

The Agitator

Carleton University supplement to Socialist Worker

no.1 ★ 22 November 2005

SUPPORT THE TRANSIT WORKERS! KEEP OCTRANSPO AFFORDABLE

By Doug Nesbitt

The Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279, started work-to-rule job action on Monday November 14 after City Council abandoned negotiations with the union on November 9. ATU Local 279 represents two thousand drivers, mechanics and support staff who work for OCTranspo, the City of Ottawa's transit service. Bus drivers are not wearing uniforms or working overtime. So far, work-to-rule has failed to get results, and the union says they may escalate to a strike.

The union, which has been without contract since March 31 of this year, is seeking the same deal received by the Ottawa-Carleton police earlier in the year. But the city is refusing to give the transit workers what they gave the Ottawa-Carleton police. The workers are solidly behind the union, having rejected the city's "final offer" on November 2, by an amazing 98.6 per cent. The union says that even though the deal on wages, work conditions and benefits haven't been adequately addressed by the city, the main sticking point is over contracting out.

Four years ago, the City of Ottawa built the O-Train. Companies bidding for the contract have offered 15-year warranties on certain communications and signaling systems, which would mean they would be maintained by contract workers. The union already has workers doing warranty work on buses, and is clearly capable of doing warranty work on the train system. However, the city refuses to let ATU workers do the job, even though similar work is done by unionized city workers in several American cities. The task only requires about thirty workers.

The debate is not insignificant. The

city is planning a massive light-rail project over the next decade, possibly connecting Kanata and Orleans to the downtown core. The current battle between the union and the city is a battle over whether or not the future rail system will be maintained by unionized workers.

Bus fares on the rise

When public sector workers go on strike, governments and the media tend to play off the public against the unions, as if the unions are being irresponsible and malicious. But this time around, the City of Ottawa has painted itself into a corner. The union is being attacked just as bus fares are about to go up. As of December 1, fares will have been raised fifteen per cent in five months. Ottawa bus fares will stand at three dollars, the highest of any city in Canada. To add insult to injury, the city has introduced a plan to raise fares 37.5 per cent over five years.

Arguments that high fares are a result of high gas prices, are completely invalid. The City of Ottawa purchases gas at a fixed price of 78 cents/litre - a deal which will last to July 2006. With high gas prices, the city could have convinced more people to use OCTranspo. Instead, they squandered the opportunity.

Mayor Bob Chiarelli and his coterie of neo-liberal councillors are out to slash public services and privatize the leftovers, just like provincial and federal governments.

In 1996, the ATU Local 279 carried out a month-long strike which ended in victory. The union has large public support and can win again. If the union strikes students should show their solidarity. We can also fight back by carrying out a fare strike on December 1 on the O-Train at Carleton University.

ANTI CAPITALIST OPEN MIC



Friday, Dec. 2, 8PM
Mike's Place, Carleton U.
suggested cover: \$3-5

Bus fares across Canada

as of December 1, 2005

Ottawa	\$3.00
Quebec City	\$2.50
Toronto	\$2.50
Montreal	\$2.50
London	\$2.50
Windsor	\$2.35
Kitchener/Waterloo	\$2.25
York Region	\$2.25
Vancouver	\$2.25
Saskatoon	\$2.10
Hamilton	\$2.10
Victoria	\$2.00
Calgary	\$2.00
Edmonton	\$2.00
Regina	\$2.00
Halifax	\$2.00
Kingston	\$2.00
Winnipeg	\$1.85
St. John's	\$1.75
Fredericton	\$1.60

all statistics from respective transit authority web sites, Nov.21, 2005

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on December 3 demand real change Climate action now!

by John Bell, from Socialist Worker no.459 (November 5, 2005)

On Saturday, December 3, thousands will take to the streets in towns and cities around the world to demand real action to address the disaster of climate change and global warming.

The events - rallies, teach-ins and vigils - are timed to coincide with the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Montreal from Nov.28 to Dec.9.

This is the first full meeting of all the nations that have signed on to the Kyoto Agreement, expected to draw as many as 10,000 participants. And it is crucial in planning beyond Kyoto's first tiny steps on how to deal with the disaster of climate change.

Disaster is no exaggeration, nor is it a future prediction. From the high arctic to Patagonia, climate change caused mostly by the burning of fossil fuels is destroying whole communities and costing billions of dollars.

Hurricane season

Extreme weather is no longer a fluke - it is becoming the norm.

The succession of hurricanes that battered the US drew attention to the fact that never have there been so many category five storms in one season. Storm trackers assign names in alphabetical order for hurricanes each year; this year they ran out of names, the first time such a thing has happened. And they ran out with more than a month left in hurricane season.

Wilma became the most violent hurricane recorded, with winds reaching 280 kph.

Hurricanes also hit places they've never seen before - far south in Brazil and on the other side of the Atlantic in Spain - where buildings are not made to withstand storms of such magnitude.

Record high water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, and the warming of parts of the Atlantic previously too cool to spawn hurricanes, are the root of the killer weather.

As official host of the Climate Change

summit in Montreal, and as a signatory to the Kyoto treaty, the Canadian government will be posturing as an environmentally enlightened good guy.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul Martin's Liberals signed on to Kyoto all right, but not until they led a movement to water down the treaty's provisions. Thanks to them, Kyoto is little more than a symbolic gesture.

Since Canada signed the treaty promising to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the amount of garbage released into the atmosphere by Canadian industries has actually risen.

A new study conducted by researchers at Simon Fraser University has found that Canada ranks an abysmal 28th out of the 30 top industrialized nations on environmental issues.

The study looked at 29 environmental categories. Canada was 29th in water consumption per capita, and dead last in both handling of nuclear waste and production of carbon monoxide.

Global response

More and more people are mobilizing to protest the government and corporate inaction all around the world. A global problem requires a global movement.

To date, 22 countries - including all the G8 nations - have climate change rallies planned for December 3.

In Canada, the focus for many will be to join a major national demonstration in Montreal. A coalition of environmental, labour and social justice organizations has chartered buses from Toronto for the event.

For those in Ottawa, the local peace group, NOWAR-Paix is organizing a bus to get to Montreal. A seat will cost \$16 dollars and it must be reserved with a firm commitment to attend the demonstration. For more details about the Ottawa bus visit nowar-paix.ca. For more information on the demonstration visit:

<http://3dec2005.org>

Events Calendar

Nov.23, 7pm, Tory 219, Carleton U.
IS Carleton branch meeting
Nov.24, 7pm, 123 Simard, U. of Ottawa
Student Coalition Against War meeting
Nov.30, 7pm, Tory 215, Carleton U.
Forum: Can revolution be peaceful?
hosted by IS Carleton
Dec.1, 11am at Carleton O-train station
SAY NO TO HIGH BUS FARES!
Dec.2, 8pm, Mike's Place, Carleton U.
Anti-Capitalist Open Mic
suggested cover: \$3-5
Dec.3 in Montreal
Global March for the Climate
visit nowar-paix.ca for details

About the Agitator

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