

ten days
that shook
the world

a celebration of the
100th anniversary of
the russian revolution

October 25
Vancouver | Toronto | Ottawa
socialist.ca

The History of the
Russian Revolution
Pages 4&5

Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 597 | October 2017 | socialist.ca

UNNATURAL DISASTER

In the past few months massive storms have flooded Texas and Florida, wiped out power for Puerto Rico and depopulated the island of Barbuda in the Caribbean. Hurricane Irma had the strongest winds ever recorded in the Atlantic's history. And Hurricane Harvey dropped a record amount of rainfall on Houston. At the same time as the hurricanes were happening, the largest forest fire in BC's history was on the rampage. And in Alberta's beautiful Waterton Lakes National Park, another fire was taking over.

There is nothing "natural" about these disasters and the populations most affected.

As Robert Bullard, environmental justice theorist explained, "When we look at the color of vulnerability and we look at which communities are actually at greatest risk from disasters and floods like this, historically, it's been low-income communities and communities of color, communities that live in low-lying areas that are areas that are very prone to flooding... What Harvey has done is to expose those inequalities that existed before

the storm. And, you know, disasters like this widen and exacerbate inequality."

Capitalism utterly depends on fossil fuels and the profits associated with production and distribution – think tar sands and pipelines. While it is possible to switch to sustainable energy sources (solar, wind, thermal), capitalists will not tolerate having "stranded assets" in the tar sands and elsewhere. And so we go nowhere.

The second problem is that austerity measures – which have been the only thing on offer from

the ruling class – have meant cuts to the very programs and services that help prevent or lessen the impacts of severe weather, like levees, and crisis response services.

Trump's response to the crisis has made things much worse. He plays golf while the planet burns and US citizens die from the devastation wrought by these disasters.

In Puerto Rico, aid has been slow to arrive and a humanitarian disaster is unfolding. The US government is more concerned that Puerto Rico is able to pay back debts owed to the

US banks than they are for the people in need.

Socialism or barbarism

Our ruling class won't volunteer to end the use of fossil fuels, create the mass transit or retrofitted buildings we need. Socialism means the 99% taking power literally into our own hands, to create the society we need and deserve.

These unnatural disasters have shown, once again, the great urgency of overthrowing the system that creates them.

Tories undermine Status of Women Committee with anti-choice appointee

by John Bell

Any idea that new Tory leader Andrew Scheer would steer a more moderate course toward election was put to rest in September when Tory MP Rachael Harder was nominated to chair the House Status of Women Committee. The Lethbridge MP has established credentials opposing women's right to choose, and opposing trans rights.

Status of Women is one of a handful of parliamentary committees where it is "traditional" for the opposition to nominate the committee chair. The job is accompanied by \$12,000 annual pay bonus.

Coincidentally, \$12,000 is the same amount Harder secured as grants for two Lethbridge "pregnancy care centres" that refuse to provide referrals to legal abortion services. The federal money was used to create summer jobs for anti-abortion activists. Since her first election in 2015 Harder has gained the endorsements from anti-choice organizations like Campaign Life Coalition.

Liberal and NDP members of the Committee walked out en masse to protest the appointment. "The chair is the spokesperson for our work and it's impossible for a spokesperson of an all parliamentary committee where reproductive choice is at the foundation of women's equality, for her to be able to communicate and articulate our work," said NDP status of women critic Sheila Malcolmson.

Liberals were also indignant, but it wasn't long ago that it was revealed that Liberal MP Iqra Khalid had funneled \$56,000 in federal summer jobs grants for the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform.

This is the group that grabbed headlines by showing up at busy city intersections, and on college campuses, with giant, graphic posters meant to horrify the public. These



Rachael Harder

misinformation missions were staffed by students as summer jobs.

War on choice

The Tories are defending their nomination saying that the walkout is an insult to "democracy" and "parliamentary tradition." But in fact it is part of their stealth war against women's rights, and the right to choose that has been fought for and won by women in this country. Any other "tradition" is bogus.

More than a controversy over a parliamentary committee, the whole episode exposes how right-wing MPs funnel millions of taxpayer dollars to fund anti-choice organizations, and chip away at women's rights.

While this usually means Tory MPs, there are Liberals burrowed in the "Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus". (Thomas Mulcair decreed in 2015 that

NDP candidates must be pro-choice, but refused to turf a Scarborough candidate who let slip his anti-choice beliefs.)

Research by the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada reveals that "pregnancy care centres" like the Lethbridge and District Birthright Society and the Lethbridge Pregnancy Care Centre cash in either with direct funds or with tax-exempt status.

Scheer repeats the old Tory evasion, that his party will not make abortion rights an election issue, even while they undermine access and weaken women's rights by stealth. Trudeau plays up his "feminist" status, but the Liberal legacy includes turning a blind eye to MPs betraying the essential right to choose.

Abortion rights were won on the streets, through mass action. We can't rely on parliament to defend them.

Momentum grows for just transition

by Carolyn Egan

In a stunning move the 5.7 million strong Trades Union Congress in the United Kingdom passed a resolution on climate change and just transition that called for public ownership of the energy sector. It was a unanimous vote, which backed a major plank in Jeremy Corbyn's election manifesto, "For the Many, Not the Few", which stated that the government should take energy back into public ownership to deliver renewable energy, affordability for consumers, and democratic control. This is a major push back against the neo-liberal agenda which has privatization as one of its key goals.

The motion also called for a "mass programme of retrofit and insulation of Britain's homes and public buildings" as a step toward just transition for workers. It went on to say the TUC should lobby for the establishment of a Just Transition strategy for those workers affected by industrial changes necessary to develop a more environmentally sustainable future for all, and develop practical steps needed to achieve this as integral to industrial strategy. It also spoke of investigating the long-term risks for pension funds investing in fossil fuels, promote divestment, and alternative reinvestment in the sustainable economy.

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy quoted Jenny Patient from the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group as saying, "We know there are good and valuable jobs in the transition to zero carbon and this resolution shows the way forward by making this integral to a cross-sector industrial strategy that can rebalance and rebuild industries and protect workers." Now the words must turn into action.

Reclaiming Alberta's future today

In Alberta a group has come together called Reclaiming Alberta's Future

Today (RAFT) which is initiating a project to clean up old oil infrastructure across the province which has a lot of environmental liabilities. There are hundreds of thousands of wells, which could provide jobs for tens of thousands of workers in this process. RAFT intends to do a public campaign with speaking tours to every area of Alberta talking to Indigenous peoples, ranchers, farmers, trade unionists and anyone who cares about the future of their province. They are hoping to set up local groups as part of the campaign asking the government to take action to support the initiative.

This is a hugely important project which raises the question of how workers can transition from extraction jobs to jobs which can heal the earth and reemploy unemployed oil workers. This is the type of campaign that the climate justice movement can get behind and show workers that they are fighting along side them for good, union jobs that can use their skills. It can advance the campaign for "just transition" in a very concrete way and allow for Indigenous peoples, environmentalists and workers to come together in common cause.

If something like this succeeds in Alberta it could be a blue print that could be used in many other countries as well. There are 2.5 million inactive wells in the US for example and many of the oil finds in the North Sea have matured. If workers can become involved in reclaiming wells, the draw of the tar sands and pipelines can be much diminished. It also can hold industry accountable for the destruction of the land in its race for profits.

It is initiatives like these that can overcome the divide between jobs and the environment, which has certainly been narrowing, but still exists. It gives hope that we can build a climate justice movement that leaves no one behind and can actually provide strategies to build the unity that is so necessary for us to create a sustainable future for all.

Anti-racist actions across the country

On Saturday September 30th, anti-racists mobilized across Canada to oppose rallies organized by the racist, anti-immigrant Storm Alliance. Below is a roundup of reports from some of the rallies.

NIAGARA FALLS – About 200 people rallied in Niagara Falls on September 30 to say 'No room for Hate in Niagara'. The protest was organized by the Niagara Anti-Racism Coalition in response to a planned rally by the anti-refugee group Storm Alliance. After hearing from several speakers including from the Niagara Regional Native Centre and the Steelworkers Toronto Area Council, the vibrant rally shouted down a handful of bigots. Organizer Karrie Porter stated, "This is just the beginning. Hate is not going to spread in Niagara."

PETERBOROUGH – Hundreds of anti-racist activists mobilized to shut down the racist Canadian Nationalist Front's planned demonstration in downtown Peterborough. The racists only

mustered a tiny number of people, a humiliating defeat. The action, part of a Solidarity Weekend to stop neo-nazis from marching, was a huge success. As one of the organizers explained, "We turned around a national news story about an anti-immigration rally into a story of people coming together in a commitment to end white supremacy... we united and took back our public space."

VANCOUVER – Anti-racists protested at the Peace Arch to stand up to racism and intolerance of Storm Alliance. We are happy to say that we outnumbered the racists, and ruined their little protest. They pouted and shouted and even briefly unplugged our sound generator but we prevailed!

People were treated to the Carnival band which drowned out the racists chants. Speakers included: Eagle Eyes, Kari Michaels from BCGEU, Shanee Prasad, Lisa Descary and Rae Figursky from the BCTF, and Nour Enayeh.

HAMILTON – More than 100



September 30th rally against hate in Niagara Falls

people stood up to the planned racist rally at city hall. In fact, the racists ran scared and cancelled their event when they found out that the counter protest had been organized.

Indigenous activists and representatives from the Muslim Association of Hamilton and the Muslim Council of Greater Hamilton spoke. Canadian Labour Congress Secretary Treasurer Marie Clarke Walker came halfway

across the country to join the rally.

OTTAWA – More than 200 people rallied at Parliament Hill today to oppose racism and Islamophobia. The crowd began to gather to oppose a planned rally by the far-right Canadian Coalition of Concerned Citizens, an umbrella group of different neo-Nazi and Islamophobic sects. Flags from several unions were present, including Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF),

Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU), United Steelworkers of America (USWA) and UNIFOR, as well as the Canadian Federation of Students.

After chanting "Refugees Are Welcome Here" the crowd moved to the eternal flame at the south end of Parliament Hill to hear speakers and a short hiphop performance by MC Mohammad Ali, aka The Socialist Vocalist. By this time, the CCCC group had grown to about 3 dozen, perhaps forty people in total.

By 1PM, the bigots called it a day, packing up their flags and sound system and skulking off Parliament Hill under police escort. The one message they had managed to make heard over the noise of the counter-protest was that all us counter-demonstrators were "anarchists, socialists and communists." This drew loud and sustained cheering from the counter-demonstrators, perhaps not the reaction the Islamophobes had intended.

Voter suppression fails

The forces of the Spanish state unleashed brutal repression of Catalan citizens attempting to vote in the October 1 referendum on independence. Images of voters forcibly removed from polling stations at gunpoint, tear-gassed and shoved down stairs circulated widely on social media.

As of October 1st, police attacks had injured 844 people with 128 of them hospitalized, including two serious cases.

Spanish police also attacked Spanish workers standing in solidarity with their Catalan brothers and sisters.

The mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau Ballano, stated: "It is unacceptable that the police should be thrown against an unarmed population that has mobilized to exercise its right to vote... Mariano Rajoy [Prime Minister of Spain] is a coward."

However, Catalan citizens fought back in the streets against this threat to democracy. Firefighters formed a line of defence between police thugs and the citizens trying to exercise their right to vote.

Police used tear gas in small polling station in a rural town. A village of 250 people was attacked by 60 or 70 paramilitary police.

Elsewhere the police dragged an polling station official down stone steps by her hair, touched her breasts, then broke the fingers of her hand one by one.

Police managed to raid or attack approximately 400 of 2300 polling stations, where up to about 700,000 people could have voted. Of the approximately 2,260,000 votes cast, 90% were in favour of independence.

Resistance

In Barcelona neighbourhoods and even in small towns, people came out on the street in their tens of thousands to defy the repression.

In this situation, the international left and anyone who supports the democratic right of people to decide their own future must be on the side of the Catalan people, whatever decision they make about their future.

In the lead-up to October 1st, the Catalan CGT, a trade union grouping of some tens of thousands, called for a general strike starting on October 3rd. This call has now been joined by other union bodies and is set to be massive.

There were solidarity demonstrations in towns and cities across Catalonia leading up to the vote. But they also took place in Madrid and several other Spanish towns.

This is important because it points to the possibility of solidarity from Spanish workers with their brothers and sisters in Catalonia and opposition to the Spanish state, which in recent years has imposed harsh policies of austerity on workers, students and farmers across the board.

People's power

The security crackdown could backfire on the government. It can also point to the possibility of a growing movement which can be about more than independence.

Quim Arrufat from the anti-cap-



Mass protest in Barcelona the day after the referendum

Photo: Sasha Popovic [CC-NC-ND-2.0]



Voters defied brutal police

Photo: Fotomovimiento [CC-NC-ND-2.0]

italist, pro-independence Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) party was quoted before the referendum as saying, "by voting [on Oct 1] we will say no to Rajoy's regime."

"This is not about culture or identity—it is about people's power. We want to take control from the regime, the banks and the army."

Socialists need to defend the right to self-determination of oppressed nations. Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin argued that those who failed to understand this necessity were dooming not only the particular national struggle but also any possibility of moving towards a socialist future:

"The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front; but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., battles around all the problems of

economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

A crucial part of the struggle for socialism in Russia was the necessity to break what Lenin referred to as the "prison house of nations" — great Russian chauvinism — in order to build a united fightback against the autocracy, exploitation and oppression.

For Lenin and the Bolsheviks, this included the right to self-determination up to and including secession, should this be the democratic decision of the oppressed national minorities.

Because of the way capitalist states have historically used national oppression to consolidate their own power, the fight for social justice is often inextricably linked with the struggle for self-determination.

We need look no further than the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada, or the struggle for independence in Quebec, to see that Canada constitutes its own "prison house of nations".

And this prison house has been of immense benefit to the Canadian ruling class, since the land and resources they have stolen from Indigenous people was the basis for constructing a prosperous capitalist state, in the same way that slavery in the United States laid the basis for a successful capitalist economy there.

Economic interests

Similarly, the resistance to allowing Catalan's citizens to vote on their future has very much to do with the economic interests of the Spanish ruling class.

Catalonia is a major manufacturing centre and represents nearly 20 per cent of Spain's gross domestic product, making it one of the biggest drivers of the country's economy. Barcelona is also a major port and the region is a prime tourist destination.

This is a fight that has wider repercussions for other capitalist countries who fear the cry for democratic freedom from Catalonia could resonate with their own populations.

Scottish nationalists and members of Québec Solidaire have condemned Spain's actions and said that Catalans have the right to choose their destiny. QS MNA Manon Massé, in Barcelona for the vote, also called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to speak out against the gross violations of human rights by the Spanish state.

In response to some socialists in his time who argued that national liberation struggles were "infeasible" or "illusory" under imperialism, Lenin argued that the 'assertion that the right of nations to self-determination cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism' misunderstands the revolutionary possibilities of the fight for democratic rights pushing beyond the boundaries of the system itself:

"The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies, as advanced by all revolutionary Social-Democrats, is also 'impossible of achievement' under capitalism without a series of revolutions. This does not imply, however, that Social Democracy must refrain from conducting an immediate and most determined struggle for all these demands—to refrain would merely be to the advantage of the bourgeoisie and reaction. On the contrary, it implies that it is necessary to formulate and put forward all these demands, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois legality, but by breaking through it; not by confining oneself to parliamentary speeches and verbal protests, but by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental, democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, i.e., to the socialist revolution, which will expropriate the bourgeoisie."

"The socialist revolution may break out not only in consequence of a great strike, a street demonstration, a hunger riot, a mutiny in the forces, or a colonial rebellion, but also in consequence of any political crisis [...] or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation."

How the revolution was won

by **Grahan Cheadle**

The overthrow of the Russian Tsar in February 1917 was the spontaneous result of the anger of the Russian masses erupting in mass demonstrations that paralyzed Petrograd and numerous other Russian cities. Within days, the once all-powerful Tsar was isolated and he was forced to abdicate.

In 1917 Russian society was devastated by poverty and the violence of the First World War. That February, women workers at factories in Petrograd organized strikes and demonstrations to mark International Women’s Day, and to demand an end to food shortages. The demonstrations spread quickly, and even the Bolsheviks were taken by surprise. With the Tsar unable to count on the usual support of the Imperial Army, his regime crumbled, and in less than a week he was gone, replaced by a Provisional Government. Within days of the International Women’s Day demonstrations, workers in several cities took the example of Russia’s upheaval of 1905 and formed workers’ councils (советы, or “soviets” in Russian). Factory workers formed committees, sending representatives to larger councils from different districts of

cities and city-wide soviets. Other social groups, including soldiers and sailors, formed similar councils, and sent representatives to the councils. The new Provisional Government was made up of parties nominally opposed to the Tsar, but in reality representing Russia’s capitalists. The Bolsheviks and other radical parties were excluded. This government was committed to continuing the war effort. The resulting situation of “dual power” was inherently unstable. Initially, however, the workers’ councils lacked the confidence to assert their authority against the Provisional Government. When the first national congress of soviets was convened, the Bolsheviks represented a minority of delegates; the soviets’ leadership came from moderate left parties like the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SR). **Power to the soviets** When Lenin returned to Russia from exile in Switzerland, he shocked his comrades by demanding that they reject cooperation with the Provisional Government and commit themselves to a new revolution that would transfer power to the soviets.

Lenin recognized that the masses of workers, while they might not have the confidence to assert their power immediately, had shown by their actions that they wouldn’t tolerate a government that continued policies of war and exploitation. After temporary gains during the July days, and the arrest or temporary exile of several Bolshevik leaders, things started to go poorly for the Provisional Government, and the Bolsheviks continued to gain strength in the soviets. When the Bolsheviks finally came to power in October, they took immediate action. The new workers’ state ended Russia’s participation in the First World War. The long-oppressed peoples of the Russian Empire (“the prison house of nations”) were given self-determination. In a country notorious for antisemitic pogroms, Jews led the workers’ councils of Russia’s two largest cities. Laws outlawing homosexuality were repealed, abortion was legalized and made available on demand. These measures only scratch the surface of the experiments of the Russian Revolution, from workers’ control over their workplaces to efforts towards true equality for women, to a new flowering of art and culture.



Gains of the October revolution

by **Isabelle Rowe-Codner**

The Russian Revolution brought numerous gains that were made when the masses of workers were able to take control of their lives. Here is a quick summary of the unparalleled gains of the revolution, in regards to women’s rights, sexual liberation, national liberation, anti-imperialism, and of course worker’s power.

Women’s liberation As class society thrives on exploiting social divides, tsarist Russia was no less brutal on women than anywhere else. Men were encouraged to inflict violence on their wives, women could not get divorced, and working women were paid on average half of what their male counterparts made. It no surprise then, that when the ferment of revolution finally arose, it was women who led the way. Indeed, it was the women textile workers in Petrograd who initially went on strike, setting off a tidal wave of action that would bring about the revolution itself. As the material conditions changed along with the revolution, as labour was made into a democratic process, the social divides repressing women began to fold. In the revolutionary period, women won the right to divorce, the right to vote, the right to equal pay and labour standards, and by 1920 abortion was legalized. This was in addition to the numerous

ways women’s lives were improved by the changing society. For example, communal laundries and daycares, which performed the work women used to be forced to do in Tsarist Russia, became free. **Sexual liberation** As part of tearing down the Tsarist regime’s political structure, laws regarding homosexuality and sodomy were abolished during the revolutionary era. This made Russia one of the first countries in the world to accept homosexuality and put them generations upon generations ahead of their capitalist counterparts on this subject. Of course, during the Stalinist years, this, along with many of the other gains made,

identities, which, under Tsarism, were targets of Russian, Eastern Orthodox ethno-nationalism. After the revolution, great strides were made to ensure the sovereignty of minority populations, such as establishing a Congress of the People’s of the East, allowing localities to be governed in the languages native to them, and setting up Muslim schools and courts. **Ending the War** By 1917, the First World War had claimed millions of lives, all in the name of imperialism. Stretched thin in resources and morale, soldiers of the Tsarist Russian empire carried a revolutionary sentiment just as strong as those back in the country. During the revolution, soldiers played an integral role, forming unions and joining soviets, and even established the Petrograd Garrison, which defended the revolution from bourgeois suppression. The Bolsheviks put an immediate end to the war once coming to power. The capitalist nations would continue to resolve their battles with the lives of their men.

Worker’s Power All of this was possible, not through the reform of a ruling class, but because the workers of Russia were finally able to decide the course of their lives democratically, through their own struggle for self-emancipation.

was rolled back and homosexuality was recriminalized. This goes to show how much social force the material conditions of a society have. **National liberation** Spanning a tremendous expanse of territory, Russia was and is home to many national

100 YEARS SINCE THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



by **Bradley Hughes**

There should be no doubt that the revolution was lost. It was overturned by the Stalinist counter revolution in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. Much had been lost before this point, but during these years all vestiges of democracy and human liberation were extinguished by a new ruling class. This new ruling class was the government apparatus and their representative was Stalin.

Both the gains of the revolution and the revolutionaries themselves were eliminated by Stalin’s regime. The historian Tamara Deutscher wrote, “Nearly all the leaders of the October revolution, all members of Lenin’s Politbureau, most commanders of the Red Army, many outstanding scientists and writers were denounced as terrorists, murderers, and wreckers, as foreign spies and traitors and executed.” The October revolution occurred in a country ravaged by World War One and about to be ravaged by five more years of civil war. The foes of democracy and progress within Russia were supported and supplied by the world’s great powers. This included blockades to keep out food and medicine and an invasion by 14 countries including Canada, involving over 200,000 foreign troops. The Great Powers also provided money and guns to the forces attempting to reinstate the rule of the Tsars. The war and collapse of industry lead to famine and disease. Seven million died of disease, the same number as Russian soldiers killed in World War One. The destruction of industry and trade lead to major cities reduced

to a small fraction of their former population. The working class largely ceased to exist. In these circumstances, we shouldn’t be surprised that the initial success and gains of the revolution were crushed. What is surprising is that so much was accomplished in so little time and in such terrible circumstances. The Bolsheviks found themselves running a worker’s state where the working class had largely disappeared. The collapse of industry meant it was nearly impossible to raise living standards, and there was no way to trade for the food produced by the peasantry. Armed workers confiscating the harvest to try to **‘The Great Powers provided money and guns to the forces attempting to reinstate the rule of the Tsars.’**

feed those starving in the cities didn’t look a lot different to the peasants than the old aristocratic landlords demanding tribute. The peasants had gone from being allies in the creation of a better world to opponents of the new regime. The new state had no choice but to implement more and more authoritarian methods, just to try to keep people fed, to defend itself from the forces of counter revolution, and to try to slow the collapse of industry. One by one the other socialist parties in Russia went from opposing workers’ democracy to allying themselves with forces to

Lessons for socialists today

by **Lisa Descary**

Today, young people in particular are more open to ideas about socialism than any time in recent history, with an American survey last year finding that a majority of those under 30 had a more favourable view of ‘socialism’ (however they defined it) than capitalism. But how do we get to a socialist society? To answer that question, we need to look at some of the lessons from the only time in history that working people were able to radically transform their society into a socialist one: the Russian Revolution of 1917. The first and most basic lesson to be drawn for socialists today is that yes, workers can run society themselves! Our capitalist system needs us to believe the lie that we need so-called ‘great men’ to be rulers and experts at the helm of the governments and companies that run the world. They try to convince us that there is no alternative to their system, and that most working people are too lazy and lacking in skills to be in charge of their own workplaces and communities.

This is a very old piece of propaganda that is sometimes believed even on the left. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin wrote more than a hundred years ago, “We must break the old, absurd, savage, despicable and disgusting prejudice that only the so-called ‘upper classes’, only the rich, and those who have gone through the school of the rich, are capable of administering the state and directing the organisational development of socialist society.” The October revolution inspired working people around the world when rank and file soldiers began to govern themselves democratically, and workers took over and ran their workplaces. But perhaps the most useful lesson from the Russian revolution is the importance of having a revolutionary party like the Bolshevik Party in Russia. While a party cannot make a revolution happen by itself, without such a party, the spontaneous uprisings of the working class cannot coalesce in an organized way into a social revolution that can successfully overthrow the capitalist order. Uprisings in struggle happen even today, but real change in society won’t occur without organized revolutionaries, who can debate strategy and tactics within a democratic party. This party of activists has to be committed to adapting and applying what has been learned

from past struggles, applying Marxist ideas without being rigid or dogmatic. **Build well ahead** Former anarchist Victor Serge, impressed by the effectiveness of the Bolshevik party that he saw in 1917, wrote, “The party is the nervous system of the working class, its brain.” This party is not separate from the working class, but part of it, made up of the best militants. Without a revolutionary party, history has shown that workers’ struggles will be channelled by social democrats and liberals into dead-end strategies that rely on the

their right and effectively became supporters of a bloody restoration of the aristocracy. During the civil war, Communist Party members were tortured to death when captured by the White Army. After the civil war, membership in the party became a ticket to a job in the civil service. In this situation people in the ranks of the government administration were no longer part of a flourishing workers’ democracy, and some began to work in their own interests. Stalin became the representative of these sorts of people. However, they couldn’t completely complete their control without a counter-revolution and all the blood and terror that that requires. The prison populations grew enormously. The number of forced labourers in the Gulags grew by a factor of nearly 100 in the decade following 1927, from 140,000 prisoners to over 11 million. Stalin’s state police arrested and killed more communists than perished in the long years of underground operation, during the revolution, and the civil war, combined. Even loyal Stalinists were not safe. Of the nearly 2000 delegates to the 1934 Communist Party Congress (who were all loyal to Stalin) well over half were executed over the next few years. This monstrous new regime cloaked itself in the words and symbols of the victorious workers’ and peasants’ revolution that it had destroyed, and the ruling classes elsewhere were happy to go along with this pretense. However, the truth of the October revolution still inspires people today, and socialists have a duty to make sure that the truth is told.

capitalist system to somehow solve their problems. (This could have happened in 1917 if the Mensheviks had had their way.) But obviously, socialist revolution is not on the agenda this week or likely even this year. So why is it important to build such a party now – can’t it wait until a more revolutionary period? In fact, the experience of the Bolsheviks shows how important it is to build such a party well ahead of a revolutionary period. To wait until then is too late. The Bolsheviks started building their party more than a decade before the October 1917 revolution. Although the size of the party fluctuated greatly, it was comparatively small in March of 1917, having only 4,000 members across Russia. But by October of 1917, the Bolshevik party had grown to a quarter million members. But without the cadre or experienced members that had built up credibility in their workplaces and communities and laid groundwork over that previous decade, it is unlikely that the Bolsheviks would have been able to be the effective ‘nervous system of the working class’ that Victor Serge recognized.

From crisis to crisis Capitalism today is far from stable. It lurches from crisis to crisis: think of Egypt in 2011, South Korea in 2016 and the U.S. under Trump. Imagine what might have been achieved by workers in these countries if a party of revolutionary socialists had roots in their workplaces. That is why we say that if you want to be part of the fight for a better, socialist world, you shouldn’t wait. You should join the International Socialists!

Where we stand

The dead-end of capitalism

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

A system that is killing the planet

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

Socialism and workers' power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs.

Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Oppression

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

We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers' revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Elections and democracy

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

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers' unity and solidarity.

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The revolutionary party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed.

If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project, and join the International Socialists.

What caused the NDP loss in Quebec?

by Chantal Sundaram

In 2015, the federal NDP tried to explain its defeat by blaming the debate over the niqab and the votes it supposedly cost them in Quebec.

Now, the federal NDP leadership race has been an occasion for some – notably Guy Caron and Nicki Ashton – to revisit that argument. To varying extents they and their supporters question the Quebec-bashing, but they also bring into question the NDP's opposition to restrictions on the niqab, particularly on the grounds of Quebec's right to self-determination.

These two arguments come up short. Both start in a good place, but end in a bad one.

Islamophobia and Quebec-bashing

The first takes a principled stand against Islamophobic attacks on Muslim women but ends in Quebec-bashing. The "rethink" of this position starts by condemning the bashing of Quebec as more racist than anyone else, which is absolutely right. But it ends by giving support to the false argument that "secularism" in Quebec directed against religious minorities does not amount to racism.

The NDP "rethink" includes suspending criticism of Bill 62, the Quebec Liberal bill that would prevent both providers and receivers of public services from wearing religious insignia and clothing, again in the name of self-determination.

Quebec attitudes to the niqab and religion in general have been shaped by a struggle to free Quebec society from the political control of the Catholic Church. But recognizing that, and supporting Quebec's right to self-determination, does not require supporting an argument that defines Quebec identity in terms of a fundamentalist notion of "secularism" against religious accommodation of racialized communities. In fact, the left in Quebec has been struggling to change that false choice.

Both the NDP's initial explanation and the "rethink" start from the same mistake about what really cost them



On the key question of austerity, NDP failed its biggest test in 2015.

the election in Quebec in 2015. To use a sports analogy, the NDP made an unforced error. But it wasn't the niqab debate, it was the debate over austerity.

Zero deficit

The key turning point in the election was when Trudeau pledged to prioritize spending on public infrastructure over a balanced budget, and Mulcair and his advisors chose to campaign against deficit spending and for "responsible government." This was the real death knell in Quebec, which has seen years of concerted protest against cuts to public spending in every single sector. This is what allowed the Liberals to outflank the NDP in Quebec – and in parts of English Canada as well.

Islamophobia and the left

Progressives in English Canada are as confused about this question as in Quebec. The fact that the NDP continues to grapple with it is not surprising.

Quebec's left party, Québec solidaire (QS), has been trying to deal with this debate for the ten years of its existence. And it is true that QS has had an unclear position, including on Bill 62 and the Niqab. But QS is a party that is broad and growing, and full of debate that is not homogeneous.

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, leader of the Quebec student revolt of 2012 and now elected as a QS MNA and

co-spokesperson of QS, said the following in a hearing of the August 15 Parliamentary Commission:

"For us, there is no law, there is no public policy, that can liberate women by force; there is no dress code, be it religious, secular, republican, public, that can liberate women from religious or cultural submission. One of the historical demands of the women's movement is their right to self-determination."

And after the August 6 firebombing of the car of the president of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec, Manon Massé, the other co-spokesperson of QS issued the following statement:

"Do I have to remind you that this same community was the victim of an attack that claimed the lives of six people last January? ... I can only fear this spiral of hatred and denounce these hateful and dangerous actions. For us, there is no doubt that the extreme right exists in Quebec."

The challenge in Quebec, as elsewhere, is to see the connection between these acts of hate and legislation like Bill 62.

Lessons for the NDP

If the NDP is to make sense of what really cost them the election, they are going to have to look deeper than the politics of scapegoating. The racist right will gain where the left fails. And it is on the key question of austerity that the NDP failed its biggest test.



Never miss an issue.

Mail in this form with a cheque or money order made payable to "Socialist Worker".

Prices per year (CAD dollars):

Regular subscription: **\$30**
Institutions, First Class delivery and U.S.: **\$50**
Other international: **\$60**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Mail to: Socialist Worker, PO Box 339
Station E, Toronto, ON Canada, M6H 4E3
Phone: 416.972.6391 / E-mail: reports@socialist.ca

Join the International Socialists

Name: City:

Address:

E-mail: Phone:

Mail to: International Socialists, PO Box 339, Station E, Toronto, ON Canada, M6H 4E3
Phone: 416.972.6391 / E-mail: reports@socialist.ca



Find us on:  @socialist_ca  \socialistca

Our Revolution: A Future to Believe In

Reviewed by **Mary Code**

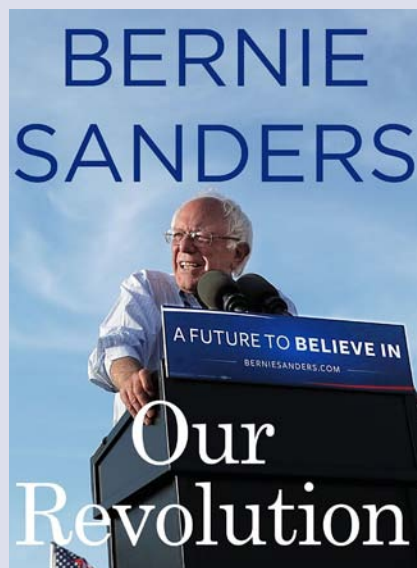
I will always feel the Bern for Mr. Bernard Sanders, however, his book *Our Revolution: A Future to Believe In* was not what I was expecting, and part of this lies in how the work is written to be two stand-alone parts.

Part One is entitled “Running for President” and is essentially a first-person narrative of Sanders’ life.

Part Two is entitled “An Agenda for a New America: How We Transform Our Country” and contrasts with Part One in its provision of a very dense, didactic breakdown of American governmental policies that contain statistics and figures on a large range of issues.

Sanders writes in an accessible way, but this half of the book pontificates on every diminutive social justice issue and as such can read like a dry first-year Sociology textbook at times.

In Part One, Sanders recounts his early life growing up in Brooklyn and how he learned about politics by reading magazines in The University of Chicago’s library. He joined the Young People’s Socialist League, the Student Peace Union, and the Congress of Racial Equality.



This involvement in politics led him to journalism where he worked for several Vermont papers; he then ran for the Liberty Union Party and won.

He details his political career in Vermont, the major wins that his campaign experienced, and how he then became mayor and senator while detailing his progressive policies.

Part Two is a departure from his personal narrative, and includes information that can be common knowledge to those who closely follow American politics. He covers health care, private prisons, institutionalized racism, climate change, media corruption, immigration reform and the DREAM Act, trade policies, poverty, and more.

The charts and figures are valuable resources but are repetitive to most socialists. There was new information for myself, but overall Part Two is a large fact list and I had to re-read this part in several sittings.

This book is a good resource for those interested in Sander’s voting track record; however, readers are to be aware of the contrast between the two parts and that the second half of the book might cool off the Bern you’ve been feeling if you expected a more personal and interesting presentation of the material.

Solidarity with Colin Kaepernick

Last year, in the midst of Black Lives Matter protests against police officers killing African American youth and facing no consequences for state-sanctioned murder, NFL Quarterback Colin Kaepernick decided to take a stance, choosing to kneel during the national anthem. As he told the media when he started his action:

“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”

Kaepernick continued his political protest throughout the 2016 season despite enormous levels of vitriol directed at him through the mainstream and social media. Much of it has been explicitly racist. Turning the other cheek, Kaepernick spoke eloquently about the issues of racial oppression in the United States and committed time and effort to campaigns and charities seeking to improve the Black experience and challenge racism.

By the end of the season, several other NFL players had joined Kaepernick in kneeling during the national anthem and speaking out against the unending violent attack against Black bodies.

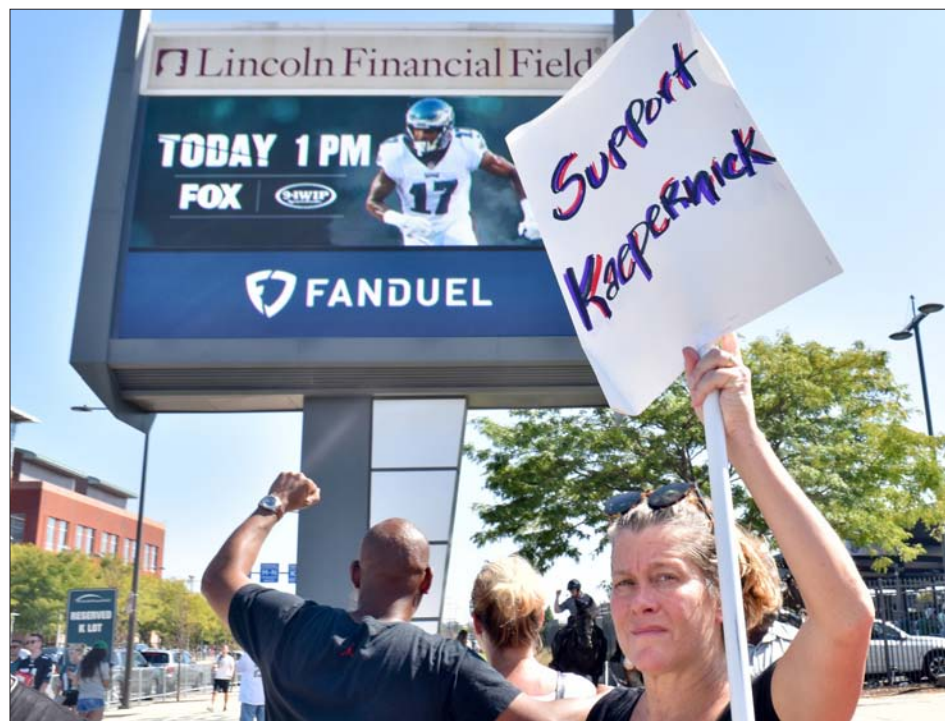
Backlash

In the NFL, teams can release players under contract with no financial penalty and with Kaepernick set to be released by the 49ers, he chose to opt out of his contract and explore his options on the free agency market. However, he soon discovered that teams were reticent to sign him, often citing the “distraction” he would cause or explicitly expressing outrage about his decision to kneel during the national anthem.

While two teams, Seattle and Baltimore, considered signing him as a back-up, they both ended up choosing much lesser known players who had little to no NFL experience itself.

Instead the NFL season started with Kaepernick unsigned and truly awful quarterbacks either starting or backing up for different teams that refused to consider the former 49er.

There is a chorus of fans and pundits asking the question that has plagued the NFL since Colin Kaepernick declared for free agency grows in volume: why hasn’t any team signed Colin Kaepernick?



Unfortunately, some on the left are answering this question by reinforcing the ruling class narrative that racism has nothing to do with Kaepernick’s unsigned status and that his situation is entirely of his own making—first for choosing to be a free agent and then by being an poor athlete. In doing so, these leftists are providing a cover for what is undeniably a racist response on the part of the NFL.

Solidarity

The growing anger about Kaepernick’s predicament has increased the call for a boycott, with the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP supporting such action and the federal NAACP threatening to follow suit. This culminated in an August protest at NFL headquarters where several speakers echoed the calls for boycotting the game.

The Kaepernick struggle is part of a larger fight happening in the United States around police violence and racism. It isn’t the only realm of this struggle, but symbolically it has enormous importance in many regards—be it fighting against white supremacy, or taking on retaliation against those who speak out against

oppression in the workplace. Organizations like NAACP and BLM are asking for support on this issue and hoping that progressives show their support.

This context—including an explicit call for solidarity from the Black community—is the key question for leftists, especially white leftists and trade unionists. When local unions call for solidarity during a strike, would any self-respecting trade unionist respond by saying “you’re overstating your case and I think management has a point”? The role of progressives and of white progressives in general is not to use this occasion to demonstrate their extraordinary knowledge of football minutiae but rather to show solidarity, and amplify the voices of those resisting racism in all its forms.

Now that Trump has verbally attacked kneeling players and called for them to be fired, the protest has spread to hundreds of other players—who are not only challenging systemic racism but also resisting Trump. The only question for white progressive is this: which side are you on? There can be only one credible answer: I’m with Kaepernick. Full stop.

Fossil Capital and the roots of the climate crisis

Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming Written by Andreas Malm

Reviewed by **Alia Karim**

When thinking about the “fossil economy” environmentalists commonly believe that the Industrial Revolution in Britain was the starting point of the sustained growth of emissions from non-renewable energy sources. Environmentalists writing about the concept of the “Anthropocene” to denote a new epoch of unprecedented global human impact on the planet, often attribute the beginning of this period to the mid-1700s with the re-invention of the steam engine, development of factories and machines, chemical manufacturing, and other industrial processes.

These critics say that the technologies of Industrial Revolution accelerated economic growth and explain the rise of fossil fuel consumption, which largely explains the basis of our current climate crisis. What these critics miss is that root causes of the climate crisis lie in the balance of class forces, as Andreas Malm explains in his book *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*.

Steam power

Fossil Capital focuses on steam power, a crucial development in the Industrial

Revolution. Scottish engineer James Watt’s transformation of the steam engine from a back and forth motion that was used for pumping to a rotating motion suited to industrial applications, significantly improved the efficiency of the steam engine. The transition to steam power, based on coal consumption, led to a plethora of industrial activities, namely rail transport, until oil overtook coal as the world’s “favorite” fuel.

But whereas people usually think that the consumption of coal-based fossil fuels, and thus the roots of the climate crisis, are found in this re-invention of the steam engine, they leave out the complex web of class relations and the organization of labour. In fact, Malm claims that steam power offered neither cheaper nor more abundant energy—but rather superior control over workers’ labour.

Environmentalists usually think the cheapest fuel option always wins over others, but Malm explains that this was not the case with steam power based on coal. Water power was preferable to steam on the basis of lower costs. Schemes for large-scale engineering projects to construct artificial water-power through collectively-owned water reservoirs in the countryside were drafted but mill owners

didn’t want to submit to planning, coordination and collective funding required for expansion of water power.

Steam power over workers

Coal-fired steam power used in factories where workers were “trained to industrious habits” was more advantageous. Factories placed in cities were close to emerging markets where owners could easily recruit workers from the growing unemployed population (meanwhile attacking the Chartist movement to quash trade unions and make it easier to layoff workers), reshape the work rhythm, and take advantage of the super-exploitation of women and children. Steam power was a prime mover that could be “whipped up by its master,” taming both nature and workers’ bodies.

Fossil Capital concludes with an indication of how a renewable economy will only occur if it is planned and implemented against private interests whose investments are sunk in fossil fuel industries. Malm’s analysis falls in line with Marxist thought on labour as a necessary part of material metabolism between people and nature. Only if capitalist relations are overcome will we come closer to restoring the metabolic rift.

COLLEGE FACULTY FIGHT EXPLOITATION

By Pam Johnson

Faculty in Ontario's 24 colleges reach two critical junctures in the coming week that will impact faculty jobs and student education.

Unionized faculty come to the end of their collective agreement on September 30, with a strike mandate in hand. Non-unionized contract faculty will begin voting on whether they will form a union on October 2.

Faculty, who are members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), have voted by a two-thirds majority for a strike mandate to push hard at the bargaining table for better working conditions for precarious faculty and for more control over academic decisions. They could be striking by the middle of October.

All faculty have seen the control over academic decision-making that affects the quality of education be eroded, as a new generation of neoliberal-minded administrators looks for 'efficiencies' and new revenue streams.

Contract faculty, both unionized and non-unionized, make up 70% of all faculty in the colleges. They have 4-month contracts, few or no benefits, and are often hired at the last minute to teach.

The percentage of contract faculty has risen dramatically in the past ten years, in the same period that student enrolment has increased and tuition has skyrocketed. "Our students are told that they need post-secondary education to get a good job, but the irony is that the person teaching them is barely make a living", said a George Brown College contract faculty.

Non-unionized faculty, who have an hourly wage that is half that of unionized faculty and no benefits, is the fastest growing job category. The colleges have been exploiting this category—which was only meant to be a temporary or transitional position. Beginning October 2, these faculty members will have the opportunity to vote to join the union.

Bill 148

The exploitation of contract faculty has been possible, in part, because currently college workers are not included in the Employment Standards Act that regulates workplaces. This



The fight is on for better working conditions for precarious faculty at Ontario colleges

will change if the Ontario Liberals' labour reform proposal, Bill 148, becomes law.

Bill 148 also calls for 'equal pay for equal work'. All faculty, full-time and contract, teach the same courses and must have the same requirements, but have vastly different working conditions.

"Bill 148 is far from perfect, but it has utterly changed the context of our negotiations with respect to contract faculty," says JP Hornick, chair of the faculty bargaining team. The faculty union is lobbying the Ontario government to pass Bill 148, and asking all faculty to contact their MPP to urge that this bill be passed.

Building Momentum

The faculty union has been working to get the messages to faculty members, students and community about the deteriorating situation at Ontario colleges for the past three years. This work began immediately following the end of the last round of bargaining. Support for the last contract was low, with 8 of 24 colleges voting against it and ratification at a very low 61%. The union channelled this discontent into building momentum for the current bargaining.

The union has organized educational forums, provided well-researched information for members and actively involved all 24 college locals

in capacity building to strengthen organizing skills of members. Contract faculty have taken their own initiative and created Contract Faculty Forward (CFF) (www.contractfacultyforward.ca) to fight against precarious work. CFF has organized days of action involving students, faculty and supporters to raise the profile of the issue.

The organizing and mobilizing work has paid off as a majority of faculty have shown their support by voting for a strike mandate to keep the pressure of colleges and a new layer of contract faculty have become actively involved.

Bill 148 is only the first batter – keep fighting for \$15 and fairness

By Pam Frache

Since Bill 148 (the Fair Wages, Better Workplaces Act) was first announced in May, there has been an intense ideological battle underway as the Big Business lobby attempts to derail and weaken the proposed legislation.

Bill 148 is the result of years of mobilizing by community groups and unions through the Fight for \$15 and Fairness. That the government has moved substantially on so many of these issues speaks as much to the power of a united working-class movement as it does to a weakened government fighting for its own survival in an election just 8 months away.

For unionized workers, there's a lot at stake. Almost 10% of Ontario workers earning less than \$15 an hour are unionized. Bill 148 would raise wages for all those employees as soon as the respective provisions of the Bill come into effect. In addition, the Bill would

extend card-based union certification to more workers and it introduces other important measures to make it easier for workers to organize unions.

Equally important to collective bargaining are the improved minimum standards proposed in Bill 148. If adopted, the Employment Standards Act would provide 2 paid emergency leave days, extend 10 days of job-protected emergency leave to 1.7 million workers in smaller workplaces. The Bill would impose financial penalties – 3 hours pay for workers – on employers who demand workers make themselves available all day, but fail to provide a shift of at least three hours. There are many other crucial changes too numerous to list.

When legislation raises the floor of wages and working conditions, it allows unions to set the bar even higher. For example, just last week service workers at the University of Toronto bargained a \$15 minimum wage for their casual workers – effective October 1



of this month. Taking a page from the food services workers at York University, CUPE 3261 linked their collective bargaining demands directly to the Fight

for \$15 and Fairness – and won. And whereas Bill 148 excludes, until 2020, unionized workers with a contract in place from the Bill's equal pay provisions, CUPE 3261 smartly bargained this issue to ensure their members win the equal pay provisions as soon as the legislation takes effect.

If Bill 148 is adopted, the \$15 minimum wage and other provisions will not be fully phased-in until January 2019. Between now and then stands a provincial election, the outcome of which will have serious consequences for working people. The last time government passed better labour laws, the incoming Conservative government dismantled them and rolled the clock back on workers' rights even further. This time, we must stay mobilized and keep organizing to defeat the Big Business lobby, build on our accomplishments and ensure that whatever party wins the next election, they dare not undermine our progress—but feel the heat to deliver more.