

Montreal rally PAGE 2

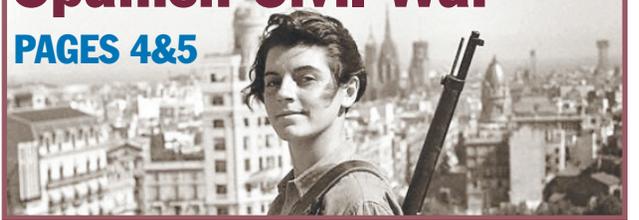


Prophets of Rage PAGE 7



Spanish Civil War

PAGES 4&5



# Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 599 | December 2017 | socialist.ca



# \$15 VICTORY!

## NOW PREPARE FOR STRUGGLES AHEAD

**T**he \$15 and Fairness has secured a decisive victory to improve the lives of working people in Ontario, after three years of organizing, protesting, striking, and lobbying. The provincial legislature passed Bill 148 on November 22. Pending royal assent, Bill 148 will:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$14 by January 1, 2018, \$15 by 2019 and implement annual cost of living adjustments thereafter. This is the fastest phase-in in Ontario's history.
- Extend 10 days of job protected, emergency leave to all workers, of which 2 will be paid – a first in Canada.

● Provide equal pay for equal work for full-time, part-time, casual and temporary agency workers.

● Introduce fairer scheduling and cancel “zero hour” contracts, including 3 hours of pay for on-call employees who aren't called in, and for workers whose shifts get cancelled with less than 48 hours of notice.

● Make it easier for cleaners, security guards, homecare and community service workers to join unions. These workers will also have better protection against contract flipping.

1.7 million workers in Ontario will receive the raise to \$15 an hour – a 30 percent wage increase.

The passage of Bill 148 is also

a huge victory for the many low-income workers of colour, Indigenous workers, immigrants, young workers, students, and women who are overrepresented in low-wage, non-unionized industries.

Bill 148 is a testament to years of organizing and on the ground, face-to-face conversations through petitioning and strategic strike actions by workers.

As \$15 and Fairness organizers David Bush and Doug Nesbitt recently wrote, “A persistent, determined movement, built from below by workers themselves, wrenched the \$15 minimum wage and other reforms from employers and the government.”

Of course, no reforms in capitalism are permanent, and it is imperative that the movement double down on organizing efforts as the 2018 Ontario election draws closer.

Pam Frache, Provincial Co-ordinator of \$15 and Fairness, declared at Queen's Park: “Sisters and brothers, the fight begins today.

What happens in June 2018 starts now!” The Conservatives who voted against Bill 148 and proposed a \$15 minimum wage in 2022, along with the business lobby spearheaded by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, will undoubtedly continue to put resources into propagandizing against these reforms.

As has been demonstrated in British Columbia and Manitoba under John Horgan and Wab Kinew respectively, even an NDP government is under no obligation to proceed quickly to \$15.

This victory was won through the tireless efforts of \$15 and Fairness activists – unionized and non-unionized workers alike – showing that workers are gaining confidence to demand more and raise the floor for workplace standards.

The strategies that have so far proved so successful to win Bill 148 must now be aimed at defending it, and demanding even more for all working people.

# On déteste les racistes

by Chantal Sundaram

The English Canadian media continues to portray the people of Quebec as more racist than anyone else.

But on November 12, 5,000 marched in Montreal against racism and hate: against Trump and the alt-right; against the rise of fascism, in Europe as in Canada and Quebec; against racist immigration policy and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and against Quebec's recently adopted Bill 62 which denies services to women who wear the niqab.

Endorsed by nearly 200 organizations including the Fédération des femmes du Québec, Alternatives, and many local community groups and student unions from across Quebec, the march drew buses from Quebec City, Sherbrooke and the Outaouais region.

There were contingents from the Montréal labour council, carrying flags of the Fédération du travail du Québec (FTQ), one of Quebec's largest labour federations, of postal workers and of CUPE, and separate union contingents from ACTRA (actors and performing arts) and IATSE (performing arts production crew).

There was a Jewish contingent with signs that read "Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism: Same struggle" and "Plus jamais, pas pour personne" ("Never again, not for anyone.")

A family contingent with strollers met ahead of time to join the march as a group.

## Systemic racism

Speakers not only denounced the far right, but the everyday systemic racism that feeds it, from the decision by the Quebec Liberal government



An estimated 5,000 people joined anti-racist protest in Montréal

to abandon a planned public consultation on systemic racism to its embrace of a neoliberal vision of immigration policy.

Speakers denounced the attempts to blame immigrants and racialized people for poverty and insecurity in Quebec society.

But the recent passing of Bill 62 on the niqab by the Liberal government was a key focus of every speaker at the start of the march, and of many of the homemade signs.

This protest came together through grassroots mobilization, and demonstrated the desire for more. The focus on linking opposition to

the rise of the far right to systemic, everyday racism was key in building broad support.

## Scapegoating

While the passing of Bill 62 was an obvious way to link the two issues in Quebec, the rise of neo-fascism and the alt-right can be linked back everywhere in English Canada and Europe to the everyday racism that drives some to despair and scapegoating and others to resistance and solidarity.

The more we march, the more we build confidence to choose the right side.

# First Nations fight nuclear waste

by Valerie Lannon

The Bawating Water Protectors (BWT) were on the march at Queen's Park on November 9 to tell Ontario Liberals and Ontario Power Generation what they can do with their nuclear power waste. And it does not include storing it near the waterways of the Great Lakes, crossing indigenous lands and potentially harming everyone in the vicinity.

BWT is a coalition of Anishinabek and Iroquois Caucus First Nations, residing all the way from the Sault Ste. Marie area to southern Ontario.

The nuclear industry wants to bury nuclear reactor waste on or near First Nations territories. Several corporations, hired by the Harper government, want to dump two million cubic metres of radioactive waste, which belong to the federal government, beside Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River.

Meanwhile, Ontario Liberals are cancelling funding of green energy programs, running the Pickering nuclear station well beyond its design life, and spending tens of billions of dollars to rebuild the geriatric Darlington and Bruce nuclear stations.

The proposed dumping of nuclear waste on and near First Nations was done, of course, without consulting these Nations. Ontario has 20 nuclear plants and the government leaves it to the nuclear industry to dispose of the toxic waste.

This is the latest in a long history of corporations and governments using Indigenous land and labour for mining radioactive materials (poisoning Navajo and Dene miners), testing atomic weapons and disposing of

toxic waste—a process that Indigenous scholars Ward Churchill and Winona LaDuke described 30 years ago as "radioactive colonialism."

Following an opening to the rally by the Smoke Trail Singers, a youth from the Anishinabek and Iroquois Caucus First Nations, acting as MC, described the damage to lands, animals and water caused by the Kin-cardine reactor, affecting the waters along Lake Huron and nearby waterways. "We need to speak for the water and for the seven generations ahead of us. As young people we understand our responsibilities. We demand the phase out of nuclear power and instead use renewable powers, or else we will be doing an injustice to future generations."

Candace Day, Serpent River First Nation said, "We need to hold the government accountable and think of how to live in harmony with nature. The indigenous worldview is critical. There is no word for 'owning' the earth. We wouldn't poison our mother and Earth is our mother. The Canadian government is disgusting."

Other speakers included Chief Don Maracle, Angela Bischoff (Ontario Clean Air Alliance), scientist Dr. Gordon Edwards, Katie an Anishinabek youth, Grand Chief Patrick Madahbee and Deputy Chief Glen Hare.

Over 100 indigenous people and settler allies attended the rally. The indigenous youth tried to present a recreation of a barrel of toxic waste to Premier Wynne. When turned away by Queen's Park security and Toronto police, the youth led the rest of the protesters to the nearby office building of Ontario Power Generation for a few more high-energy speeches of

# Young Workers Assembly shares lessons of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness

by Peter Hogarth

"I believe that we will win! I believe that we will win! Doesn't it feel good to say that and mean it?" Rajean Hoilett from Ryerson Fight for \$15 and Fairness commented after leading the crowd in the chant at the Ontario Federation of Labour's (OFL) Young Workers' Assembly.

The gathering of more than 200 young workers at the Toronto Sheraton Hotel on Saturday, November 18 ahead of the OFL convention seemed buoyed by the recent announcement of the passing of Bill 148.

It was an exciting chance to reflect on what can be learned from experience and how to strengthen and extend the recent victories going forward. The bill will raise the minimum wage to \$14 an hour in January and \$15 in January 2019, along with a host of other fairness provisions, regarding scheduling, unionization, time off work and equal pay.

The attendance demonstrated the diversity of the labour movement, with attendees from Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Kingston, North Bay, Thunder Bay and elsewhere.

Young workers represented CUPW, IATSE, IBEW, CUPW, UFCW, PSAC, Unifor, Unite Here, CUPE, and more. The messaging from the invited speakers and participants in table discussions reflected the success of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign in pushing its message and just how much the campaign has done to help shape the agenda for labour in Ontario.

## Grassroots organizing

Lesley Jamieson, a member of PSAC and Kingston Fight for \$15 and Fairness organizer, talked about the grassroots nature of the campaign and "starting from scratch in Kingston to take advantage of the historical opportunity presented by the Changing Workplaces Review" to fight for decent work.

What was especially striking about these stories was the way people in their ones and twos found another person to bring to a meeting or to make a call or to put up a poster; building trust-based face-to-face relationships in communities and workplaces to force MPPs to take the campaign seriously.

Fight for \$15 and Fairness and



Rajean Hoilett

union activists talked about breaking out of a passive, service model of labour activism; instead making people aware that this was their fight and finding ways to involve them and give them agency in their own fight for decent work. The campaign emerged from workers themselves, around a demand that could inspire people but also one that seemed achievable. In

organizing to win decent work, the campaign empowered low-wage workers to demand better.

## Defend and extend

The assembly reflected the optimism of a movement that had just won a major victory, but there were no illusions about where that victory came from and what it would take to defend it. As Alia

Karim of the York University Fight for \$15 and Fairness group emphasized, "the victory is ours, it's not from the Liberals. We fought for and won it!"

The successful fight of food service workers at York University was cited by many as a useful example of how we can defend and extend the gains of Bill 148. The York food service workers built the demands of a province-wide movement into their contract demands and the solidarity of \$15 and Fairness student groups helped mobilize support from students and other campus workers, put pressure on York University and won an impressive contract that had reverberations on other campuses and workplaces.

The Young Workers' Assembly brought together young workers, organizers and leaders that have the potential to transform the class struggle in Ontario. By becoming leaders in our workplaces and activating that next layer of co-workers and neighbours, we can win much more than Bill 148 and have the fighting labour movement we want and need.

• Visit [15andfairness.org](http://15andfairness.org) for more information.

# Canada's oil rush in Kurdistan

by Sid Lacombe

The Canadian military intervention against ISIS was portrayed as another example of our ability to bring stability to the world. It was clothed in the rhetoric of peacekeeping and sold to a public that was, justifiably, disgusted by ISIS.

But once again, if we scratch the surface we find an entirely different set of motivations for the government. Marx famously said that the state is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. One of the jobs of the state is to make sure that domestic corporations get to pillage overseas resources. In Iraq, the government of Canada is acting the part.

## Kurdistan

In 2004, Calgary-based Western Oilsands was the first to drill in Kurdish territory. Simon Hatfield, an executive with the company at the time, could not contain his glee. He said that the oil was literally seeping out of the ground. "Every single reservoir we've drilled has had oil or gas or both in it," he said.

Newspapers in Canada talked of the great transformation of the oil and gas fields in Kurdish territory. They had good reason to be excited. The area had been underdeveloped for decades and the war started by the US-led invasion in 2003 was changing that.

Fast-forward to 2014 and the rise of ISIS. By this point, Canadian companies had invested more than \$4 billion in Kurdish controlled oil and gas fields. According to the Kurdish regional government, the following companies are currently drilling or exporting from the region: Groundstar Resources, Niko Resources, Shamaran Petroleum, Talisman Energy, Vast Exploration, WesternZagros. It's not just Kurdish territory that is enticing for Canadian business. In 2016, Bruno Saccomani, the Canadian ambassador to Iraq and Steven Harper's former security chief, told the *Financial Post* that there was more than \$1 trillion in business opportunities associated with the rebuilding of Iraq. He called for Canadian banks and corporations



Canadian light armoured vehicle on patrol: peacekeeping or pillage?

to head to the country to secure this windfall and to help facilitate expansion of Canadian businesses in engineering, health, education and agriculture.

## The fight against ISIS

All of this must be part of our reckoning with what Canada's role and justifications are for the intervention against ISIS. Our state had more than humanitarian reasons for engaging in this fight.

When Justin Trudeau was elected, he quit the bombing campaign that had been started under Stephen Harper – but he was not about to disengage from the country.

Canada proceeded to send special forces to both Kurdish territory and to Iraq to train and supply the groups fighting ISIS. As we know, once the main ISIS strongholds were taken, Iraqi forces and Kurdish forces started fighting each other.

According to Col. Jay Janzen, a senior Canadian military spokesperson, "It wouldn't be fair to say we were caught by surprise" by the fighting between the two. It beggars belief that Canadian military officials would not know that this would be the likely outcome. They would have to know literally nothing about the history of the quest for Kurdish autonomy, to have not seen this coming.

But this is the pattern in the relationship between the Kurds and the imperial powers. Once again, the Kurdish people were used as pawns in a great game of control.

This is nothing new. The Kurds have been promised autonomy in exchange for their fighters for more than a century. Whether it was the British in the years after the First World War or the Americans before the invasion in 2003, they have always been used to support Western military interventions only to have

their own ambitions betrayed by their alleged allies.

And this fight is nowhere near over. The Turkish government, which always opposed western support for the Kurdish people, is being wooed by both the West (it is a NATO member) and by Russia, intent on its own imperial ambitions.

The major regional powers, specifically Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia, also continue to jockey for position. The recent attempts by Mohammed Bin Salman to destabilize Lebanon by calling for the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, thus setting up a power struggle in that country, is a prime example. The ongoing killing in Yemen shows how brutal another conflict could be.

## Instability

The crisis for the western imperialists that resulted from the failed attempt to gain control of Iraq in 2003

has created a new and multipolar scramble for control. The defeat of ISIS in certain parts of Iraq and Syria (they are still operating in other parts of the world from Afghanistan to Egypt) has not stopped this drive – it has simply changed the calculations.

So what will Canada do when confronted with a new outbreak of war near its protected assets? It appears that the strategy is to hedge its bets by arming all sides in the regional struggle. Canada is sending military hardware to the Saudis and has done so already with the Iranian-trained Iraqi forces and the Kurdish fighters.

That is certainly a good way for Canadian arms manufacturers to keep making money, but it will not bring peace to the long-suffering people in the Middle East.

# Zimbabwe's new president promises reforms that will hurt the working class

by Tomás Tengely-Evans

Zimbabwean president Emmerson Mnangagwa pledged to open up the country to international capital as he was inaugurated on Friday November 24. It followed mass celebrations at Robert Mugabe's resignation after 37 years last week.

Mnangagwa said, "Key choices will have to be made to attract foreign direct investment while transforming our economy.

"We are ready and willing for a steady re-engagement with all the nations of the world."

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is already circling. Zimbabwe mission chief Gene Leon said, "Immediate action is critical to reduce the deficit to a sustainable level, accelerate struc-

tural reforms."

And former colonial power Britain, seeing an opportunity to reassert its interests, pledged to support the new government.

Zimbabwean capitalism is in deep crisis. The military coup earlier in November that brought Mnangagwa to power was the result of divisions within the ruling class about how to deal with it.

Mugabe implemented some free market reforms, but didn't go far enough to satisfy those who ousted him. The Mnangagwa faction's solution is to go further with free market reforms and normalise relations with Western imperialism.

This will mean more suffering for working class Zimbabweans.

Mnangagwa was vice president until last month when he was

sacked to make way for Mugabe's wife Grace Mugabe. He was one of the Mugabe regime's key henchman and worked for the repressive security apparatus.

Willet, a Zimbabwean student and socialist, spoke to *Socialist Worker* from the resignation celebrations last Tuesday. "Mnangagwa represents the deep state, the junta and the army and he's the mastermind of all of this," he said. "He is favoured by capital and imperialism."

He added, "The fundamental question is what happens next, because what we've seen is an elite war.

"The ruling system is pursuing a neoliberal agenda and we're not celebrating that."

But Mugabe's resignation has

also opened up the possibility of working class people asserting their own demands. Willet said, "We've seen the biggest demonstrations and it will have raised the confidence of the working class.

"This is a step forward for the working class – whatever government comes next will face resistance."

• Reprinted from *Socialist Worker* – UK



Celebration in the streets of Harare

# HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

*The Spanish Civil War was part of a global revolutionary movement that showed what the world could look like with workers at the helm. But strategies pursued by sections of the left failed, and the fascists were able to gain power. Faline Bobier looks back at this period of history and draws the lessons for the fight against the far right today.*



British volunteers in the International Brigades

Last year was the 80th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. What happened in Spain in 1936 was a civil war against fascism and a prelude to World War Two, as well as being a workers and peasants' revolution that sought to create a new kind of society where the toilers, rather than the rich, would inherit the earth.

Although these struggles happened 80 years ago, they are still relevant today for what they say about the potential and pitfalls for those who want to change the world. With the reemergence of fascist currents in Europe and North America, the experience of Spanish workers and peasants during this period can be instructive.

## Popular Front

In February 1936, a Popular Front government won the Spanish national elections. The Popular Front government stood for the creation of a republic, as opposed to the monarchy and the ruling oligarchy that controlled Spanish society.

There had been jockeying for position for dominance on either side

**‘It was up to ordinary people to step up and defend democracy and indeed to move towards a real democracy, where the vast majority of Spanish society – workers and peasants – would be the ones in charge of their own destiny.’**

since the early 1930s. In July 1936, the Spanish officer corps (including General Franco) staged a military rebellion against the Popular Front government. For the next three years, there would be civil war as both sides vied for control.

The British writer George Orwell, who spent time in revolutionary Spain fighting the fascist threat represented by the attempted military coup, wrote about the forces that backed Franco

and the generals:

“Franco’s chief supporters, apart from certain sections of Big Business, were the land-owning aristocracy and the huge, parasitic Church. Obviously a rising of this kind will array against it various forces which are not in agreement on any other point.

“The peasant and the worker hate feudalism and clericalism; but so does the ‘liberal’ bourgeois, who is not in the least opposed to a more modern version of Fascism, at least so long as it isn’t called Fascism.

“Hence, in the face of such a blatant reactionary as Franco, you get for a while a situation in which the worker and the bourgeois, in reality deadly enemies, are fighting side by side.

“This uneasy alliance is known as the Popular Front (or, in the Communist press, to give it a spuriously democratic appeal, People’s Front). It is a combination with about as much vitality, and about as much right to exist, as a pig with two heads or some other Barnum and Bailey monstrosity.”

To understand the nature of the Popular Front government in Spain,

Thorez argued that in order to defeat fascism they needed to create the French Popular Front, which would be a joining together of left and middle class forces. What this meant in reality was the dampening down of workers and peasants role and the subordination of their interests to those of the French ruling class.

In May 1936 a Popular Front government was elected in France. Thorez claimed that the working class alone could not stop fascism, but the elections triggered the greatest strike wave yet seen in working-class history to that point.

What happened were not just strikes but factory occupations, which had the potential to win important workers’ rights and also to undercut the middle class base for fascism. French middle class support was growing for the workers, but only when they were leading and winning.

But the French Popular Front alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie capitulated and brought an end to that. Across the Pyrenees that summer workers were fighting fascism by taking over cities in Spain. The

strategy have to be seen in the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy, who were more concerned at this point with manipulation of Communist parties outside Russia—not to spread proletarian revolution, but to shore up Russia’s interests on the world stage.

Given the compromised nature of the Popular Front government, it was up to ordinary Spanish workers and peasants to defend the gains of the Republic and, indeed, to push for gains that had never been dreamed of by the compromised leaders of the Popular Front.

## Revolution

On the eve of the civil war, the CNT, an anarcho-syndicalist union, claimed more than a million members and had as its stated aim the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. In the aftermath of the attempted military coup in July 1936 the CNT and the UGT,

another smaller anarcho-syndicalist union, demanded that the government arm the workers, but it refused.

With the refusal of the Popular Front government to arm the population, detachments of workers broke into the army barracks, seized weapons and distributed them to anyone with a trade union or party membership card.

They organized defenses, barricades and armed patrols, and arrested fascist sympathizers. Within days, the workers crushed the military rebellion in key areas like Madrid and Barcelona. And the success of workers themselves pushing back the fascists on July 19 changed everything.

There were many similarities between the circumstances of Russian workers and peasants before the 1917 revolution and in Spain at the time of the civil war. Like in Russia, the Spanish revolution would be fought by an alliance between workers in industry and landless peasants who cobbled together a bare subsistence by following the harvests on vast, wealthy agricultural estates.

What followed the military coup in

Spain was a social revolution for the redistribution of wealth, which also brought change on a range of social questions in a very socially backward society. The Catholic Church had been in full control of secondary education, and education for women was deemed unnecessary.

Universal literacy was regarded as a danger rather than a goal; divorce was illegal. And yet, women played key roles in the workers’ militias that for a time pushed back Franco, and in the seizures of land and workers’ collectives that took over factories.

Orwell, in his famous book *Homage to Catalonia*, described the society he saw when he came to Barcelona in 1936: “It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle.

“Peasants took control of the land, redistributing large estates and, in many places, collectivizing the land and setting up communes...the big landowners were expropriated, small property was liquidated, and all the land passed into the hands of the commune.... All the food, the clothing, the tools, etc., were distributed equitably along the population.

“Money was abolished, labor was collectivized, property was taken over by the community, and the distribution of consumer goods was socialized...Three liters of wine are distributed to every person per week. Rent, electricity, water, medical attention and medicines are free.”

The Popular Front government showed itself to be totally ineffective in combatting the military coup and the fascist threat that lay behind it, because they were much more concerned with reassuring Spanish capital that the hierarchy of society would not be threatened.

It was up to ordinary people to step up and defend democracy and indeed to move towards a real democracy, where the vast majority of Spanish society – workers and peasants – would be the ones in charge of their own destiny. As in Russia, they did

this by creating workers’ and peasants’ committees (like the Russian soviets) to run the factories and to oversee the seizure of land from the rich landowners.

They also created workers’ militias to defend the Republic, although they often had to fight with outdated, defective or non-existent weapons. The magnificent struggles of ordinary men and women during this period are movingly documented in British film maker Ken Loach’s *Land and Freedom*. Loach tells the story through the experience of a young British worker who comes to Spain to participate in the International Brigades.

Outside Spain, in fact for workers around the world, the Spanish Civil War was a beacon of hope against the tide of fascism sweeping Europe. In Canada, the hidden history includes the fact that although the Canadian government refused to send troops against Franco, ordinary Canadians volunteered and raised their own funds for an anti-fascist battalion, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

In a military contest, the forces of reaction had the upper hand. Franco had support from large sections of the army—and beyond that, financial support from much of the bourgeoisie and military support from the fascist government in Italy and the Nazis in Germany.

But as the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote at the time: “A civil war is waged, as everyone knows, not only with military but also with political weapons. From a purely military point of view, the Spanish revolution is much weaker than its enemy. Its strength lies in its ability to rouse the great masses to action. It can even take away the army from its reactionary officers. To accomplish this, it is only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the program of the socialist revolution.”

## Compromise

But from the first days of the war, the Popular Front government, with the

support of the PSOE (Socialist Party) and the PCE (Communist Party), passed restrictions against peasants seizing large land holdings and on workers’ running factories under their own control.

It passed laws stating that under no condition would the private property of foreign firms be seized. Only by restraining the demands of workers and peasants, the Popular Front government and its supporters argued, could it maintain unity among all anti-fascist forces, including the bourgeoisie. This strategy not only held back the revolution, but undermined the struggle against Franco and the far right.

The civil war was waged over a period of three years from 1936-1939, when Franco’s forces were finally able to take control. The final victory came in January 1939 when Franco took the city of Barcelona, which represented the very heart of the revolution.

But this victory was not inevitable. It was made possible by the failings of the Communist Party and the anarchist leadership of organizations like the CNT. In the early days, after the routing of the military coup, the leaders of the CNT in Barcelona were called into the offices of Luis Companys, head of the regional government, who said: “You are masters of the city and of Catalonia.... You have won and everything is in your power. If you do not need or want me as president, say so now. If, on the other hand, you believe me when I say that I shall yield this post to victorious Fascism only when I am dead, then perhaps I can be of use to you.”

In the end the anarchist leaders of the CNT agreed to collaborate with Companys, despite the fact that real power was already held by the armed workers and the organization committees in the streets of Barcelona and by the government committees in the towns and villages. This would prove to be one of the decisive moments in the civil war, because this compromise with Popular Front-style poli-

tics laid the grounds for the failure of revolution and the ultimate victory of fascism.

One of the anarchists defended the decision this way: “We could have remained alone, imposed our absolute will, declared the Generalidad null and void, and imposed the true power of the people in its place, but we did not believe in dictatorship when it was being exercised against us, and we did not want it when we could exercise it ourselves only at the expense of others. The Generalidad would remain in force with President Companys at its head, and the popular forces would organize themselves into militias to carry on the struggle for the liberation of Spain.”

Equating the dictatorship of capital and the ruling class with that of workers and peasants seizing power in order to build workers democracy and socialism dooms any dreams for a different kind of society to failure. As Trotsky wrote about this failure of leadership: “In opposing the goal, the conquest of power, the Anarchists could not in the end fail to oppose the means, the revolution.”

## Lessons for today

The debate about the United Front vs. Popular Front is relevant beyond the fight against fascism; and remains relevant today even after the demise of the Communist International. The revolution also raises issues about the limits of anarchism and the question of power (especially the building of a revolutionary party before a revolution).

But most importantly, it gives us a glimpse of what worker’s control and self-empowerment looks like in practice, outside of the Russian experience with revolution. And it can inspire those fighting today to realize that it is possible for ordinary people to storm the heavens and remake society so that it benefits all of us, not just the tiny minority sitting at the top of a disintegrating and ultimately inhuman system.

# Workers’ solidarity against NAFTA

by Carolyn Egan

The NAFTA negotiations have been going on for months, but without a strong movement on the ground in Canada.

Decades ago, when it was first on the table, the labour movement and community organizations were in the streets raising the issues of the working class and the poor. In those days, opposition to NAFTA dominated political discussions.

Even the Liberal Party initially opposed the free trade deal. Former PM Jean Chrétien campaigned against it during the federal election, but once in government pushed it through Parliament in support of the corporate sector.

Make no mistake, the Liberals have always been a party of business, and it is they who are negotiating on our behalf.

Today there’s little discussion taking place among ordinary people across Canada. It seems to be reserved for “Power and Politics” and other media that share the ups and downs of the talks, with little input from those who would be most affected.

It has not engaged people around kitchen tables or workplace lunch rooms. When the negotiations were taking place in Ottawa, the trade unions should have mobilized members through a process of political education and national protests.

In Mexico, that is exactly what happened and civil society joined with labour in demanding the country pull out of the talks.



There’s no ‘Team Canada’

There is a myth that Mexican workers have taken the jobs of US and Canadian workers and have greatly benefited from the deal. It’s not the case, and this was made very clear in the streets of Mexico City.

Workers in all three countries have to work together in solidarity. They have no common interest with their employers who are only concerned with maximizing profits at the expense of the working class everywhere. There should be no “Team Canada” approach to this deal. We’re not all in it together. Chapter 11 of the existing deal allows corporations to contravene labour and environmental protection.

Foreign investors have the right to sue governments if they feel legislation would interfere with their business goals. Canada has been subjected to many

suits and it looks to be only getting worse.

Trade has increased among all three countries but the profits have gone to the corporate elite. Workers have not benefited anywhere, as the Mexican unions have made very clear.

Environmental and labour protections are presently very weak and the needs of business are primary. NAFTA has never been a deal that has been in the interest of workers or the climate and it’s not getting any better.

The Good Jobs for All Coalition in Toronto has organized a teach-in and public forum, hoping to kick-start a broader discussion of NAFTA and its implications for working people. There will be another set of talks coming up in Montreal in the new year and hopefully there can be mobilizations putting the needs of the people of all three countries first.

## Solidarity in struggle

We have recently seen victories and strikes that may signal an upswing in struggle.

The significant win of the Fight for \$15 in Ontario, along with other improvements to employment standards and labour law, was the result of broad and consistent organizing across the province. It was a huge victory that shows that significant change can take place through collective struggle.

The recent community college faculty strike involving over 12,000 workers in 24 colleges across Ontario showed the awakening of a significant section of the labour movement, with an overwhelming rejection of the employer’s final offer.

Over the weeks of the strike, strong workplace resistance was forged which resulted in an active and engaged membership. Student support was also very important. Even though the Liberal government, in a terrible betrayal, legislated the workers back, they went in with their heads held high because of the strong fight they put up.

This momentum can give confidence to other areas of struggle. The much smaller Ippolito strike at the Ontario Food Terminal, where immigrant workers along with community supporters shut down the entire terminal, shows how gains can be made through solidarity.

The working class and its most vulnerable elements – women, racialized communities and Indigenous peoples – have so much to lose and our voices must be heard in the ongoing NAFTA debate. International solidarity is the only way that the working class will win against the capitalists who have only their own interests at heart.

## 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.

# Tories attack Payette for defending climate science

by John Bell

It is not my usual practice to defend a representative of the Crown, specifically the Governor General of Canada. But Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette has been in her job for barely a month and already she is under attack by the right-wing. She must be doing something right.

If asked what the Governor General's job entailed my honest answer is: not much. Show up at good-will events and official functions, shake a lot of hands, and—occasionally—adjudicate a parliamentary crisis.

Payette's predecessor, David Johnson, will be remembered for granting Stephen Harper's minority governments parliamentary prorogation-on-demand. (Johnson should also be remembered for his connection to Brian Mulroney, and the Airbus scandal in which Lyin' Brian took envelopes stuffed with tens of thousands of dollars in kickbacks. But that's another story.)

Payette was Justin Trudeau's choice; a former astronaut with two stints on the International Space Station, an engineer and ex-commercial licensed pilot, an accomplished musician, and an athlete who speaks 10 languages. Not a bad resume.

### Defending science

Her skills and experiences were on display when she was asked to deliver the keynote address at the Canadian Science Policy Convention. Her speech was an unapologetic defence of science:

"Can you believe that still today in learned society, in houses of government, unfortunately, we're still debating and still questioning whether humans have a role in the Earth warming up or whether even the Earth is warming up, period."

"And we are still debating and still questioning whether life was a divine intervention or whether it was coming out of a natural process let alone, oh my goodness, a random process."

After digs at charlatanism in the form of fortune telling and replacing medical care with placebos, she ended



Julie Payette: See, the Earth is NOT FLAT!

with a challenge to her colleagues to take the offensive against the assault on science and learning: "Democracy and society have always gained from learned debate but we have to remain vigilant and we cannot let ourselves fall into complacency and we must be vocal, all the time, everywhere, every single one of us, so we can deconstruct misinformation and don't end up in an echo chamber just listening to what we want to hear."

The right-wing punditocracy immediately shifted gears to high dudgeon.

### Backlash

Ezra Levant gives Payette a good finger wagging: "How about doing your job and representing all Canadians modestly and humbly, and taking your instructions and your role model from your boss, the Queen herself, instead of Justin Trudeau." If anyone has the right to insist on modest, humble decorum, it is Levant.

One of Ezra's Rebel Media minions, Sheila Gunn Reid, warns: "Canada's new GG, Julie Payette is rolling her eyes at religion and that means she is rolling her eyes at the Queen too." (Eye rolling is the least the Queen can expect, caught hiding her wealth in off-shore tax havens just months after crying poor and begging money to fix up the old palace, but that's another story.)

The Globe and Mail's John Ibbitson takes up the flail: "Julie Payette's

transgression is more serious than some suppose." He doesn't bother to repeat Payette's statements because, "it wasn't her opinions that got her into trouble so much as her tone." Typical uppity woman!

Tory leader Andrew Scheer's attack took a cue from the Rebel Media. (His top strategist is Hamish Marshall, former corporate director of the Rebel, and a long-time Ezra Levant fellow traveler, but that's another story.)

Scheer attacked Trudeau for defending Payette: "It is extremely disappointing that the prime minister will not support Indigenous peoples, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Christians and other faith groups who believe there is truth in their religion." (So the Tories, whose election campaign hinged on Islamophobia are champions of "diversity"? But that's another story.)

Remember, Scheer was a member of the Tory government which waged a decade long war against science, knowledge and free speech. Harper's fealty to the fossil fuel industry led him to shut down research, gag scientists and ignore climate change. It was a government that secretly pandered to an extremist evangelical base, knowing that to openly expose its real opinions would be political suicide.

Rather than tolerate attacks on a government functionary who speaks loud and clear for science and reason, we should thank her for finally giving her office some purpose greater than presiding at tea parties.



## 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

## Ippolito workers strike and win workplace fairness

**A**fter staying strong on the picket line, and building solidarity that helped shut down the Ontario Food Terminal, Ippolito workers have reached a deal. Workers with Teamsters Local 419 had been striking for paid sick days, fair wages, job security, and workplace respect.

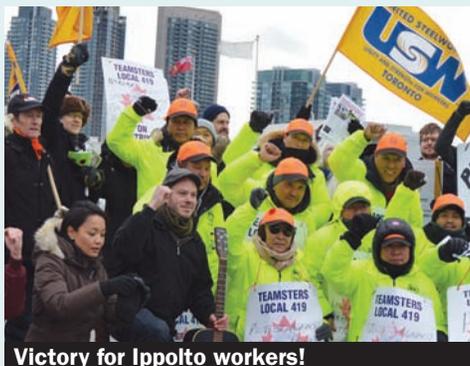
Workplace respect is of particular significance. All of the striking workers are Tibetan refugees who fled persecution by the Chinese government. The promise of a better life has been marred by insecurity and disrespect at work. At the picket line, one of the speakers told the crowd that management regularly brags about firing and replacing the workers.

### Workers power

The strike has also had the effect of elevating the expectations and treatment of workers at the 20 other companies operating warehouses in the OFT. Many of these 350 workers are not unionized, but support the action. Their employers have taken notice. "This little strike is having a ripple effect," says Tenzin Nawang, an organizer at Parkdale Community Legal Services. "The other day they brought pizza [for the workers]. They never do that. It was like Christmas."

On November 16 workers held their third solidarity picket, which successfully shut down the OFT for hours. OFT is North America's third largest food terminal, processing 5.5 million pounds of produce daily. That a relatively small number of workers and community members can plug traffic at such an important link for capital shows the power of working class struggle.

The atmosphere on the line was one of solidarity and optimism. Many of the striking workers had positive face-to-face conversations with strangers. One of the more charming placards featured smiling baby produce that read, "we're rooting for you!" Montreal-based musicians Union Thugs played classic labour anthems for the workers.



Victory for Ippolito workers!

### Solidarity

There were contingents from the Fight For 15 and Fairness, United Steelworkers, and the OPSEU college faculty strike. This type of movement cross-pollination creates trust based relationships between people, increasing the collective power of working-class people.

The largest group of supporters from the community came from Parkdale Organize, a community group in Toronto's neighbourhood of Parkdale. This same group organized towards a major victory through a rent strike against MetCap Living-owned buildings earlier this year.

"Some of us were involved in the [Parkdale] rent strike... we know how these fights are connected," the workers said in an online statement.

This energetic community provides a model for solidarity and progress for other segments of the population.

## REVIEW

# Prophets of Rage debut album: a mixed, mostly positive bag

by Kevin Taghabon

"No hatred. Fuck racists. Blank faces. Time's changin'. One nation. Unification. The vibration. Unfuck the world!" These chants in the second track of Prophets of Rage's eponymous album are a rallying cry that summarizes the stories on the album. Given the DNA of the group and their political aesthetic, anticipation for this album was high. The result is a mixed, mostly positive bag.

In early 2016, political rock icon Tom Morello reunited with his former Audioslave and Rage Against the Machine (RATM) bandmates to form Prophets of Rage. Prophets was launched – like most of Morello's post-RATM musical projects – with the aim of once again mainstreaming leftist politics into popular music. The hideous spectacle of politics in 2016 only made his mission more urgent.

Absent RATM's lead singer Zack De La Rocha, Prophets of Rage instead brings in legendary emcees B Real of Cypress Hill and Chuck D of Public Enemy, as well as DJ Lord (also a Public Enemy alum). "We've been musical comrades for a very long time. They're my idols and friends," Morello said of Chuck D and B Real, who he pitched the project to via phone last year.

Despite not being named once, Donald Trump looms large in the album. "All hail to the chief/ Who came in the name of a thief/ To cease peace/ And he didn't even run" on track 6 is an obvious dig at Trump and Steve Bannon. The opening song has Chuck D remind listeners "You've been distracted again/ You fell asleep and when you woke up/ 45 for the win." This line is relatable on a literal level for millions who went to bed November 8th, 2016 calmly



banking on pollster Nate Silver's omniscience, only to wake up to disaster.

There are some more insightful moments on the album too. "Know your rights/ But you should understand/ Who, owns, who?", the hook for track 10 shows that Prophets of Rage's lyricists understand the limitations of legalism. In essence, it is not enough to be well versed in the law. The problem is the system itself, not the imperfect enforcement of the system's rules. "Strength in Numbers" urges throughout that the power to dismantle injustice exists only in a unified people.

There is some levity in the album as well. The anti-security state anthem that is "Take Me Higher" opens with banter from the emcees: "Yo Chuck is that a drone up there, man?! They fly over, they fly over/ Let me go get Timmy C's gun and shoot it out the fuckin' sky." (Tim Commerford is the band's bass player). The

song fits nicely alongside El-P's "Drones over BKLYN" and ANONHI's "Drone Bomb Me".

Instrumentally, the rap rock supergroup sounds great - about on par with Audioslave and RATM. A notable absence on most tracks is Tom Morello's signature guitar solos, which sometimes became obnoxious during Audioslave tracks.

Prophets of Rage has its foundations firmly planted in acclaimed projects of the past. Inevitable comparisons arise. Prophets of Rage must have especially anticipated RATM's legacy breathing down the neck of their new project from day one. Here, even the most die-hard fans of Morello & Co. must admit that Prophets feels light by comparison.

While the songs are universally political, they lack De La Rocha's trademark historical references and ferocious conviction. There is no "mainline adrenaline from Gaza to Tiananmen" or "cinema, simulated life, ill drama/ Fourth Reich culture, Americana" moment. De La Rocha's powerful growls, recently heard on Run the Jewels tracks and other side projects, are sorely missed. De La Rocha is currently recording a solo album with Run the Jewels emcee and producer El-P, though this project itself has earned infamy for being almost two decades in the making in various forms.

Given the popularity of recent works by artists as varied as Pussy Riot, Run the Jewels, and A Tribe Called Red, it is clear that there is hunger for music laden with political content. This ache will only become more acute as years pass under austerity regimes and a revitalized left. Prophets of Rage has the potential to be something great. Time will tell if they take advantage of their unique talent and our historical moment.

## The Florida Project

by Valerie Lannon

From the opening title track with Kool and the Gang singing "Celebration" and the scenes of endless Florida sunshine we are thrown into the life of happy-go-lucky young children having fun on their own during summer break. They cajole strangers for money so they can buy ice cream to share with each other. They score free waffles from the back door of a restaurant where one of their mothers works. They explore the nearby fields to sit in trees or watch the cows.

The children are cute, resourceful, funny, creative, kind and definitely anti-authority. One of their adventures brings mixed reviews from the surrounding community when they set a deserted condo development on fire. Their families hated the place.

All of this takes place against a backdrop of extreme poverty. The children live in motels in Orlando, just outside Disney World, which is the expensive playground for wealthy families or for families who scrounge for funds to make their children's manufactured dreams come true. The motels have names like Futureland Inn and Magic Castle, all painted in pastels and all inhabited by families trying to get by on welfare or less. The greedy motel owners are sure to make funds available to keep the outsides of the motels always brightly painted. But, in Grenfell fashion, no money is provided to prevent and stop bed bug infestations.

The movie revolves around one family in particular – young mother Halley and her

6-year old daughter Moonee. Halley is very young, has few "marketable" skills, lacks any family besides her daughter, and has no friends, after alienating her one friend who lives in the motel. Halley and Moonee share an intense love for one another, a fact that is reinforced throughout the film.



Halley cobbles together a living, initially by performing in a strip club, then hawking "wholesale" perfume to tourists staying in nearby luxury hotels. When she is kicked off the hotel property she resorts to sex work in her motel room. While her mom is with customers, Moonee, ignorant of what is going

on, stays playing in her bubble bath and loud music plays in the main part of the hotel room.

Halley is then reported to the state authorities and child welfare department. After an "investigation", the authorities decide to remove Moonee. It is so painful to watch her, this strong little girl, crying tears of terror at the thought of being separated from her mother.

Most reviews of this movie focus on the ability of the children to make something out of nothing and to bemoan Halley's "poor decisions" which force the child's removal. But these totally miss the point that in the US (and most western economies) in general and Florida in particular, there is a political ruling class that champions "less government" and wages an all-out assault on the poor. Halley's "poor decisions" and Moonee's removal would have been completely preventable if we lived in a society that actually gave a shit about children. We would ensure that no one lives in poverty, that social networks are in place, that parents are ensured the resources they need.

What happens to Halley and Moonee happens every day in First Nations, where the Canadian government has chosen to under-fund health and social services, the very services that can support families and prevent tragedies.

This movie is similar to Ken Loach's films, including his latest "I Daniel Blake". We need more of these films, the kind that exposes the brutality that is poverty, an inevitable by-product of capitalism. They also make us think about how the world should be if we really cared about families.

# Kinder Morgan will be stopped

by Lisa Descary

Climate justice activists in BC celebrated the cancellation of the proposed Energy East Tar Sands pipeline this October. Although Justin Trudeau called it a ‘business decision’ due to dropping oil prices, we knew that it was really a win for grassroots anti-pipeline activists, and we hope to see the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion pipeline befall the same fate.

When the Green/NDP provincial government was elected in BC, they stated that they would use ‘every tool in the toolbox’ of the government to ensure that the Kinder Morgan pipeline would not be built. However, indigenous and settler activists fighting Tar Sands pipelines realize that they can’t depend on the government or the legal system to stop these damaging projects.

The BC NDP, like other provincial NDP governments before them, are keen to show that they can be responsible stewards of the province, and are under a lot of pressure from business interests. This means that while they want to do the right thing and stop this pipeline, we need to ensure that there is equal or greater pressure from the social movements to ensure that they don’t cave in to right-wing forces. These forces are calling the KMX a project ‘in the national interest’ and greatly exaggerating the number of jobs that would result, while minimizing the significant risks to the environment.



Popular resistance will be needed

Photo: Mark Klotz (Flickr CC BY-2.0)

Of course, while the NDP and climate justice activists are expected to abide by the law, despite the cost to the environment, Kinder Morgan (KM) itself is breaking the law, and getting away scot free. In August of this year, KM illegally used plastic snow fences laid along stream beds to prevent salmon from spawning where KM wished to begin construction. KM had no

permits for laying these as yet untested and potentially damaging anti-spawning mats. This interference with fragile salmon populations went unnoticed by the National Energy Board (NEB) until a member of the community saw a post on KM’s own blog. Only after a complaint was made to the NEB was a stop-work order issued to KM. Since the NEB didn’t require KM

to remove the anti-spawning mats from streams, fortunately some members of the Secwepemc nation have taken it upon themselves to remove the mats.

We know that Kinder Morgan can’t be trusted to follow the rules, and that popular resistance will be needed to stop the pipeline. Secwepemc activists know this too, and are fighting the Kinder Morgan expansion in an innovative way. A group of Secwepemc and other activists called the Tiny House Warriors are building ten tiny houses in frontline communities in the path of the 518 km pipeline route on traditional unceded Secwepemc territory, to assert their jurisdiction and to block access to the pipeline. Likewise, the Kwantlen Nation is building a healing lodge in the path of the pipeline for the same reason.

Indigenous activists are definitely leading the fight against pipelines in BC, and their resolve and determination is inspiring. But those of us who are not indigenous need to be more than just allies in this fight against Tar Sands expansion. We need to continue building a climate justice movement in the cities to complement and be in solidarity with the work being done in front line communities like that of the Secwepemc. Because it will take all of us to stop Kinder Morgan and fight for real climate justice.

• To donate to the Tiny House Warriors, go to <http://bit.ly/2ib1fj5>

# Back-to-work law shows Liberals’ true colours

by Pam Johnson

Mere hours after 12,000 striking Ontario college faculty massively rejected a forced offer vote by the College Employer Council, Premier Kathleen Wynne tabled back-to-work legislation to end the strike.

But this anti-worker move will not roll back the impact that this strike has had on Ontario colleges and the labour movement as a whole, especially on the issue of precarious work.

Despite the legislation, this strike – one of the largest in English Canada in many years – shows that workers will strike for better working conditions. It shows that the labour movement can fight against austerity and precarity.

The employer’s initial strategy to paint college faculty as highly paid and greedy backfired spectacularly as students, their parents and the general public were outraged that 70 per cent of college faculty are precarious workers on four-month contracts with minimal to no benefits.

The strike also impacted Ontario college faculty in a huge way. Full-time and contract faculty went on strike together and forged a level of solidarity they did not have previously. In the lead up to the strike, the faculty union had worked to concretize the message to faculty members, students and community about the deteriorating situation at Ontario colleges and that the issues were a jobs crisis and the erosion of control over the classroom.

## Ideas change in struggle

The success of this strike is clearly illustrated by



Five weeks of discussion and debate on picket lines built solidarity and cohesion

the difference between the strike mandate vote supported by 68 per cent in September and the forced offer vote, rejected by 86 per cent with a 95 per cent turnout in November. It shows how members’ ideas shifted during the course of the strike. Five weeks of discussion and debate on the picket lines built solidarity and cohesion.

Running a 12,000 member strike is a massive undertaking. It has been 11 years since the last strike, but the level of self-organization and

number of members stepping up to the tasks of the strike was amazing.

Picket captains and picket squads formed in a few days with many contract faculty members participating. Flying squads formed to visit MPPs and participate in actions off the line.

When the employer announced the forced vote on their offer, locals across the province held historic mass meetings. ‘Stop the rat vote’ committees sprang up immediately to make sure

that faculty who were not picketing would be aware of what the employers’ offer contained.

There was excellent solidarity from the labour movement. Some building trades workers, postal workers and other delivery people refused to cross picket lines. Members from CUPE, OSSTF, ETO, Unifor, Steelworkers, ONA to name a few and coalitions like the 15 and Fairness campaign visited the picket lines across the province.

And, the most amazing support came from students. They were on picket lines and at rallies. They created petitions and started student strike newspapers.

A rank and file strategy and a clear understanding of the context that bargaining was happening in was key to get to the point of a strike.

There was also a sense that it was time to open up the bargaining process, fight concessions and try to win real gains. Inspired by the Chicago teachers 2012 strike, the union restructured the bargaining process to create a more democratic structure.

The success of this strike, the rank and file content, the massive rejection of the employer’s offer and the broad support of the public who see this strike as a fight against precarious work, strengthens the foundation on which more strikes and campaigns can be built.

For socialists and trade union activists, the lessons of this strike, its militancy and the mood among, not only the strikers, but the broader sentiment that it exposed, shows that it is critical that we continue to build the resistance to austerity and precarity in our trade unions.