything from climate change to world hunger.

The result: protesters inspired by his film denounced the recent People’s Climate March in Edmonton: “The organizers only wanted to focus on oil and gas, the safe climate topics and not ‘switch focus’ to address personal behaviors that can actually make difference.”

### Cowspiracy or cowpitalism?

Cowspiracy raises the important point that the climate crisis is not only driven by oil and gas companies but is also connected to our food system. But instead of challenging the corporations who control food production and distribution, it places all the blame on “animal agriculture.”

Using decontextualized statistics and graphics, it implies that cows are inherently destructive creatures who waste water while producing the methane that is driving the climate crisis—

instead of exposing how capitalism has separated cows from communities, concentrated them in factories and turned them into methane machines.

As India’s leading environmentalist (and vegetarian) Vandana Shiva explains, “The problem with many of these studies has been that they take the most industrial practice, for example factory farming for meat... and extrapolate it to the world. As if the whole world treats its livestock in the torturous way that factory farming does.”

As she explains in *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, “Ecologically, the cow has been central to Indian civilization... By using crop wastes and uncultivated land, indigenous cattle do not compete with humans for food; rather, they provide organic fertilizer for fields and thus enhance food productivity... Indian cattle provide more food than they consume, in contrast to those of the U.S. cattle industry, in which cattle consume six times more food than they provide.”

Instead of challenging the corporatization of agriculture, Cowspiracy blames cows—reinforcing the industry’s view of animals as abstract production units disconnected from communities. As Vandana Shiva explains, “Livestock are absolutely key. The tragedy is on the one hand we’ve got those who would put animals into factory farms... And there’s the problem that those who think they love animals push for a situation where there will be no animals. So we need to avoid both these extremes that are anti-animal by denying an effective role for the animal, and an effective role of a farmer..”

### Sustainability and choice

Our harmonious relationship with

nature was not disrupted by consuming animals (which communities have done sustainably for millenia) but by a relatively recent system of production that has separated us from nature and turned animal and plant worlds—and humans themselves -- into sources of profit.

Not only does *Cowspiracy* fail to differentiate between traditional and corporatized uses of animals, it also ignores carbon emissions from capitalist agriculture in general. Our food system is not unsustainable because it includes animals, it is unsustainable because of capitalism—which is based on colonizing Indigenous territories, driving peasants off the land, exploiting workers for profit and reducing animals and plants to units of production.

### System change, not diet change

As climate organizer (and vegan) Cam Fenton wrote, “we need system change to stop climate change, and our personal dietary choices are not system change. Changing lightbulbs and taking shorter showers wasn’t a really effective strategy for the climate and that’s what switching out steak for tofu seems to be to me... If the goal is really to deal with the emissions from agriculture, and these emissions are a big problem, it’s time to stop telling people not to eat meat and start figuring out how you’re going to stand with peasant farmers who are being forced by the Monsanto of the world to abandon their traditional methods of agriculture for massive mono-crop operations... These things, might help to tip the scales and bring down emissions from agriculture in a way that more vegans just won’t, and they might win you some allies along the way.”

*His Gun*, written in 1939. He was a supporter of unionizing in the film industry; he was also Hollywood’s highest-paid screenwriter before he was blacklisted, living in a luxurious estate with private lake.

Trumbo was one of the “Hollywood 10”, a group of writers, producers and directors who were members or supporters of the American Communist Party. But the film barely glosses over their politics, the reasons the American Communist Party grew through the 1930s, and the reasons many of them later left the CP.

Instead it revels in Trumbo’s eccentricities: his practice of writing naked in his bathtub, his ivory cigarette holder, his prodigious use of whiskey and amphetamines, the pet parrot that perched on his head. It is almost as if his political affiliation was just another personality quirk.

In real life the Red Scare and witch-hunts destroyed thousands of

lives, wrecked families and drove many to suicide. In factories across the country union activists, some CP members and others just allies, were literally beaten and driven from their workplaces by gangs of thugs organized by the bosses. For the key to the fatal weakness of trade unionism in the US, look no further than the Red Scare. According to the movie, for Trumbo it was more of an inconvenience than mortal danger.

In 1970 Trumbo made a speech to the Writer’s Guild in which he argued that everyone, the people who informed and ratted on their workmates and friends and those who were blacklisted, were equally victims. The film ends with this speech, everything is healed, and Hollywood lived happily ever after.

Except of course that it didn’t. The speech was denounced by others of the Hollywood 10 as liberal nonsense. And so, I’m afraid, is Trumbo.

### LEFT JAB

John Bell

# Corporate U goes on the offensive

**According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), a university is “a public institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in the public interest.”**

But today’s universities and colleges are increasingly in thrall to the corporate “benefactors” who are filling the funding void left as government backs away from its responsibility to foster “knowledge in the public interest.”

And in return corporations expect to call the shots in how research is conducted, who is hired to teach and how curricula are designed.

The battle for the soul of post-secondary schools—the battle between knowledge in the public interest and Corporate U—is taking place across the country.

### University of Calgary

It may not surprise you that the University of Calgary is in the midst of a series of struggles over academic freedom in the face of oil industry funding. One of U of C’s corporate partners is Beijing-based Kerui Group, an oilfield drilling and pipeline business. Through Kerui, U of C is involved in shale gas extraction research in China, and is bringing Chinese students to Calgary to conduct similar research.

U of C engineering professor Martin Mintchev has gone public with complaints that one such PhD student has essentially stolen some of his copyrighted material for inclusion in an article submitted to a professional journal, an article which Mintchev says is riddled with errors. The professor has complained to U of C administration, which has sided with the student (and with the corporate funding) and threatened Mintchev with academic penalties and dismissal.

Mintchev told the CBC: “In the complex relationship between the university and external sponsorship and the academic freedom of professors to exercise their supervisory duties properly, I think the university administration has profound problems.”

### Enbridge

In 2012 U of C set up the Enbridge Centre for Corporate Sustainability. It hired a young, rising academic star from the US to head it; Joe Arvai had worked with NASA, the US Environmental Protection Agency and as an energy advisor to President Obama.

But from his arrival Arvai complained, in emails to the dean of the business school who was his superior and to the Board of Governors, about unethical interference from Enbridge. The pipeline giant wanted to interfere with student awards and use the Centre for its public relations purposes. It also wanted to form a partnership with a Michigan university that made no academic sense, but would allow Enbridge to pump money and positive PR into the area where its ruptured pipeline polluted the Kalamazoo River in 2010.

Arvai wrote to his superior, Dean Leonard Waverman: “I am not sure what we are signing up for. I have the

impression that Enbridge sees the centre as a PR machine for themselves, whereas I see it as an academic research centre. “In the latter case, it’s likely that finds of academic work in the centre will not, at times, paint industry—including Enbridge—in the best light. I’m not sure Enbridge understands this.”

Waverman’s reply was anatomically cryptic but politically clear: “If this goes belly up my ass is on the line and I won’t feel happy with you either on this.”

If Arvai thought U of C president Elizabeth Cannon would defend academic integrity, he was in for some schooling. Cannon sits on the board of directors of Enbridge Income Fund Holdings, a conflict of interest the nets her an extra \$130,500 a year.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Arvai quit. Waverman has moved to Hamilton where his lofty academic ideals lead McMaster University’s DeGroote School of Business. And Cannon is riding out the scandals, insisting there is nothing wrong with her double life.

### Carleton

At Ottawa’s Carleton University, biology professor Root Gorelick is an elected faculty representative to the board of governors. He has made headlines for refusing to sign a gag order which will prohibit him from ever divulging the doings of that board of the rest of his life. He argues that his role is to represent and report to the faculty association that chose him.

Lacking the geographic connection to the oil and gas industry the U of C enjoys, Carleton had decided to build on political connections instead. With the 2005 creation of the Manning Centre for Building Democracy—yes, headed by Reform Party founder Preston Manning—Carleton began marketing itself as the training ground for right-wing political and economic ideology. Someone who understood the “practical application” of his politics was Clayton Riddell, petro-billionaire and (in 2014) Canada’s 16th richest individual. In 2010 he “donated” \$15 million to set up (in cooperation with the Manning centre) the Clayton H. Riddell Graduate Program in Political Management. In return Riddell got more than his name on the letterhead; a secret agreement with Carleton gave him power to control hiring, student enrollment and curriculum. News of the deal reached Carleton faculty (through its rep on the board of governors perhaps) and then CAUT. After a year-long legal battle to keep its agreement with Riddell secret, Carleton was forced to fess up, and rip up that agreement in 2012.

But U of C and Carleton are not unique. Corporations are staging hostile takeovers at campuses nationwide, and faculty and student unions are pushing back.

Are our schools to be run like public institutions devoted to the public good or like businesses devoted to profit? As with the rest of our public services, the battle for the soul of our education hangs in the balance.



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 transgendered 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.



Activist calendar  
movement events



Hamilton Day of Action

Saturday January 30, 1pm  
Hamilton City Hall  
71 Main St West



Jan 18 Hamilton  
Jan 19 Windsor  
Jan 20 Thunder Bay  
Jan 21 Sault Ste Marie  
Jan 22 Ottawa  
Feb 1 Toronto  
Visit [www.ofl.ca](http://www.ofl.ca) for details



International Women’s Day  
Toronto, Saturday March 5  
[iwdtoronto.ca](http://iwdtoronto.ca)



World Social Forum  
Aug 9-14, Montreal  
[fsm2016.org](http://fsm2016.org)

Socialist Worker  
IDEAS FOR THE STRUGGLE

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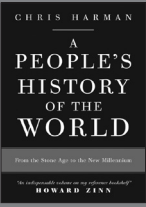
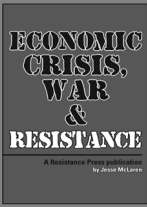
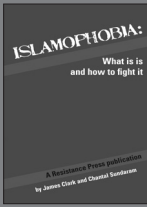
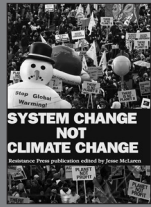
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RESISTANCE  
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ideas for  
struggle





LABOUR SOLIDARITY

by STEPHEN ELLIS

December 2, 2015 was CUPE 3903’s Day of Solidarity with UNITE local 75.

Throughout the day, 50 or so York University workers and students, as well as Jane and Finch Action Against Poverty activists and others, walked the picket line bringing a much-appreciated ruckus to the strike. Those in attendance chanted “up with the workers, down with boss,” in a show of genuine solidarity.

On October 5, 2015 hospitality workers walked off the job to demand fair wages, benefits, job security and pensions. Vrancor Group acquired the hotel two years ago and has continued to demand humiliating concessions from the union. This is the eighth week of the strike.

“We were here since day one of this strike and we’ve had different people coming down maybe even 10 times, since the strike started,” said Kyle Bailey of CUPE 3903. “We got involved because workers only win when they stand together in solidarity. It’s great that we have trade unions but trade unions are also limited in what they can achieve. They divide workers as well unite them, so in unions we have to stand together and that is real working class solidarity.”

“We’re out here because these workers haven’t gotten the same contract as the rest of the city has gotten, said David Anderson, a researcher with UNITE local 75. “We have settled contracts with about 35 hotels across Toronto along roughly the same standard for things like pensions, wages and benefits. And this is the first hotel owned by this company in Toronto and they don’t want to settle at the same standard as the rest of the city, and we can’t have that. Also, in a neighborhood like Jane and Finch where there are so few good jobs, we can’t allow any good jobs to fall down the drain. We have to do everything we can to ensure this community isn’t left behind. “

Solidarity is key to winning this fight. Show your support by bringing your friends out to 30 Norfinch Drive in North York and walk the picket line with these workers. To get involved call 647 869 7651

SASKATCHEWAN: REFUGEES IN, BRAD WALL OUT



by CATHERINE GENDRON

On November 16, Premier Brad Wall released an open letter to Prime Minister Trudeau requesting a halt in the Syrian refugee plan.

Citing the attacks in Paris as a means to be concerned about Canada’s refugee screening process, Wall laid out his fear-mongering xenophobia and distinguished himself as the most racist premier: distracting from his privatization agenda and building his career on the backs of refugees.

As political science professor Howard Lesson explained, “he simply wishes to deflect attention from a number of provincial issues which have been plaguing the government this fall. These include the carbon capture problems, the bypass problems outside of Regina, health-care deficiencies, etc... I think the more likely explanation, is that the premier continues to position himself for a possible run at the national Conservative leadership.”

The threat of racism

As Wall wrote, “The recent attacks in Paris are a grim reminder of the death and destruction even a small number of malevolent individuals can inflict upon a peaceful country and its citizens.” If that were his concern, he would be speaking out against the small number of malevolent individuals who have launched Islamophobic

attacks across Canada in recent weeks.

Wall is manufacturing a refugee threat from abroad. Syrian refugees had nothing to do with the Paris attacks. Nearly all of the attackers were of French or Belgian descent, and a recent study actually demonstrates that since 2011 in the United States, there has been “one terrorism-planning conviction for every 286,543 refugees that have been admitted. To put that in perspective, about 1 in every 22,541 Americans committed murder in 2014. The terrorist threat from Syrian refugees...is hyperbolically over-exaggerated and we have very little to fear from them because the refugee vetting system is so thorough.”

Racism is the greatest security threat—provoking attacks at home and justifying wars abroad. Refugees in Syria are fleeing a repressive regime, Western bombs and the counter-revolutionary force of ISIS.

Canada not only has a shameful record of welcoming refugees, but is actively making the situation worse through ongoing war. The tragedy in Paris should not close doors, it should illuminate the dire need of opening our doors—which should not incite confusion and fear, but should incite resourceful planning and support in any way we can.

While the Liberals were elected to stop the

war and welcome 25,000 refugees by the end of the year, they are breaking both promises—relying on Conservative rhetoric that Syrians should be bombed rather than welcomed.

Refugees welcome

Wall has faced backlash, and with an upcoming spring election, Wall has already backtracked and has promised to set up a refugee settlement centre. Moreover, the people of Saskatchewan have come together to express that Wall does not speak for them.

The day after the letter was released, an emergency rally was held in front of the legislative buildings in Regina to let the public know that refugees are welcome in Saskatchewan. Later that week, the Amadiyya Muslim community in Saskatoon hosted an event aimed at clarifying misconceptions about the religion. Local communities have come together to encourage donations and supplies for refugees upon arrival, and many families have been able to independently fund refugees.

To quote the Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism, “we stand united with our brothers and sisters in transit and with No One Is Illegal and join in their Canada-wide call that declares: refugees welcome!”

to get there and the whole event became a solidarity stand for the community. On November 27, the Beth Israel Synagogue opened its doors and on December 4 Jumuah will be held at an Anglican Church.

The community has rallied and the whole community has said no to hate and no to violence. Yes to love and yes to peace. Only together can our community put this event behind us. And we already have. Everywhere you look, there is some poster that says solidarity with the Peterborough Muslim community. We have already put this tragedy behind us and have begun to rebuild. The peace cannot be the same as before, but it will be better.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Labour for the climate

I had the opportunity to attend the COP 21, the United Nations Conference on the climate, as part of a trade union delegation from Canada.

Upon arriving it was clear that Paris was a militarized city. Armed police and military were everywhere and the demonstration scheduled for November 29 was banned. More than 400,000 were expected to attend to hold their leaders to account for the environmental crisis that we are experiencing.

A human chain did take place along the original route of the march with over 10,000 participating, including visiting trade unionists such as ourselves. Parisians placed 40,000 pairs of shoes in a square to represent those who would have demonstrated in the climate justice action if the French state had not intervened. A small march did take place and was attacked by the police, taking many into custody. There were also house arrests of known activists.

People from every corner of the globe came together to put pressure on the negotiators and their governments who were deciding the future of the world we live in. The feeling was very different from an earlier event in Copenhagen in 2009 where there was tremendous optimism that an agreement would happen that would commit nations to take the climate crisis seriously. It didn’t happen and a real demoralization set it. This time the view was that “the road was not to Paris but through Paris.”

Climate justice movement

There was a recognition that we are in the process of building a global climate justice movement and no matter what happened in Paris this would have to continue. There were workshops and forums taking place in the area reserved for “civil society.” There were many inspiring sessions: women from Indonesia spoke out against deforestation by lumber companies; activists from the Philippines described the devastation of their country by weather systems and the effects on the poor and working people; young people from Jackson, Mississippi spoke of the work they are doing and Hispanic water rights

activists from California described their struggles. There were Indigenous people who were leading fights from every continent.

Labour for the climate

Historically there had been a real divide between environmentalists and labour. The tension between jobs and the environment had kept these sectors from working together. In more recent times there have been real attempts to bridge this divide.

The Leap Manifesto in Canada was one such attempt. Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis convened a symposium of Indigenous peoples, environmentalists, community activists and trade unionists earlier this year. They tried to build a basis of unity and the manifesto was the result. It linked the environmental crisis with the austerity agenda and brought a class and social justice approach to fighting climate change. In Toronto the July march for “Jobs, Justice and Climate,” which brought out 10,000, was one outcome. There was a well-attended forum on the manifesto in Paris.

Trade unionists had held a conference in September and the position they developed was “No jobs on a dead planet.” This was an important piece of building the unity that is so necessary in the climate justice movement. Workers are fighting for a just transition for those working in the resource industries and real green jobs.

At one session in Paris a worker from the tar sands stood up and made a statement to the audience. He said that the workers know what’s happening. They see a huge fire coming their way engulfing everything and they are grabbing their families and their belongings and running until they come to a river that they can’t cross. They need to build a bridge to get across but they can’t do it alone. They need our help and if we help them they can help us. He saw the forestry and fishing industries devastated, and the promise of jobs that never came.

He wants to be part of a climate justice movement that include the needs of working people, Indigenous communities and environmentalists. His comments were very inspiring and our job is to continue the fight to build this movement.

NO TO HATE, YES TO LOVE

by JANAHAN RAVIKUMAR

During the night of November 14, the only mosque in the city of Peterborough was attacked. Arsons broke in and caused \$80,000 worth of damage to the building.

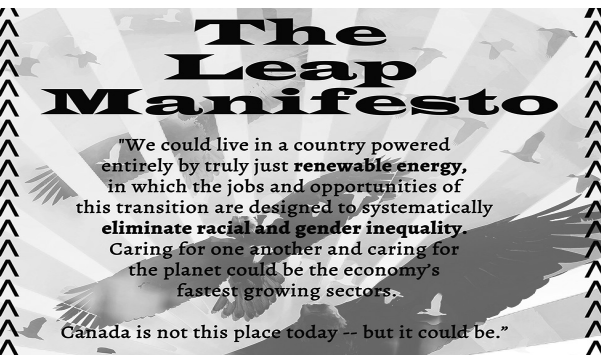
The Masjid Al-Salaam Mosque is the only Mosque in the city and is the place of worship for over 1000 people. The police classified the attack as a hate crime, coming not even 48 hours after the Paris Attacks. There had never been threats made against the Kawartha Muslim Religious Association (KMRA) before and this incident is the first of its kind in Peterborough. The immediate reaction

from the community was shock. How could someone do this? The Muslim population of Peterborough had lived here for decades with no troubles before. The Masjid Al-Salaam Mosque itself was purchased in 2001 and provided the first place where the KMRA community could come together. But out of the sadness, there was light.

Almost immediately after the news broke of the attack against the Masjid Al-Salaam Mosque, the entire city rallied. Peterborough resident Duane Rousselle established a crowdfunding page mere hours after the attack to pay for the \$80,000 damages; 36 hours later, the page had exceeded its goal and had gathered more than \$110,000. The KMRA eventually

had to step in and have Rousselle close the page because there was no end in sight for the donations. All the money went to the Kawartha Muslim Religious Association but they intend it only for the Mosque reconstruction, all extra money will be given to charity.

Thousands have come together in solidarity for the KRMA, including many other religious groups in the city. In solidarity with their brothers and sisters, several religious institutions have brought in those needing a place to worship. The first Friday after the attacks, the Mark Street United Church opened its doors and held Jumuah for all who wanted to attend. Trent, the local university, established a bus convoy for students





# SocialistWorker

## SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE

At the Copenhagen climate talks in 2009, the climate justice movement was disillusioned to see governments refuse to act on climate change.

But since then the movement has grown massively, led by Indigenous communities and with growing support from the labour movement—to challenge the oil companies and the states supporting them.

Across Canada and the US the climate justice movement has delayed every major pipeline project—stopping Northern Gateway, driving Kinder Morgan off Burnaby Mountain and TransCanada from Cacoona, and forcing Barack Obama to refuse the Keystone XL pipeline.

Last year the People's Climate March mobilized 400,000 in New York and hundreds of thousands more around the world for climate action, and this year was set to be a historic march in Paris on the eve of the climate talks.

### Violence inside and outside Paris

After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris earlier the year, the French government called for a massive demonstration—which it cynically used to whip up Islamophobia and war. But after last month's attacks in Paris, the government declared a state of emergency that it used to ban the climate demonstration.

As Naomi Klein wrote, "When governments and corporations knowingly fail to act to prevent catastrophic warming, it is an act of violence. It is a violence so large, so global and inflicted against so many temporalities simultaneously (ancient cultures, present lives, future potential) that there is not



yet a word capable of containing its monstrousness. And using acts of violence to silence the voices of those who are most vulnerable to climate violence is yet more violence."

The French state followed with further violence—attacking climate justice protesters, and whipping up racism against Muslims and refugees to justify intensifying the war on Iraq and Syria. The result has been to stoke even more violence, with the fascist National Front rising in the polls.

### Watering down the text as waters rise

In the midst of climate violence, oil-fuelled war and barriers to refugees fleeing both, the Paris climate

talks were supposed to stop climate change—but those most responsible for climate change have been the most resistant to taking action

As Anwar Hossain Manju, Bangladesh's Minister of Environment, explained, "We refuse to be the sacrifice of the international community in Paris. Anything that takes our survival off the table here is a red line. All parties have an obligation to act. Not doing so is a crime."

At the Climate Vulnerability Forum, countries most affected by climate change, who have also contributed the least to it, announced the Manila-Paris Declaration calling for 100% renewable energy and zero emissions by 2050—as

well as financial support for adaptation and mitigation from countries most affected—in order to keep global warming below 1.5 degree.

But through the negotiations, the leading climate criminals worked to water down the climate targets and language around groups most targeted by climate change, including "the rights of indigenous peoples, migrants, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and under occupation."

As Dallas Goldtooth from the Indigenous Environmental Network said, "Considering that Indigenous communities often face the worst consequences of climate

change, the decision to reject Indigenous Rights and advocate for false solutions is not only offensive and intolerable, but illogical and destructive to the climate change movement as a whole."

### From Harper to Trudeau

For the Canadian state, Paris was an opportunity to rebrand itself and put a new face on Harper's pipeline politics.

In the recent federal election, the Liberals took advantage of the NDP's rightward tack and monopolized the anti-Harper mood, pretending to be an alternative. Millions voted for real change and Trudeau has been trying to sustain

that image to mask the reality. "Canada is back, my good friends. We're here to help to build an agreement that will do our children and grandchildren proud," he announced to a standing ovation in Paris.

But even securing strong rhetoric was a battle against the Canadian delegation, which showed up with two executives from oil giant Suncor and Harper's old climate targets.

After initially resisting setting a target, Canadian Environmental Minister Catherine McKenna agreed to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, without any mechanism to accomplish this. While the Liberals support the legally-binding TPP trade deal, they refuse to support an legally-binding climate deal—so under Trudeau, Canada earned the "fossil of the day" award just like during the previous climate talks with Harper.

### After Paris

Trudeau spoke of a "balanced agreement," which for the Canadian government meant balancing between the climate justice movement and Canadian oil corporations. The resulting "agreement" becomes vocal support for one, along with material support for the other.

This is emerging as Trudeau's record: promising to withdraw fighter jets while continuing to bomb Iraq, and promising to stop climate change while continuing to support tar sands and pipelines.

The real historic agreement is not from state leaders pushing more war and more warming, but from the growing climate justice movement including Indigenous, environmental and labour organizations.

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## Stop the TPP

By Catherine Gendron

**The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) must be seen for what it is: a corporate bill of rights.**

The investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system embodies their superseding voice; even the former chief economist and vice-president at the World Bank has exclaimed opposition towards it.

As Joseph Stiglitz wrote, "ISDS goes much further: The obligation to compensate investors for losses of expected profits can and has been applied even where rules are non-discriminatory and profits are made from causing public harm." This sinister obligation particularly disturbs the provision and research of health care.

### Big Pharma

As if "Big Pharma" didn't

already wield substantial power, the TPP will extend their power—as evidenced from leaked content.

Intellectual property rights will guarantee pharmaceutical companies the right to increase their control of patented medications: they will have the ability to prevent generics from competing, and stop "biosimilar" (another term for medicine that is akin to one that has already been licensed) from producing new medications for years.

If countries involved in the TPP have an aim to ensure universal and affordable health care, pharmaceutical companies will have a way to stop it.

It has been demonstrated that intellectual property rights solely benefit pharmaceutical companies, and not people. Where is the drive for research and

affordable generics when trade laws may result in legal prosecution?

Moreover, the extension of patents and control results in pharmaceutical companies charging whatever they want without public involvement and without competition due to the delay of lower-cost generics.

Doctors Without Borders warned the public of the effects the TPP would have; as Judit Rius Sanjuan, explains: people "need access to affordable medicines; innovation without access is meaningless."

People across Canada already experience the second highest per capita cost of medicine in the world after the US; the passing of the TPP ensures rising pharmaceutical costs and further solidifies Big Pharma control.

The TPP also weakens

the goal of a universal drug plan. In countries where universal health care is provided, Canada remains the exception, but with the rising costs that are sure to coincide with the TPP, the goal for a universal drug plan is further pushed from the agenda.

The TPP was negotiated without any public involvement and Harper hoped people would be too distracted by the election to realize.

But already there has been resistance, and not all counties have agreed to sign as of yet.

Public pressure to stop the TPP must continue to grow; the newly elected federal government has repeatedly insisted on transparency and public involvement—let's make sure they hear us.