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Canada needs a green new deal



Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau: Liberals are moving us towards greater inequality and climate crisis

PEOPLE not PIPELINES

We live in a moment of both great hope and potential horror. There are two interwoven crises. On the one hand, there is the massive gap between rich and poor which is getting worse for the majority of the global population. On the other, there is the drive towards climate catastrophe.

But world leaders have no answer for this crisis – only more of the same.

Oxfam released its latest report on global poverty and found that 26 people own as much wealth as the bottom 3.8 billion people. The top 1% took home 82% of the wealth created last year.

Those numbers are staggering. Yet policy prescriptions are moving us towards even greater inequality, with tax breaks for the rich and austerity for everyone else. From Trump to Trudeau to Ford, there is an unrelenting campaign to squeeze working people—all the while consolidating power and wealth for the 1%.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos,

numerous sessions looked at the dangers posed by both climate crisis and poverty. The rich are scared. They see a population that is no longer willing to mortgage their future so the rich can get richer. And they are right. The popularity of “radical” politicians like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (AOC) has them deeply worried. Socialism is no longer a bad word, and the rich are not happy about it.

AOC’s proposal to dramatically increase taxes on the top earners is immensely popular, even though the right wing is twisting itself into knots to discredit the plan.

Of course we know what their solution is. One need only see that they invited the fascist Jair Bolsonaro to be the keynote at Davos to understand what direction they want the world to go.

And in Canada, Trudeau and his Liberal government are moving us towards greater inequality and climate crisis. With a federal budget due to come down soon, and given the track record of the always Bay-Street friendly

Liberals, we should expect that it will be woefully inadequate in reversing course on these crises.

In the US, AOC has been pushing for a Green New Deal which would see massive investments in green technology, creating millions of climate jobs. The goal is to start reducing carbon emissions immediately and to have them lowered by half by 2030.

We need a green new deal in Canada. Movements across the world are demanding radical action on climate change.

In the Quebec elections, Québec solidaire put forward a similar plan and in doing so changed the debate, pushing it much farther to the left. This has also contributed to a huge movement on the streets of Quebec for climate action.

And what is Trudeau doing? He is going ahead with more pipelines. Not only is this reckless from the perspective of stopping climate change – it also requires attacking the rights of Indigenous peoples who have re-

fused to let the pipelines through their lands.

Trudeau and his finance minister Bill “Mr Privatization” Morneau are sowing the seeds of further polarization with these policies. As is the case in most parts of the world, the policies of the political centre are driving towards greater conflict and aiding the rise of the far right.

In some cases, the Liberals are openly supporting a drive to violence, as with their support for the coup leaders in Venezuela.

And where is the NDP? They offer milquetoast policies that will not match the scale of the crises we face, and will do even less to inspire people.

It’s not like the solutions are difficult to find. What is needed is the political will to go out on a limb and propose bold solutions.

In the election to come, the NDP will either go big or get decimated. Either way, we will have to build the forces on the ground that can push back against the drive towards poverty for the many and riches for the few.

Housing: a right or a nightmare?



by John Bell

It is cold comfort to know that one's immediate, personal suffering is part of an international crisis. I have just had a taste of the crisis of affordable housing that is gripping cities from San Francisco to Dublin, from St. Catharines to Moncton.

After nearly 15 years in my endearingly decrepit apartment my landlady joined the choir invisible. Her heirs jumped to cash in on the Toronto housing bubble, and the fact that my shack was in a hot midtown neighbourhood. I was being "renovicted."

I knew I was going to have to pay more rent, and was prepared to shell out a third more—surely \$1300 would find me a new hovel. It took me almost no time to find that I was living in a fool's paradise. In the just the few months in which I was house-hunting, the average rent for a Toronto one-bedroom apartment went from \$1800 to \$2260. The latest report projects another 11% increase in the coming year.

These wild increases are mostly the result of pure speculation. Almost all the new housing stock within the city is condos. Interest rates are kept low, and the pressure is on to buy a crackerbox in the sky. Those of us who cannot, or choose not to be "home buyers" are left squabbling over dwindling rental stock.

In Hamilton, where activists made housing an issue in recent municipal elections, city councillors voted to allow conversion of 252 apartments to condos. They say developers meet all the legal requirements.

One landlord in Toronto's Dufferin Grove neighbourhood described how some prospective tenants were willing to bid between \$100 and \$350 per month above the advertised rental to get an apartment. Others offered to pay not just first and last month's rent, but an entire year in advance.

So we have runaway construction of condos, many of which sit empty, more which are used as AirBnB units (unregulated hotels). It is estimated (as of 2017) that in Toronto there are 99,000 empty housing units, enough to house over 250,000 people.

Ontario: open for business, closed to tenants

When he was campaigning for office, Doug Ford explicitly denied he would remove rent controls. "When it comes to rent control, we're going to maintain the status quo," he said in May. Promise made, promise broken. In November he removed all rent controls on new units. According to Ford, the incentive to his developer friends would result in the creation of lots of new, affordable rental stock—trickle-down housing as it were.

Once upon a time, Ontario had effective rent control which limited how much a landlord could hike the rent between tenants. Mike Harris's Tory regime got rid of that; landlords were limited in how much they could raise the rent as long as you remained in your apartment, but once you moved out they could raise the rate to agree with "the market." But don't worry, Harris promised, "thousands and thousands" of new rental units would be built.

Except it didn't happen then, just as it won't happen now. Developers and their bought and

paid for politicians created a condo boom and encouraged renters to go into deep debt to buy their units. Boom became bubble as the economies of major Canadian cities became focused on real estate speculation. Big capital, looking for a place to park their money rather than invest in new technology or industry, played the housing market.

And developers bought and paid for politicians like Ford to protect their investments.

During the election campaign Ford was caught in a secret meeting where he promised to open the "Green Belt"—designed to limit Toronto's suburban sprawl and protect the aquifer—to real estate developers. Public outcry made him back down. But now that he has his majority, all bets are off.

Ford's omnibus Bill 66 is all about "cutting red tape" and "making Ontario open for business"—not only does it scrap environmental precautions dating back to the deadly Walkerton poisoned water disaster, it would allow development in the Greenbelt. Again, we are told that the move would result in more "affordable housing." What we'll get are endless tracts of wasteful suburbia, homes that the urban working class can't afford and don't want.

At the same time as Ford's government scraps rent control, his MPPs voted in favour of giving themselves a 20% raise for housing subsidy, financed by taxpayers of course. How's a Tory supposed to be able to afford to live in Toronto in style, with these rents! Proving once again how tone-deaf they are, NDP MPPs also voted in favour of the rental allowance raise. Ontario MPPs receive a base annual salary of \$116,500. The average salary in Toronto is \$58,500.

Vancouver fights back

Everything that is happening now in Ontario will be familiar to people living in BC. But in Vancouver the housing crisis has created a political, activist response. Tenants rights groups organized and fought back, raising housing rights as the highest profile issue in recent local elections. A slate of housing activists campaigned hard and refused to compromise, shaming "progressive" NDP and Green Party candidates who had talked up the issue but failed to act.

Long-time activist Jean Swanson was elected to council and proposed new protections for renters facing "renoviction"—a law that would let them return to their renovated apartments at the same rent. Big crowds of supporters were mobilized to pack city hall. The reform passed.

This is a first step, a taste of what is possible. The fightback has to begin with a recognition that housing is a human right. It has to include a solution for the army of homeless that crowd our city streets, an army that will only grow with the austerity and cuts being brought in by Doug Ford's gang. It has to include decent, subsidized housing solutions for seniors and people on fixed incomes. It has to include affordable inner-city rentals for the workers existing pay cheque to pay cheque.

The money is there. Developers have been raking it in for years. Now wonder they are organized to back up Ford all the way, with money and political clout. It is time we start to fight back like our homes depend on it.

Solidarity with Wet'suwet'en

by Ryan Schebek

Nine days after the military assault, by RCMP, on the Gitdum't'en check point Coastal Gaslink workers can now enter the Unist'ot'en camp site. Although reports by RCMP might suggest the battle is over, the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en nation have been clear, allowing RCMP and Coastal Gaslink pipeline workers to enter their lands does not mean consent is given. Force does not mean consent.

As the Unist'ot'en explained on their website, "the RCMP used excessive and brutal force. We expected a large response,

hours and allies around the world proves the Wet'suwet'en do not stand alone. Our rights to water, air and land are not only Indigenous rights but human rights."

Chief Kloum Kuhn stated, "The five clans of the Wet'suwet'en will never support the Coastal Gaslink (CGL) project and remain opposed to any pipelines on our traditional lands. There is no legitimate agreement with CGL as reported in the media, and we stand behind the Unist'ot'en and Gitdum't'en. Under 'Anuc niwh'it'en, Wet'suwet'en rule of law, all five clans of the Wet'suwet'en have unanimously opposed all pipeline proposals and given no authority to Coastal Gaslink/



Taking to the streets in Ottawa for Wet'suwet'en

Photo: Leveller

we did not expect a military level invasion where our unarmed women and elders were faced with automatic weapons and bulldozers.

"While the chiefs have a responsibility to protect the land, they also have a duty to protect our land defenders. Our people faced an incredible risk of injury or death and that is not a risk we are willing to take for an interim injunction. The agreement we made allows Coastal GasLink to temporarily work behind the Unist'ot'en gate. This will continue to be a waste of their time and resources as they will not be building a pipeline in our traditional territory."

The RCMP have strategically timed their raids to be executed during funerals or indigenous celebration, a time when people are most vulnerable.

Solidarity

On January 16 hundreds of hereditary leaders, supporters and allies from across BC gathered on Wet'suwet'en territory to stand in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and their opposition to the fracked gas pipeline.

"Our rights to these lands have never been extinguished... the jurisdiction of the provincial and federal governments is misleading and false."

"Our rights to these lands have never been extinguished, the assumed and presumed jurisdiction of the provincial and federal governments is misleading and false," said Chief Na'Moks of the Wet'suwet'en. "Today's show of support from our neigh-

TransCanada to do work on Wet'suwet'en lands."

Injunction

Shamefully, but not surprisingly, the provincial and federal government have decided to side with an injunction, that has not been processed yet, to continue work and demolish any obstacle in their way.

People all over the world continue to support the Wet'suwet'en people and their right to enact their laws on their land despite Coastal Gaslink workers moving in. The world sees what the Canadian government is doing is wrong and reaffirms what the Wet'suwet'en people are doing is right. Legal funds, donated by allies from all over Canada, continue to flood in. In one month since the crowd funding began, legal funds for Gitdum't'en have double their original goal of \$100,000 and have set a new goal of \$350,000.

Protests

Solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en continues with almost daily protests somewhere within the Canadian state.

On the first day of action on January 8th, thousands marched in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and in 50 cities and towns.

And the momentum is growing. On January 10, Indigenous people and allies occupied and shut down Portage and Main in Winnipeg. Similar protests have shut down roadways in Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax, Toronto and Brantford.

These protests are where the rubber hits the road in the campaigns for both Indigenous sovereignty and against climate change.

As socialists we need to give our total support to the Indigenous land defenders who are taking enormous risks at the barricades.

• To learn more on how to support and donate to the Wet'suwet'en people and their fight against Coastal Gaslink please visit: <http://unistoten.camp/supporter-toolkit/>

Canada fuels crisis in Venezuela

by Sid Lacombe

The government of Canada has announced its support for the Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó, essentially green-lighting a coup to oust the elected president Nicolas Maduro.

They blame the humanitarian crisis in the country on the left wing politics of Maduro – the heir to the highly popular socialist president Hugo Chavez.

The reality is that this is another example of Canada and the US pushing for regime change, not because of a humanitarian situation but as a means of opening the country up to pillage by “our” corporations.

US in Latin America

The US has always considered Latin America as part of its natural sphere of influence. They have attacked any leader from Chavez to Salvador Allende in Chile if they dare to challenge US control. They have invaded, launched economic warfare and funded death squads in Nicaragua, Honduras, Columbia, Haiti, Cuba, Dominican republic and many more. There have been 56 military incursions by US supported forces in the region since the turn of the 20th century.

US Marine Corps General Smedley Butler, who was involved in a dozen US invasions of Latin America said it clearly: “I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.”

In the case of Venezuela, the US has wanted to oust the Chavistas since they came to power. After an unsuccessful CIA led coup attempt in 2002, they instead engaged in economic warfare using the former Venezuelan ruling class as proxies.

The Bolivarian Revolution

The Bolivarian revolution, as Chavez’s version of socialism was called, did result in significant changes with increased spending on programs for the poor and displaced. All of this was paid for by oil wealth, Venezuela having the second largest reserves in the world after Saudi Arabia.

And there were some improvements for working people. Under Chavez, poverty fell from 70.8% in 1996 to 21% in 2010. The number of people going hungry fell from 21% to 5% in the same period. Local governance structures allowed for more democratic participation in the politics of the country, crime rates fell, even in notoriously dangerous Caracas, and working people felt they had a champion in Chavez.

The revolution was seen as an attempt to get out from under the boot of the imperial interests which had pillaged the continent for centuries.

There were still, however, persistent problems with the process. Centrally, the revolution didn’t go far enough. Most sectors of the economy remained in the hands of the capitalists. Food production and distribution for example, controlled by a tiny elite, was used over and over again as a means of building discontent as the companies manipulated food distribution.

The mass media, with the exception of a few networks, also remained in the hands of the rich. During the coup attempt in 2002, they all suspended regular programming to call for Venezuelans to join the coup. There were also multiple bosses’ strikes, where workers would be locked out and sectors of the economy would stagnate.

To make matters worse, corruption increased within the government. There are many reasons for this, from foreign meddling to lack of proper and binding oversight – but it did lessen the enthusiasm of supporters of the revolution. Chavez remained personally popular, but that was insufficient. No revolution can survive based on a cult of personality alone. After Chavez died in 2013, the right wing opposition saw its prospects increase greatly.

The crisis

The economy of Venezuela has been in significant crisis since the collapse of oil prices at the end of 2015 but that crisis has been massively exacerbated by the US sanctions that came into effect in August 2017.

The impact has been enormous. The sanctions essentially banned any investment from



US-based companies or individuals in the Venezuelan oil industry. As investment dried up, production decreased. That, coupled with the collapsing price of oil, has been devastating. The government has been printing money to try and pay off its debts, resulting in hyper-inflation.

There is no longer any money for food and medicine, and people are going without essential needs. The opposition to Chavez, which is based in the upper and middle classes, seized the initiative and renewed their campaigns of sabotage of the government. The result has been chaos.

And now there is new enthusiasm from the global elite to get rid of the whole revolutionary project.

Already Guaidó has announced that he will open up the country’s oil supplies to foreign investment and will look to the IMF to lend money to stabilize the economy, thus ensuring austerity in the form of structural adjustment programs, a prerequisite to getting IMF funds.

Revolutionary response

There are many problems with the Maduro government and Chavez’s project – but it was an attempt by a country to try a different model of development than the one imposed by the imperialists. For that reason, it still has millions of supporters inside the country. They will have to mobilize and organize to head off this threat.

But it will be difficult. There is a lesson here for revolutionaries who look for a way to build socialism while leaving the ruling class in their position of economic power. As the old saying goes, “Those who make revolution half way only dig their own graves”.

But make no mistake. What we are seeing is the imperial powers punishing Venezuela and lining up at the trough to gorge on the country’s resources. Whatever violence accompanies the next stages of this process is the fault of Trudeau, Freeland, and Trump. The job of socialists is to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people against any imperial meddling.

Trump crumbles, LA teachers win

by Pam Johnson

In mere hours, a sick-in and strike threat by air traffic controllers brought Trump to his knees. On January 25th, Trump ended the historically long US government shutdown when it became apparent that air traffic controllers’ actions were going to cripple air travel across the country.

Two days earlier, in a joint statement the unions that represent US air traffic controllers, pilots and flight attendants issued a dire warning calling the government shutdown an “unprecedented” and “unconscionable” safety threat that is growing by the day and must end.

This occurred in the same week that striking teachers in LA won their demands after an 8-day strike. 34,000 LA teachers in the second largest school district in the US, picked up the strike wave for better education that teachers in West Virginia, Arizona and Oklahoma started in early 2018. This wave has become a movement, #RedforEd, demanding that public education be fully-funded after decades of erosion and privatization.

The strike wave that began mainly in red states that had voted for Trump, has won

unprecedented gains: increased teachers’ pay and pay for all other workers in the schools including bus drivers, food service workers, librarians, counselors and education assistants. Demands have also included restoring general funding to education system after decades of cuts that left schools in a terrible state of disrepair and neglect.

Escalating to political demands

These demands exposed not only the horrible working conditions for teachers but the systemic attack on public education, especially by the Trump administration and his henchperson, Secretary of Education Betty DeVos. LA teachers demanded and won more than just better working conditions. They won caps on class size, an immigrant defense fund, local school control for 30 communities, and a moratorium on the funding of charter schools, to blunt the privatization draining the public school system.

Next up to call out the chronic starvation of education were Virginia teachers, who walked out on January 28. The one-day action called on the Virginia legislature, which is considering \$573 million in tax

breaks for Amazon’s new headquarters, to increase teacher pay instead. They are also demanding that education funding be restored to pre-recession levels. “What’s happening in LA is energizing us here in Virginia. There is a sea change happening in this country,” said #RedforEd activist Cheryl Binkley.

The power of organized workers

The frustration and misery caused by continual squeezing of workers’ jobs and public service decimation is breaking out in resistance. Austerity measures by governments and employers are backfiring and fueling this resistance. It is a different time from 1981 and the PATCO strike, when Reagan shut down striking air traffic controllers, isolating them without support from the rest of the labour movement. This time the air traffic controllers’ actions caused Trump to cave with the pilots and flight attendant unions in support.

The teachers and air traffic controller strikes show the power when this resistance is organized and the reality that the system does not run if the workers are not working. The LA teachers victory has, said union president Alex Caputo-Pearl, “renewed the strike

not only as the last resort, but as something you do to build a social movement.”

This resistance is not just happening in the US. There is a new mood of resistance in Canada and Quebec as well. Postal workers went on a national strike in October and, after Trudeau’s back to work legislation killed the strike, an unprecedented wave of solidarity started and is still continuing months later. GM workers barricaded GM headquarters in Oshawa last week, after GM refused to accept the union’s proposals to stop its closure. Thousands of Ontario students have recently been in the streets against Premier Ford’s cuts to OSAP.

Remarkably, West Virginia teachers are considering striking again after Republican lawmakers tabled new pro-privatization and anti-union measures in retaliation for the first strike. An organizer of that strike said, “A year ago we had to reinvent the wheel, but now we know how to fight this. After what we accomplished last year, we’re aware of our power. So there’s no way we’re going to let the horrors of this bill be forced upon us, our students, or our state. We’re going to organize, we’re going to take action — and we’re going to win.”

Race, borders and the working class



Organizing against racism in London, UK

Photo: Alisdare Hickson CC BY 2.0

How do we fight racism and capitalism?

by Ritch Whyman

One of the most inspirational chapters in working class history is the story of Black workers in Detroit in the 60s and 70s who challenged both their employers and weak-kneed union leaders in the auto industry.

After the Second World War thousands of African-Americans from the South moved north looking for better paying and unionized industrial jobs in Chicago, Detroit and other industrial cities. Many workers in the plants fought in the Second World War and in Vietnam—ostensibly for freedom and democracy—only to return home to racism and low wage jobs.

They began to circulate a newspaper called Inner City Voice, which carried articles opposing the war and about conditions in the workplaces and community struggles.

and assert their power in the workplace and community.

DRUM organized a march of over 300 workers and allies to the Chrysler UAW office, to demand in-

Hospital workers had HRUM, and workers at the Eldon Avenue Axle and gear plant formed ELRUM, Cadillac workers CADRUM, Jefferson Assembly Plant JARUM and so on.

These organizations attracted support from activists and even had a movie made about them: *Finally Got the News*.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers

From a spontaneous upsurge of Black workers, the need to form an organization to try to knit together the various groups in a more coordinated fashion led to the creation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) in June 1969.

The League initiated fundraising campaigns, book clubs to help political education, rallies and demonstrations against attacks on workers and became a political force in the city.

While friendly with groups like the Black Panther Party, the League argued that the strategy of the Panthers in looking to the “brother on the block” as central to winning liberation was mistaken. The League argued that it was the economic power of Black workers that was the key for Black liberation and the overthrow of capitalism as well.

The League also tried to raise the political understanding of their co-workers, linking the war in Vietnam and US imperialism to the fights on the shop floor. The opening lines of the LRBW’s general statement and policy paper said:

“The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is dedicated to waging a relentless struggle against racism, capitalism and imperialism. We are struggling for the liberation of black people in the confines of the United States as well as to play a major revolutionary role in the liberation of all oppressed people in the world”

The LRBW helped pave the way for a strike wave that rocked the US in the late 60s and early 70s. Postal workers, other Autoworkers in Cal-

ifornia, and New Jersey truckers all struck. New workplaces also revolted: GM’s new model plant in Lordstown Ohio, built away from the cities and employing mainly young white workers, went out on a wildcat strike that showed the rebelliousness of campuses was spreading into the workplace even more.

Even after the League disbanded after internal troubles, the worksites where it had been strongest continued to have a tradition of militancy. In 1973 workers both white and Black staged wildcats strikes that had to withstand both the employer and organized goon squads from the UAW trying to smash their picket lines.

Debates

Unfortunately the League didn’t see the necessity of building a revolutionary organization in the workplace of both Black and white workers. This meant that once the League moved beyond the confines of Chrysler—which had the highest percentage of Black workers, the RUMs ran into the problem of not being able to relate to the majority of the workers. This sometimes led to actions being called without support from larger numbers of workers, leading to the firing of key militants before building a larger base.

It was this political problem which split the League, between those looking for a way to deepen the presence on the shop floor and those looking to forces outside of the workplace.

Despite not recognizing the necessity of multi-racial organizing, the League’s focus on building resistance in the workplace is a vital lesson for today.

Some on the left continue to argue that power lies in the “community” and amongst the poorest sections of society. They argue that workers are just one of many “groups” in society. The lessons of the League show that if you really want to challenge the system then building a revolutionary organization in the workplace is the most radical thing one can do to threaten the 1%.

The struggle for internationalism

by Tom Leonard

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. It is part of the struggle for social justice, for environmentally sustainable practices, and true equality. It is part of a struggle in partnership among those who are most exploited and dejected in the nations in which they live.

There is an alternative to our current system, but any meaningful solution must be international in both theory and practice. Just as capitalism destroys environments and oppresses workers on a global scale, the same scale must be used by revolutionaries in order to affect real change. Built into capitalism is a drive for supreme exploitation and alienation from others. We learn to be fearful of those from other countries, cultures, and backgrounds. The tools of nationalism, patriotism, and corporate control are counter to the internationalist appeal of solidarity with the oppressed of the world. As stated by the Russian revolutionary Lenin in 1918:

The character of the war (whether it is reactionary or revolutionary) does not depend on who the attacker was, or in whose country the enemy is stationed; it depends on

what class is waging the war, and on what politics this war is a continuation of. If the war is a reactionary, imperialist war, that is, if it is being waged by two world groups of the imperialist, rapacious, predatory, reactionary bourgeoisie, then every bourgeoisie (even of the smallest country) becomes a participant in the plunder, and my duty as a representative of the revolutionary proletariat is to prepare for the world proletarian revolution as the only escape from the horrors of a world slaughter. I must argue, not from the point of view of ‘my’ country ..., but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie, the imperialist, the one percent, all seek to divide us. Flags, statues, narratives, and even the content of our school systems all act in tandem with these points in mind. When a statue of a “historically important figure” is erected, we should ask ourselves “whose story is being told? What voices are being included or excluded in this narrative?”

These ideas are what Karl Marx called “the muck of ages” in *The German Ideology*. In this work, he argued that, for the revolution to be

successful, it must overthrow both the system structures of capitalism, as well as the ideologies which are socially reproduced by it. With all this being said, are there not any historical instances we can look to? Why do people refer to the Soviet Union as an example?

Revolution and counter-revolution

The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. Based on the historical-materialist ideas of Marx and Engels as well as revolutionaries from 1905 revolution such as Rosa Luxemburg, overthrowing the imperial Tsar and replacing it, eventually, with a system representing Russian workers.

The Bolshevik party, who would rise to power during the revolution, represented what the movements on the ground were calling for. Their slogan of “Peace, land, and bread,” was indeed exemplary of what Russian workers and peasants were demanding: A withdrawal from World War I, increased peasant control over rural lands, and better working conditions and wages for workers.

The Bolsheviks did gain control and many of the workers’ and peasants’ demands were met. However,

the international socialist revolutionary spirit was met with heavy resistance from outside forces within Russia as well as other countries.

Many nations would turn to fascism as a means of putting down workers’ revolution. Capitalist nations with means were actively suppressing communist uprisings and using imperial power to isolate Russia. Stalin would eventually rise to power in Russia, though Lenin himself warned against this in what is commonly referred to as his Last Testament (1922). “Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary-General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands,” he writes. “And I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution.”

Lenin was fearful of the direction the party could take with a membership under Stalin’s thumb. He would also add an addendum to the letter in which he believed it best to remove Stalin from his current position. The letter was suppressed and Stalin would rise to power. A bloody counter-revolution created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control, commonly known as state capitalism.

Other countries such as China or

Eastern Europe would create Stalinist, not socialist, systems. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

What does international revolution look like?

The short answer is that the international revolution will be shaped by those who create it. The revolutionary movement and the revolutionary party must successfully work as one in order to defeat capitalism and gain equality. While there may be no specific “blueprint,” detailing the step-by-step process of achieving revolution, the bones and DNA can be found in the present.

As international socialists, we actively participate in the day-to-day struggles against war, imperialism, and capitalist oppression. Through victories, both big and small, we see fits of the revolutionary spark. We also believe that the revolutionary party must help shape and participate in the revolutionary movement. We are a group of activists dedicated to action and democratic change through radical participation and socialist theory. We believe that, not only is a better world needed, but that a better world is coming.

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.

State and revolution

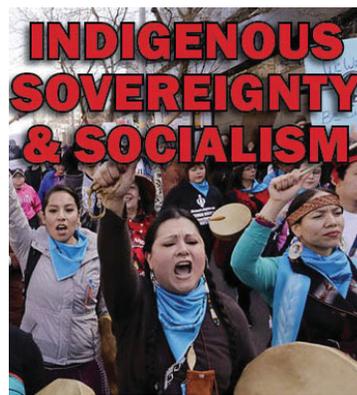
The following is an excerpt from the newly published **Indigenous Sovereignty and Socialism**

by **Jesse McLaren** and **Valerie Lannon**

As Marx stated in the *Communist Manifesto*, during industrial capitalism's formation, "The executive of the modern state is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." This means there will always be corporate and state unwillingness to recognize Indigenous sovereignty because the resources of Indigenous territories are too valuable to the extractive industries of oil, gas, fishing, forestry and mining. In other words, the denial of Indigenous sovereignty is rooted in the capitalist economic system itself, regardless of who is elected to lead it. Canada is based on a Parliament that denies Indigenous sovereignty and workplace democracy, a court system that upholds privatized property on stolen land, and a police force that is deployed against Indigenous blockades and workers' strikes.

Changing the face of the Canadian state will not change its foundation. The capitalist state is not neutral and, while granting reforms when forced to by mass pressure, exists to serve corporate interests. For 150 years the Liberals and Conservatives and the corporations they support have taken turns colonizing Indigenous land and exploiting Indigenous and non-Indigenous labour. Alone among the major political parties, the NDP is not supported by big business. The party's resolutions, put forth by NDP activists involved in movements, support the working class and Indigenous rights. For example, members are pushing the party to support the Leap Manifesto, Cree NDP MP Romeo Saganash re-introduced a private member's bill to make the UNDRIP part of Canadian law, and during his leadership campaign federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh opposed pipelines for not respecting UNDRIP.

But because of its electoralist strategy, the NDP leadership subordinates these to the needs to be "electable" and thus cater to business interests. When elected to government, the NDP repeatedly turns its back on the working class and on Indigenous rights: in the 1990s the NDP legislated teachers back to work and attacked Gustaf-



sen Lake, and today the BC NDP is supporting the Site C dam and delaying a \$15 minimum wage. The NDP behaves like all social democratic parties around the world—to prop up capitalism, not overthrow it. In the context of a colonial settler state, this reformist strategy leads the NDP to choose the Canadian state and Canadian capitalism over Indigenous sovereignty. As Howard Adams explained in *Prison of Grass*, "The New Democratic Party is very much like the other two bourgeois parties, except that it brings about small reforms in health, welfare, car insurance, etc.; it is equally a part of the capitalist system and therefore unable to bring about any real and basic changes in society. All governments regardless of their political affiliations have discriminated against native people and denied them their rights as full citizens. Parliament is an instrument of the ruling class and its main purpose is to support and protect the ruling class."

The same goes for Canadian courts and international institutions like the United Nations. Mohawk lawyer Patricia Monture-Okanee explained in the article "Thinking About Aboriginal Justice: Myths and Revolution" that "All oppression of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada has operated with the assistance and the formal sanction of the law. The legal system is at the heart of what we must reject as Aboriginal nations and as Aboriginal individuals." While the courts can partially reflect Indigenous demands, it is fundamentally an institution of colonial and capitalist rule.

This point was reinforced in early 2018 when white juries acquitted those charged for the murders of First Nations youths Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine. The immediate and angry response from Indigenous activists and their allies prompted the Trudeau government to announce

supposedly wholesale changes to the legal framework for "nation to nation" relationships, changes that will leave the fundamentally colonial relationship intact. As Pam Palmater told *The Guardian*, "The question that he (Trudeau) never talks about in any of his speeches or announcements is lands, resources and power. Those are big ticket items that are the crux of reconciliation."

Similarly, international institutions like the UN are made up of international capitalist states who place no enforcement mechanisms for rulings. Even when favourable decisions are made by the courts, or when something like UNDRIP is recognized, there still needs to be "negotiation" with the state in order to implement these decisions. And the state makes sure that these hard-won rights will not be achieved.

While the colonial and capitalist ballot box won't deliver change, electoral campaigns are important moments to raise political issues—from Carole Lavallee's campaign in 1968, to efforts to push the NDP towards the Leap Manifesto today. Individual elected officials can also use their positions as a megaphone for the movement, like Elijah Harper's refusal to sign the Meech Lake accord, or Marion Dewar's call for people to support the Constitution Express.

Left alternative parties provide greater opportunities, like Québec solidaire, a party of the ballot box and of the streets. While the Canadian state tries to pit Québec and Indigenous demands against each other there's a long history of solidarity, from Louis Riel to the Québec student strike. This history of resistance to national oppression and solidarity with Indigenous communities is reflected in Québec solidaire, which sees Québec sovereignty not as an end in itself but as a means to win democratic demands including Indigenous sovereignty. As Ellen Gabriel wrote on her website, "the only party who tries to address Aboriginal issues is Québec solidaire and I applaud their efforts."

While elections and courts can be used as tactics, the ultimate strategy to win Indigenous sovereignty and socialism is to break free of the prison-house of nations which is the Canadian state, reclaiming land and labour.

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Anger at the system can go left or right



Yellow vest protests have rocked France Photo: Pascal Maga cc by 2.0

by Carolyn Egan

The Trump victory in the presidential election in the United States has given confidence to right-wing forces around the world. This includes both fascists in the streets and right-wing parties that echo the refrain that things cannot stay the same and claim to have the answers to a world that is no longer tolerable for the vast majority of people. The context is, of course, the vicious neo-liberal agenda that has been wreaking havoc on working people and the poor, and the intractable economic crisis that drives it. Unfortunately, the rise of right-wing extremism is a warped expression of people's anger at a system that cannot meet their needs.

In Ontario, the Doug Ford government came to power claiming to speak for "the little guy" who faces exorbitant rents and housing prices, whose hydro bills are out of control, whose job prospects are more and more limited, and whose pension is becoming a thing of the past. The Tories quickly showed whose interests they really represent. They started slashing and burning social programs, rolling back victories such as the \$15 minimum wage and other improvements for workers, cutting the anti-racism directorate, and much more. And these attacks are continuing.

After the Trump victory, we also saw organized members of the far-right showing themselves in the streets and in public spaces across the country. We just passed the second anniversary of the horrific killings in the mosque in Quebec City by a young man influenced by these movements.

Right-wing governments and the far-right are not the same. But right-wing governments are showing a kinship to the extremists as we saw when Doug Ford would not distance himself from Faith Goldy, who openly associates with the far right. She ran for mayor of Toronto and won over 25,000 votes from people supporting her views. And parties of the centre are being influenced by these sentiments

and moving further right, as we saw recently with the European Union's summit on refugees in 2018.

The right is attempting to capture the growing anger at the system. But movements to the left are also building, as we saw in the Bernie Sanders campaign and the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America, Corbyn's rise in the British Labour Party, and huge anti-racist demonstrations in Germany and other European countries.

An effective fightback against Ford's austerity agenda, taking on the ideological arguments and showing how he governs for the 1%, can win people who may have voted for him. The Toronto and York Region Labour Council has called a stewards' assembly in March, with the expectation that 1,000 activists from the diverse working class in this city will come out to hopefully start this and undercut the racist dynamic that we have seen growing across the country. In Vancouver, anti-Chinese sentiment has been whipped up, blaming the Chinese community for the housing crisis. In the east end of Toronto, mosques have been vandalized and refugees have been targeted by the far right.

The left cannot allow racism and anti-immigrant sentiment to grow. Our task is also to build a broad movement to oppose the far-right. In Toronto, demonstrations on August 11th and September 9th were turning points that have shown the effectiveness of broad community mobilizations led by a coalition of anti-racist, community, faith, labour, and other organizations and individuals.

As we do this, we must also build a revolutionary left that makes it clear that it is capitalism that maintains the exploitation and oppression that we face. Organized socialists have an important role to play in building resistance to austerity and racism, but also building a socialist alternative that shows through its theory and strategy that a new world is possible. It is this revolutionary vision that can give people real hope that fundamental change can and must take place.

REVIEWS

Leyla McCalla *The Capitalist Blues*



by D'Arcy Briggs

Political music was king in 2018. Childish Gambino's *This is America* was lauded by critics and the public as the top song and video of the year. Artists such as Kendrick Lamar and Janelle Monáe also took their work and followed in similar directions, expanding the medium while still producing incredible music.

All of these means that, in 2019, we will see an explosion of powerfully important music released. Leyla McCalla's *The Capitalist Blues* might be the best album of this kind released so far this year.

Leyla McCalla is a folk musician and cellist, known for her solo work as well as a member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops.

Her latest album, *The Capitalist Blues*, centers around the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in the physical, cultural, and political sense. Her parents were both born in Haiti and she says that, since moving to New Orleans over a decade ago, she has been more connected with her Haitian Creole heritage and current issues of oppression and resistance.

The album plays lyrical homage to these themes, but also features musicians with musical roots in Haitian, Brazilian, Cajun, zydeco and calypso forms.

The album is a journey in itself, making it difficult to highlight some tracks above others. There are so many styles and moods present, than the album presents itself as a complete experience from start to finish.

The album opens with the title

track, a New Orleans jazz lament to capitalism. McCalla opens with "You keep telling me/ To climb this ladder / I've got to pay my dues / But as I rise / The stakes get higher / I've got the capitalist blues." She later addresses the sense of alienation central to the system by singing "It's not fair, it's not right/ I don't know what I'm / gonna do with my life / It's not fair, it's not right / I wasn't born to just endure all this strife."

But when a hungry man goes out to beg / They set a bulldog behind his leg / Twenty policeman will arrest him too / You see where a dog is better than you

The next song "Money is King," is a calypso song originally done by Growling Tiger in which income inequality is explored. One of the closing verses sums it up very well with "A dog can walk about and take up bone/ Fowl head, stale bread, fish tail and pone/ If it's a good breed and not too wild / People will take it and mind as a child / But when a hungry man goes out to beg /

They set a bulldog behind his leg / Twenty policeman will arrest him too / You see where a dog is better than you."

Another highlight from this fantastic album is "Heavy as Lead," a song that both musically and lyrically conveys the powerful weight of income instability, and more specifically her personal experience with her daughter's diagnosis of lead poisoning. The song serves as part cathartic exercise in soul music, part warning and howl for the system's failure to protect those most vulnerable.

"Lead intoxication is a systemic environmental health issue that affects children and families all over the United States. I wrote this song after discovering that my own child had high levels of lead in her blood," McCalla stated in a promotional interview for the album. "I'm thankful that my husband and I had the resources to tackle and rectify this issue, but I sing these words thinking of all the families from New Orleans, LA to Flint, Michigan grappling with a system that takes no responsibility for solving this environmental health crisis."

The Capitalist Blues opens the year off right with a well produced and musically varied adventure focused on the personalized anxieties and oppressions many are faced with through capitalism.

It carries on a proud musical tradition of resistance and resilience that is as profound as ever in 2019. For those in search of a musically varied take on how capitalism can attack us on a personal level, look no further than McCalla's latest.

Students rise up against Ford cuts

Ontario's Conservative government has ignited a wave of protests with its announcement of major attacks on access to post-secondary education.

On January 25th, 5,000 students marched through downtown Toronto chanting "We want OSAP – Give it back ASAP". Students from across Ontario including North Bay, Belleville, Kingston, London and Hamilton joined Toronto students and marched on Queen's Park.

Doug Ford's plan includes eliminating free tuition for low-income families, eliminating the six-month grace period on student loan repayment and shifting from mostly grant-based to mostly loans-based funding.

Ashlea Brockway, a student from the Niagara region who joined the march, said "My husband is a disabled veteran, we have 3 young boys and live on ODSP. My goal is to support my family without ODSP. I attend university on full grants. I will

now be required to pay at least half of my tuition. The 10% reduction of tuition saves only \$600 to \$1000, mainly benefiting those who don't need assistance."

She added, "These changes will cost me thousands and rob us of an opportunity at a better life. OSAP costs exceeded projections because they underestimated the significant barrier tuition is for low-income individuals. The rich gain and the poor are stuck."

In a classic Tory switch-and-bait tactic, Ford announced a tuition cut of up to 10% – but with no additional funding to universities and colleges. This is a naked attempt to pit students against others in the post-secondary sector, as campus administrations scramble to make up for the gap in funding.

Taking a page from former Tory Premier Mike Harris, Ford is using "salami tactics" while at the same time "creating a crisis". The 'solution' to the crisis will undoubtedly

be what Tories have pushed for for decades: massive increases to tuition.

But students are not falling for Ford's divide and conquer strategy. Student organizer Mohammad Ali Aumeer said, "Our message to the Ford government is, reverse the cuts. We need actual proper funding of post-secondary education. Cuts to tuition are great, but if it's not met with putting money into the system, it's not going to fix anything."

Not only has Ford attacked students' conditions, he is trying to knee-cap their ability to fight back. His "Student Choice Initiative" would allow students to opt-out of contributions to student unions. This is intended to weaken the capacity of students to organize on campus to resist these attacks, by removing the funding for organizations that have resisted regressive policies in the past.

If Ford is successful, he will undoubtedly push for similar policy targeting trade unions.

In this fight, unity of students and

education workers is vital. Students have been joined in the protests by faculty.

Pam Johnson, a faculty member at Humber College, told the rally "It is beautiful that you have come out to tell Doug Ford to stuff it. College faculty are with you. My working conditions are your learning conditions, our fight is the same fight... If this government thinks it is going to divide students and faculty, it is not going to happen. We are going to stand together."

She concluded, "In 2012, Quebec students had

a strike. They stopped tuition rises – but they did something else. They brought the government down on a student strike. We can repeat it here in Ontario!"



• For info on the February 4th Day of Action: <https://bit.ly/2Gd5RPc>

How Quebec students brought down a government

In 2012, students across Quebec launched a strike against a proposed massive tuition hike. The strike, which was the longest and most impressive in the history of Quebec and Canada, lasted over six months, from February to September.

Not only did it succeed in stopping the tuition hike, it sparked a mass movement that ultimately brought down the then-Liberal government of Jean Charest.

With growing struggle against attacks on post-secondary education in Ontario, activists are looking to the experience of Quebec students for inspiration and strategies. What are some of the lessons we can learn from the Quebec Spring?

Building from below

Quebec students showed that we can stop austerity measures, if we build resistance from below.

Threatened with a 75% tuition hike over five years, students mobilized all those opposed to the tuition hike within a broader argument against austerity.

The CLASSE student union did not suddenly call a strike from on high, but built it patiently from below—starting with mass petitions, demonstrations and protests. Through the process of organizing department by department and campus by campus, the movement built the rank-and-file confidence and experience necessary to organize and enforce a strike.

Polls coinciding with the strike's launch in mid-February gave two-thirds support for Charest's plan to increase tuition. The Liberals began to



Quebec students on the march

squeeze out right-wing Coalition Avenir Québec and creep up in the polls.

For nine weeks, Charest refused to sit down and talk with the student leaders. Amidst escalating police repression, it seemed clear to many that Charest was counting on populist anti-strike sentiment to give him a boost for the election, which some thought he would call for the spring.

Forging alliances

For six months students went on strike, resisting media vilification, sometimes extreme police violence,

and government attempts to divide them at the negotiating table. The student movement built alliances with the climate justice and labour movements.

In March, the CLASSE moved its general meeting to the town of Alma, where workers at Rio Tinto had been locked out for several months. This coincided with an international day of action to support the workers. They joined the workers' march and called for the student strike to broaden into a social strike.

The students also joined the massive climate march on Earth Day in April, alongside hundreds of thousands of others. Their symbol, the red square (referring to students being squarely in the red) became ubiquitous.

Broadening the fight

The strike built and strengthened as more and more campuses voted to join. When the government responded to this success with a draconian law, bill 78—which banned gatherings of 50 people or more—the student movement called on all the population, whether students or not, to defend the right to protest and civil liberties more broadly.

The "casserole" protests built from small numbers of people gathering after work and banging pots in protest, to massive night-time marches that wound through the streets night after night. These protests were inspired by the movement against austerity in Argentina ('cacerolazo'). They reached far beyond the student population and dug deep into Quebec society, effectively breaking the law in what became the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history. Solidarity demonstrations spread across Canada and around the world.

Electoral defeat

After months of increasingly broad protests, in a last desperate attempt to break the movement, Premier Charest called a provincial election. On September 4, the Quebec Liberals were tossed out of government. The next day, Charest resigned from politics after 28 years in office, having lost his own seat.

Ousting the Liberals was a huge victory for students and the left. Fed up with government corruption, declining social services, demonizing student protesters and criminalizing demonstrations, Quebecers had simply had enough.

The mass pressure from below pushed the newly elected Parti Québécois government to abolish the tuition hike and the law meant to enforce it. This, despite the PQ's own history of tuition hikes in previous governments,

and its earlier calls for people to comply with Bill 78.

Left alternative

While it was not long before the PQ began rolling out its own austerity program, the gains of the student strike were impressive and provide huge lessons for struggles today.

One of the lessons is how a left party can be a megaphone for the movement, and in the process build an alternative to the politics of austerity. At the time of the strike, Québec solidaire had only one elected MNA—Amir Khadir. He participated in the "illegal" demonstrations, was arrested and even had his home raided by police.

Québec solidaire operated to amplify the demands of the movement and build people's confidence, before and during the election campaign.

In contrast, the PQ said "If you want to defeat Charest, you have to vote for us, whether you like our platform or not." This call by the PQ for "strategic voting", i.e. telling people to vote against something rather than for something, was the opposite of QS which sought to be the party proposing positive changes, and not just replacing one government with another exactly the same.

Seven years later, QS has 10 MNAs elected on a clear left platform.

As we build the movement to stop Ford's attacks, the lessons of the Quebec student strike can hopefully inspire and guide us.