

Socialist Worker

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Ford can be beaten

Ford Tories attack on our rights

Since their election last June, Doug Ford's Tories have been on a mission – to roll back, slash or eliminate services and legislation affecting working class Ontarians.

Unlike their Liberal predecessors, who preferred a 'death by a thousand cuts' approach, Ford's Tories, under the slogan "For the People", have moved quickly to satisfy the people he really represents: Ontario's true special interest group, the 1%.

The Ford government has attacked health care, French language services, Indigenous education, replaced the sex-ed curriculum, rolled back labour rights for the lowest paid, attacked autistic children, rolled back grants to university students, licensed new construction on the green belt, attacked health & safety for construction workers, to mention a few low-lights.

Workers' Power is the key

There has been pushback! Thousands of students, precarious workers, parents of

autistic children and anti-poverty activists have been on the streets since Ford's election. But there is an elephant in the room: the labour movement's failure thus far to bring

the possibility of labour/community solidarity when postal workers, members of CUPW, were ordered off their strike by Trudeau. Trade unionists and community members

began shutting down city by city, "London Calling", "Hamilton Answering", to Kitchener-Waterloo and eventually to Toronto. Nothing moved during the strike in Hamilton, and downtown Toronto was virtually shut down – demonstrating the awesome power we have as workers, if we use it.

Yet Mike Harris was re-elected with a majority in 1998 – were those mass strikes a failure?

In a word, no. The failure was to be found at the top of the labour movement. After the shutdown of Toronto at the end of October 1996, calls were made throughout our movement for an Ontario-wide General Strike. But it was never called. Our leaders at the time wound down the Days of Action, de-mobilizing our movement in the run-up to the election.

Mass strike action can and does work – we are this year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike. But we must carry it through to the end, and aim to bring down the Ford government, not wait passively for the next election while our province is destroyed.



Student walkout against Ford

its weight to bear in opposing these attacks. Our class, the workers, has the power, when organized, to pull together all the fightbacks, and strike a blow against the Tories and their rich backers in the Chambers of Commerce. We can shut down their factories, offices, construction sites, schools etc. – in other words, where it will hurt them most – in their pocketbooks.

We saw a recent glimpse of

immediately shutdown postal facilities and picketed Liberal MP's office across Canada and Quebec in protest. This speaks to a mood of resistance and solidarity that can be the spark for mass actions that can push Ford back.

Days of Action

We've done this before – during the Days of Action against the Harris government starting in 1995. Labour

Bold plan for mass action now



Rally against Harris cuts in 1997



Teachers protest at Queens Park in 1997

Next Steps: June 7 actions

Actions have been called for June 7th to mark the one year anniversary of Ford's election.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and some labour councils and unions have taken up the call. This came out of townhalls held by the (OFL) including the Power of Many conference, and mass stewards assembly by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council (TYRLC) on March 25.

Ford's popularity has taken a tumble in recent weeks as his government's cuts have rolled out and the anger has grown.

June 7 is an opportunity for coordinated activity across the province on the same day and is an important step to building broader mass actions in the future.

Every union, labour council and local should have a plan for June 7. Every action is important, it does not have to be large.

In Toronto the call by the labour council is for 15 minute lunch time meetings to outline the cuts, the impacts and formulate questions to tweet to MPPs under the hashtag: #ONEYEARAFTER.

Building momentum

June 7 actions are good first step but, this must be followed by a clear plan to use this momentum to build bigger actions. This means unions need to hire action coordinators for every city/region, so that we can coordinate not only among ourselves as different unions, but give maximum solidarity to others in struggle. Other groups such as students, parents of autistic children, social assistance recipients have all been on the streets and need the support of the union movement.

We need to do this now. A larger attack on union rights, such as was proposed with Tim Hudak's "right to work" plan, may be in the cards and we must be ready.

We need coordinated mass action across the province to begin to demonstrate workers power.

When we fight together, we show those who are angry and demoralized, who may have voted for Ford, that there is an alternative. And we show that we, **'The People'**, in collective struggle, are the ones who can make it happen.

Building mass action against Ford

Public Forum: Lessons from Ontario's Days of Action

Sunday June 9

2-5pm, followed by a social

Steelworkers hall | 25 Cecil St

South of College - east of Spadina

Schedule

2:00-3:15pm

What is the real legacy of the Days of Action?

3:30-4:45pm

How we build for mass action to fight Ford?

5pm

Social



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