

Trump is a loser but Democrats offer no solutions

US election - Page 6



Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 629 | November 2020

socialist.ca

COVID second wave is here and BOSSES WANT YOU TO DIE FOR PROFITS

WE SAY: no evictions
no cuts, no layoffs
no more deaths for
the market



As the second wave of the COVID pandemic reaches new levels, our politicians and bosses have made a decision - human life should not stand in the way of profits. In Canada there are new and alarming up-ticks in cases in almost every province yet restrictions are either being rolled back or have become a nonsensical patchwork of rules.

Cases in Ontario are much higher than in March when most parts of the country went into total lockdown yet Doug Ford has said repeatedly that no measure which may impact the economy will be considered at this time.

So you can't go to visit your family if that would mean your bubble is more than 10 people. However, squeezing 30 kids into a classroom or 300 people into a workplace is just fine as long as it keeps the profits flowing.

Some cities such as Toronto have broken with the province and set their own guidelines.

But all this has done is create confusion about which rules apply where.

This gibberish is also helping to pave the way for the new far right anti-mask groups. They are banking on the fact that the COVID measures are so obviously inept that it makes the argument that there is a larger conspiracy an easier pill to swallow.

Meanwhile, the job losses are mounting, small businesses are closing down at record rates and evictions - suspended for a few months earlier this year - are being handed out to tenants who can't afford rent.

Right wing governments are using the pandemic to enact legislation which will make things worse for the majority of the population.

The Alberta government is using the pandemic and the loss of oil revenues to justify cuts and layoffs to healthcare workers. Legislation in Ontario has, effectively, suspended collective bargaining in the public sector and done away

with hard fought workers gains.

That same government is sitting on almost \$10 billion earmarked for pandemic response. They have decided to hold onto that money and are instead laying off teachers.

Meanwhile the billionaires make more and more. The Weston family - owners of the Loblaws/Metro chain stores - have cut pandemic pay for their frontline workers despite calling them heroes in public. The Westons' have made \$1.6 billion during the pandemic. And they are not alone. Canada's billionaires made an extra \$37 billion from March to September of this year.

The bosses are using the pandemic to clawback workers rights and make the country even more unequal.

But it doesn't have to be this way. There could be proper supports for working people, renters and anyone who is suffering as a result of this system. But it won't happen unless we

demand it. Capitalists have no intention of turning over their wealth to the workers who made that money in the first place. Pandemic or not - this is the structure of capitalism which is designed to make the rich richer at the expense of the vast majority.

But workers are fighting back. Healthcare workers staged a wildcat strike in Alberta when the government announced 11,000 job cuts. Teachers have walked out of schools in Ontario. Service workers in Scarborough are on the picket lines demanding that their boss, Tropicana Foods, which receives millions in government subsidies, pay them living wage.

It is up to all of us to fight back against the distorted priorities of capitalism and to work to dismantle the system that has caused massive outbreaks, huge cuts to workers standard of living and breeds racism and climate chaos at the same time.

It is time to end this rotten system.

Dignity for migrant workers

by: **Erfan Rezaie**

The title comes from the name of a non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC – Dignidad Migrante Society. It came into existence out of necessity and continues to exist because of the continual lack of support from government. They primarily serve Temporary Foreign Farm Workers (TFFW) in the agricultural sector, a typically invisible workforce that makes up a crucial part of the food supply chain in Canada.

According to StatsCan, in 2017 there were about 550,000 temporary foreign workers (TFW) in Canada, accounting for 15.5% of the employment in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting. Since 1966, the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) has been one avenue through which TFW have met the seasonal labour needs of Canadian agricultural producers [Government of Canada]. The Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 created a shortage of workers able to enter Canada and has ultimately exacerbated long-standing problems that these workers face.

Some of the common issues facing TFFW include: Inadequate, non-standard housing, with overcrowding and lack of privacy. Low wages, with lack of overtime, holiday or vacation pay. A wait-period of three months to access provincial health care upon arrival. Violations of employment standards, including poor working conditions, abuse, punishment for speaking out, and barriers to exercising rights.

The list goes on, and the multitude of challenges faced by predominantly non-English speaking TFFWs who seek only to be treated fairly and with dignity, has led to the need for organizations like Dignidad Migrante.

Raul Gatica, technical assistant to the worker-run board at Dignidad Migrante, says that although they have received very well-written letters in response to their demands to the Federal and Provincial (BC) governments

for increased equity for migrant workers, it mostly amounts to lip-service and no concrete action.

Take for example the overcrowding and unsafe living conditions in Norther Cherries Farm in Kelowna, BC, where 16 workers have been living in less than 300 square feet, without any bedding or places to store clothes, and appliances and kitchen next to the sleeping area. Workers there are prohibited from leaving the farm, under threat of punishment, and instead must be escorted to

in the name of the pandemic.

Of course, solutions to the injustices faced by migrant workers have long existed. Some basic pathways towards justice include: Participation of workers in negotiating their contract. Open Work Permits, which would allow migrant workers to easily change employers if their rights are violated, rather than the current method that involves lengthy court processes. A Pathway to Permanent Residency, which all immigrants should be eligible for, and would



Migrant freedom caravan in Vancouver

a single grocery store every two weeks to shop for all their food.

Another example is Sam Enterprises in Abbotsford, BC, where workers can only request food from their employer, who purchases food at more expensive locations, prevents workers from speaking in private and even uses drones to investigate workers, including throughout the night.

Some of these new restrictions are supposedly in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19, but have been going on in many places for years, with the pandemic being used as a pre-text for such appalling abuse of workers' rights. Though the provincial and federal governments are well aware of these violations, they have done little more than reply with nice letters, befitting of Trudeau's Liberals. The double-standard of the application of employment standards for Canadian residents but not migrantworkers, is one of the long-standing forms of exploitation that has now been exacerbated

ultimately provide the same rights to employment standards, pay, vacation, health care, and the basics of a dignified life, that Canadian residents experience.

Similar to other demands against injustice, these appear radical at first, but upon closer reflection, they demonstrate the basic requirements that all labourers anywhere should have access to.

Organizations like Dignidad have created a network of migrant workers who work with one another in solidarity to teach new workers about their rights and how to seek support. They also hold events, such as the "Ride for Rights", to highlight to the general public the injustices they face and the support they seek from fellow residents who dearly depend on their work to put food on the table. It is up to all of us to raise awareness and work in solidarity with migrant workers, to ensure that they are treated with the same dignity that we all expect for ourselves.



Justice for Abdirahman Abdi

by: **Chantal Sundaram**

"Today there was no conviction, but conviction remains in our hearts"

These words were spoken at a media conference and rally for Abdirahman Abdi, a 37-year old Black man of Somali origin living with mental health issues, murdered by police in July 2016. They were spoken on the day the cop who killed him was acquitted.

On October 20 an Ottawa court delivered a predictable verdict on the charges against Ottawa Constable Daniel Montsion: acquitted of manslaughter, aggravated assault and assault with a weapon. "Not Guilty" on all 3 charges.

Justice Robert Kelly said the Crown did not prove beyond a "reasonable doubt" that Montsion's actions caused Abdi's death. The judge also admitted that it was quite probable the cop dealt the blow that led to Abdi's death, but couldn't find the legal certainty.

This is yet another conviction of the criminal IN-justice system that makes "reasonable doubt" an impossible test to meet - and uses it to legally justify a police system that was never intended to be held to account.

City of Ottawa response

Councillor Jeff Leiper, in whose ward the murder occurred, tweeted: "To Abdirahman Abdi's family, loved ones and his community, I'm sorry. Justice requires that we end state and societal sanction of violence perpetuated against the poor, the sick, and the racialized. Today's judgment is an indictment of our city and country."

Councillor Shawn Menard has brought forward a motion to Ottawa City Council that seeks changes to emergency responses in Ottawa. The motion calls on the Ottawa Police Services Board to undertake a public consultation and report outlining potential alternative models of community safety response that could involve the creation of non-police led response to calls which do not involve weapons or violence, such as those involving individuals experiencing mental health crises or drug addiction and where a police response is not necessary. The motion will be debated and voted on at the October 28th meeting of Ottawa City Council, and there is a call to sign the petition to support it.

As Shawn Menard's office says: "It is rare to see law enforcement held to account and it is further evidence that we need alternatives to police-led emergency response calls."

And the fight is not over in the courts either: a civil action launched some time ago had to wait until the

criminal decision was rendered, and now will proceed: to sue the Ottawa Police Services Board and the two officers involved in Abdi's murder.

But whatever well-deserved financial damages can be won through this for a family in grief, it will not truly bring justice or prevent this from happening again. And whatever crocodile tears come from Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson for Abdi's family and friends, BIPOC people in Ottawa will not be safe until we fully defund the police and provide real alternatives - and the only way to do that is through mass mobilization.

The police can be sued and be made to pay (as they should) and they can be partially reformed (as they should). But as long as they exist, there is no lasting safety.

Their conviction and ours: from the courts to the streets

Every July 24 since 2016, a crowd has gathered at 55 Hilda, where Abdi was murdered. On October 20, a crowd that was set to gather there changed location to one adjacent to Ottawa City Hall.

The supporters first heard impassioned speeches by those connected to the campaign and the trial. Signs read "Defund the Police" and "Mental illness is not a crime." Then the crowd occupied the intersection directly in front of City Hall, with chants of "Black Lives, they matter here."

The organizers announced to the protestors: "We're going to stay as long as possible" - and they did. Cops showed up when the blockade occurred but then quickly left - the sign of a strong movement.

The march ended on Parliament Hill, but it doesn't seem like the conviction to continue has ended here in Ottawa. As everywhere, the debate has just begun over what kind of alternatives to policing can exist in a society so fundamentally steeped in racism and the policed protection of the rich who are so deeply invested in racism.

But it is an important debate to have - and since the movement that erupted over the murder of George Floyd, this debate has become more than a legal question: it's about what kind of social justice we want and need.

This moment is about the memory of Abdirahman Abdi, his family and friends. But it cannot be only about that, as the family and the Coalition for Justice for Abdirahman Abdi have said themselves.

Because if it becomes only about that - about that individual, unjust tragedy - it will lose the only thing that was not sickening and nonsensical about Abdirahman's death.

Rebel loses again

by: **John Bell**

Far-right Rebel Media and its mastermind, Ezra Levant, have been handed another in a long line of legal defeats. The latest is a settlement in a suit for defamation brought against Rebel by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

CJPME has long endorsed a strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the state of Israel for its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory.

Rebel responded by making many defamatory and libelous statements about CJPME, calling them "anti-Semitic", "Nazis" and "Jew-baiters". CJPME launched its lawsuit in 2016, determined to resist any attempts to label peaceful pressure tactics illegal or anti-Semitic.

Terms of the settlement were not disclosed, but obviously favoured CJPME, which announced itself

"satisfied" with the judgement. This is a victory for Palestinian solidarity, BDS tactics and the right of free expression in Canada.

But that fight is not over. The

Conservatives in Ontario have been working to equate any criticism of Israel with anti-semitism. Check out Independent Jewish Voices Canada for info: <https://www.ijvcanada.org/>



A tale of two crises

by: Deborah Murray and Chantal Sundaram

This year marks 30 years since the so-called “Oka crisis” in Kanesatà:ke, Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) territory on

Turtle Island, within what is now the Canadian state - and a section of it carved out for another conquered nation, now called Québec.

Québec is the remnant of New France, also a conqueror of Indigenous nations, before it was itself conquered – but on much different terms. The Québec government within the Canadian state remains to this day both oppressed and oppressor, to the extent that it is allowed to exercise authority over the territory it supposedly controls.

This year also marks 50 years since the imposition of the War Measures Act by the Canadian state during the so-called “October Crisis.” In 1970, an uprising of a small number of québécois took place, and was thought to be much bigger due to the wide and palpable support for independence at the time.

Hundreds not directly involved were arrested, mostly progressives, activists and trade unionists. Just a year and a half later, in the spring of 1972, Québec unions launched a general strike against both the government in Ottawa and Canadian capitalism.

Both the Québécois nation and Indigenous nations remain under the same troubled roof, in extremely different ways, but both give the lie to the possibility of peaceful coexistence in a federal state forged by conquest and bent on using repression against any questioning of its ultimate authority.

And Québécois and Indigenous people are pitted against one another in ways that build the racist right - in very different ways, but which ultimately lead to the same fuel that feeds the growth of the right.

The federal state that calls itself “Canada” has its own spin, or silence, on all of this.

The so-called “October crisis”

The movement to contest the legacy of Québec’s historic oppression has long been hijacked by a racist, identitarian – and solidly neoliberal and capitalist – leadership. From the PQ’s Charter of Values to the middle-ground posturing of the Québec Liberals, to the blatant racism of the CAQ, it has become difficult to remember that the rebels who provoked the “October Crisis” of 1970 were in fact anti-capitalists and internationalists.

Nevertheless, a historical apology is owing to the hundreds of progressive Québécoises and Québécois who were rounded up at that time, and the only representatives in a position to demand one are these mainstream parties: the PQ, the PLQ, and now the Bloc. An apology is owing, above all by the son of the Prime Minister who put tanks in the streets and wire-tapped phones with the infamous threat about how far he was prepared to go: “Just watch me.”



This state-sanctioned cancellation of all democratic rights and civil liberties could be used again against Indigenous uprisings, which are taking place today both in Québec and English Canada - from the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia to the 1492 Land Back movement in Caledonia, Ontario – to the Mohawk of the pines in Kanesatà:ke.

This is what should be remembered about October 1970.

The so-called “Oka crisis”

The “Oka crisis” is now called the siege of Kanesatà:ke by Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) land defenders to expose this fight as no standoff between two equal powers, but a siege by the Canadian state.

Over 2000 police (SQ and RCMP) and 4500 soldiers were sent in along with armored vehicles, helicopters, jet fighters and the navy. Canadian armed forces were sent in under precedent-setting measures in Quebec that did not require the use of the War Measures Act.

Despite it all, the people of Kanesatà:ke defended their land and stood their ground against a violent onslaught by Québec and Canadian forces.

Racist responses in Quebec were widely reported in English Canadian media, but not the many acts of solidarity and support. A militant

movement was built with Mohawks in Akwesasne and Kahnawake, other indigenous people across Turtle Island, as well as settler allies. During the height of the siege, daily demonstrations took place in Montreal. Food and other supplies, and moral support were brought directly to what was then known as Kanesatake. The demonstrations and solidarity work were mostly organized by francophone Québécois, notably long-time anti-poverty activist Francois Saillant who in 2018 was a candidate for the left-independantiste party Québec solidaire.

Among the many land defenders in Kanesatà:ke in 1990, the name of Ellen Gabriel stands out. First known as a Mohawk spokesperson that summer, she has continued to lead the fight for the Kanien’kehá:ka of Kanesatà:ke.

The struggle for Kanesatà:ke today

This past summer, Ellen Gabriel toured the area with a Kanehsatà:ke Tourism Office sign with an image on it of the Kaswentha or Two Row Wampum, symbolizing the agreement of peace and mutual respect with settlers.

She live-streamed her tours of the territory and spoke about unceded land that once included 689 square kilometres but now is only 12 square

kilometres. The territory includes the Pines, where the infamous golf course at the centre of the 1990 siege is located, and the surrounding territory of Oka National Park, an industrial farm, and a housing development.

She talked about climate change, and systemic racism against the Kanien’kehá:ka and Indigenous defenders of land, hunting and fishing rights and Treaties across Canada, notably in B.C., Ontario, and Nova Scotia.

Gabriel addressed the historic systemic racism of residential schools and band council governing bodies, such as the Mohawk Council of Kanesatake (MCK), all created under the Indian Act. She demanded that Trudeau act on recommendations from the report on MMIWG (Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls) completed in 2017, and spoke to the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan, who live-streamed the final moments of her life at the hands of violently racist health care workers at a hospital in Joliette, QC.

A major focus of Gabriel’s tour of the territory was a housing development being built by Grégoire Gollin. He purchased the land from the town of Oka, which Gabriel notes, doesn’t have the right to sell unceded land. Gollin ‘gifted’ a parcel of land to the people of Kanesatà:ke in an agree-

ment he’d signed with MCK Chief Simon. The people were not properly consulted.

In October, the town council of Oka held a one-hour video call as a public consultation on declaring the Pines, excluding the golf course and Gollin’s housing development, a heritage site. If approved, Oka would have total say over any development or modification of the Pines.

The Kanien’kehá:ka has defended their land from federal and local governments trying to force them off through directives, court injunctions, special military measures, moratoriums and more. They will continue to defend it.

This is what should be remembered about 1990.

A tale of two crises

There is no comparison between the siege of Kanesatà:ke – or between the ongoing daily criminalization and repression of Indigenous people across the Canadian state which includes an obscene ratio of incarceration per population - and the number of Québécois arrested in the 1970 War Measures sweep.

But there is something inescapable they have in common: the same jails, the same police state, the same ability to cancel the entire veneer of civil liberties for all.

Apologies are owing to both, and they should be given (don’t hold your breath) and the demand for apologies can expose the crocodile tears of Trudeau junior, who is equally capable of invoking repression against anyone who threatens the fake happy family of “Canada.”

Just watch him.

Whose interests does “Canada” serve?

Most progressive people who are neither Indigenous nor Québécois, today identify the Canadian nation-state as progressive, or at least better than the one to the south. Especially given the recent struggle against Trumpism.

But this is a very wrong read. “Canada” is a wolf hiding behind a sheep’s thin skin of civil rights won through struggle, and public health-care won through struggle, both of which can be so easily skinned off either violently, or silently eroded by stealth.

The racist history of the RCMP in defending a federal state founded on institutionalized repression is yet another argument to defund the police at every level. The debate that BLM has opened up on the question of whose interests are served by police has struck a chord internationally, and in Canada a part of that answer must be the way policing and the potential deployment of military forces within Canada serves a federal system founded on colonialism.

But Indigenous movements – from Wetsu’wet’en to Kanesatà:ke, from the Mi’kmaq to 1492 Land Back Lane in Caledonia - have shown that even before we can effectively defund and disarm the forces of the Canadian state, it is possible to resist them.

Just watch them.

Solidarity VS capitalist Covid chaos

As the second wave of covid hits, it is becoming more obvious that the 1% and their political lackeys are only concerned with making sure profits keep flowing. John Bell outlines the contours of the struggle to put people before profits.

LEFT JAB

by John Bell

The COVID plan: illness, death and business as usual

At first I thought, “There is no plan!”. Then I realized, “That is the plan.” Premiers like Doug Ford and Jason Kenney have obviously decided that the debate that hung in the balance during the pandemic’s first wave – public health and welfare vs business and profit – has been settled.

And public health has lost. On a day when new COVID cases spiked to a (then) record high of 1,050, on a day when 14 people (at least) across the province died, Premier Doug Ford announced he was easing restrictions on non-essential indoor businesses like restaurants and gymnasiums.

But fear not folks: they are unveiling a new “dashboard”, and a colour coded chart so you can follow along at home. At ton of formless information, not a lick of sense.

One number is always hard to find in the blizzard of digits: the number of deaths. 14 people died in Ontario. But that fact rates barely a mention on our news broadcasts, instead buried (pun intended) in a scroll at the bottom of the screen.

14 people dead and their names appear nowhere but after the fact, on the obituary page. The day before it was 7, the day before that 9. An average of ten people a day, dying gasping for breath in ICU wards, and it isn’t “news”.

What was top of the news today? Interviews with restaurant owners about how their business is suffering now that patio season is over.

Three days ago—when 9 nameless

Ontarians died from COVID—the top of the local news was the closure of The Pickle Barrel, a barely adequate, charmless Toronto restaurant masquerading as a “deli”. The gravitas with which the closure was announced told the tale: this was a Toronto institution to be mourned. Dead friends, neighbours and elders, not so much. Our media, given the choice between smoked meat and dead meat, opted for the former.

Last week the local morning “news” platform (CP24) led each morning with interviews with gymnasium owners. Toronto gym users (where gyms were ordered closed) were fleeing to suburban sweat shops to get their endorphin fix. The answer, not to close all the gyms, but to open them up.

Gym owners argued that if big businesses and factories remain open, why should they close. And they are right; everything should be closed down if only temporarily, to flatten the curve. So government does the opposite, and opens everything (albeit with strings attached). Seems fair. Lemming-like in its suicidal short-sightedness, but fair.

Whatever glossy wrapping paper Ford uses to decorate this shit brick, the fact remains: it stinks. His government, along with a compliant media, have been relentlessly preparing us to sacrifice our health and our very lives to get back to business as usual.

Also on the morning’s news, reports of an outbreak at a Scarborough elementary school—at least 9 staff and 2 children testing positive, and about 60 more kids in

isolation pending results. The Ford government acted decisively. They, and their minions to the Toronto District School Board declared that one wing of the building was bad and must be closed, but the school must stay open. As if corona virus was a naughty kid sent to the corner for a time out.

“It is safe to attend,” said a TDSB rep. “There is no reason to close the school. If we thought it was unsafe, I can tell you, that school would already be closed.”

they have bought into the disastrous idea of “herd immunity”.

So we face a “plan” to deal with COVID that amounts to this:

- 1) Downplay the severity of the disease, by minimizing attention on the deaths and long-term health issues it causes;
- 2) Normalize the pandemic by making it seem inevitable and unstoppable – the “we might as well get used to it” argument;
- 3) Play up concerns about “business” by focusing on our

5) Prioritize the plight and rights of “business” over public health, and keep the “economy” going at all costs;

6) Use “emergency” powers to weaken workers’ ability to organize and resist austerity cuts, while appearing daily making announcements that are nothing more than motherhood statements.

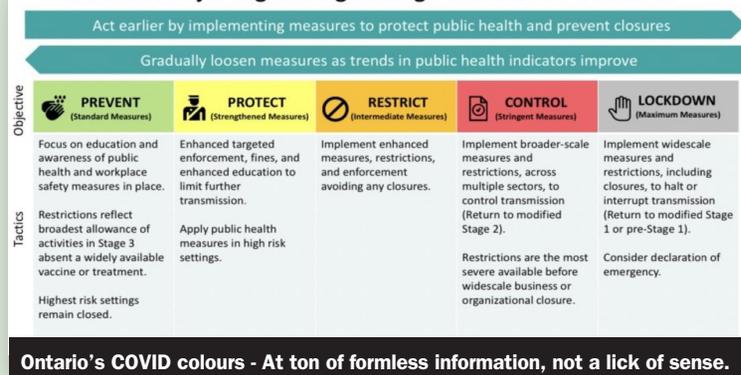
This will certainly appear chaotic. So we get the bizarre spectacle of Doug Ford easing restrictions on business at the exact moment when COVID cases and resulting deaths are on the rise.

Even as Ontario’s handling of the pandemic is being exposed as murderously inadequate, a new poll reveals that 70% of respondents think Ford has shown good leadership on the issue. It infuriates me to say it: to some extent their plan is working. They know that in chaos there is opportunity, so they stoke the chaos and grab for the ring.

Our job is to blow away the smoke, the way the teachers did who refused to work in an unsafe school, or like the health care workers in Alberta who wildcatted to protest government layoffs, cuts and austerity. There are thousands of workers who are saying “we won’t let you throw our bodies into the grinder for your profits”. The mainstream media will only downplay them or ignore them entirely. It is our job to seek their stories out, amplify them, and shout them from the rooftops:

When the choice is public health or business as usual, our lives must come first.

Framework: Adjusting and Tightening Public Health Measures



Ontario's COVID colours - At ton of formless information, not a lick of sense.

Teachers and unionized staff disagreed, refusing to enter an unsafe workplace. The school countered by calling in management and lunchroom volunteers to keep the illusion of business as usual going.

Orders from on high are to keep up the appearance of normalcy at all costs. Although Ford and his ilk make sympathetic noises, hoping for the best and praying to whatever free market deity they subscribe to,

favourite local bistros and pizzerias going out of business, and ignoring the big industrial concerns, like meat processing plants, that act as super-spreaders ;

4) Put the responsibility on individual behaviours rather than economic organization, as when we hear DoFo fuming about people gathering in their homes on the same day he lets restaurants open up for the winter;

Workers fight back

Support Alberta health care wildcats

by: **Carolyn Egan**

I read a quote the other day which stayed with me, "Hope has two daughters, anger and courage". It aptly speaks to the inspiring walkouts of the Alberta health care workers who collectively stood up to the bullying tactics of Jason Kenney and his band of United Conservative reactionaries who run the provincial government.

The anger has been bubbling under the surface for some time, and the courage came when the minister of health announced there would be 11,000 job losses through outsourcing of laundry, food services, house keeping and laboratory jobs. Things change when they can no longer stay the same, and these workers, many of whom are women and people of colour, feel that this is their time to fight. That same anger is being felt by millions across this country, who are suffering massive job losses and attacks on public services. The effects of Covid-19 have made worse a deteriorating health care system that has been feeling the effects of an austerity agenda and privatization for decades.

Workers at smaller health care centres joined larger hospitals in Calgary and Edmonton, 23 at this point. After members walked off the job the president of AUPE was quoted as saying, "Nursing care and support workers decided today that there was no other option but to fight to protect Albertans at risk, especially during the deadliest pandemic in a century... This was a decision taken by the members themselves."

The strikers stand on the shoulders of the hospital laundry workers who wildcated in 1995 protesting contracting out. They stayed off the job for 11 days. Some of them may be taking part in today's actions. What they did 25 years ago gave inspiration to workers in every province, and in the years that followed there were similar walkouts including city wide general strikes across Ontario.

These workers are giving hope to so many others that things can change through collective action and they need the support of fellow workers and community members across the country. Solidarity is critical right now, one day longer, one day stronger!



Ontario teachers walkout

by: **Sid Lacombe**

Teachers at Glamorgan Junior Public School in Scarborough walked out when it was announced that 11 cases of COVID were found at the school. Staff and students cited safety fears as the reason for the walkout.

Jennifer Brown, president of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto supported their members saying in a release, "This outbreak was preventable. The cases of COVID-19 at Glamorgan are the direct result of the Ontario government's inadequate and underfunded return to school plan. Right now, teachers have a school environment that they don't see as safe. Their colleagues have been sent home because they've contracted COVID."

Ford cuts

Ontario schools have not received the kind of funding required to limit class sizes and provide adequate PPE for teachers and other support

staff. Inadequate funding has also led to redundancies which have cropped up in wake of the school reopening.

The situation is only getting worse and school staff are contemplating next moves. According to the Ontario government, a total of 2,865 cases have been found in schools since September. Almost 160 COVID cases were found in one day in Ontario schools on November 10 and 643 schools have had at least one case.

Teachers unions are calling for: smaller class sizes, with the requisite additional staff, so students and educators can adhere to physical distancing requirements of 2-metres; that cohorts are maintained and not collapsed into other classes when staffing issues arise; consistent masking guidelines in schools and N95 masks for teachers in classes where students cannot wear masks for health reasons and proper ventilation in our schools.

Huge abortion protests in Poland

by: **Carolyn Egan**

The mass protests in Poland against attempts to restrict abortion access shocked the right wing Law and Justice party government. In Warsaw alone over 100,000 people took to the streets showing their determination to fight. There were similar actions in cities across the country. The participants are for the most part young, and brought creative approaches to slogans and placards, "Girls Just Want to Have FUNDamental Rights". A lot were in English, attracting international interest and support. Many men are taking part and there is broad participation from different sectors. Farmers blocked roads with tractors carrying banners stating, "Fight the Virus, Not Women".

The Catholic Church has a strong influence in the country, but as we saw in Ireland a number of years ago, a broad based movement can push back against both church and state. The government is trying to whip up opposition to the pro-choice organizing by suggesting that it is anti-Catholic but it is not having any success. The huge numbers in the streets show that support is growing and the popularity of the government is waning. It has lost 10% in opinion polls.

Trade unions have come out in support of the mobilizations including, the OPZZ, (a labour federation), a large teachers and education workers union, as well as oil and gas union, and miners. The last two have predominately male members, which shows the breadth

of the growing movement.

Reproductive justice is a fundamental issue which has been at the heart of struggles for women's liberation in many countries including Canada. In the early eighties a campaign to overturn the federal abortion law galvanized support across Canada and Quebec. After the establishment of an illegal clinic that became a symbol of resistance to an unjust, racist and class biased law, and a long campaign that mobilized hundreds of thousands in the streets, the law was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1988. It made it clear that we have the power to make real change when we organize from the bottom up. It is movements from below as we witnessed in Canada, Ireland and today in Poland that can win reproductive rights for all.

We are seeing in the US that it is the right that is trying to restrict access to abortion in state after state, and overturn Roe vs Wade at the Supreme Court. This most directly the most vulnerable in poor and racialized communities. Huge

mobilizations such as the Women's Marches met the threat and the battle is ongoing.

It is no surprise that the neo-Nazi movement in Poland is vehemently in support of increased restrictions on abortion rights. It has attacked marches, burned LGBTQ banners and has tried to mobilize the population in favour of the government. But because of the large numbers in the streets in support of abortion rights, they have begun to lose support as it becomes clear what they actually stand for.

The fascists have marched for years on November 11th attempting to show their power. This year the event was dramatically smaller, an embarrassment to their leaders. The media called it a "flop" and attributed the fewer numbers to the strength of the pro-choice demonstrations. This is a powerful and growing movement which will hopefully win greater abortion rights, but also influence and build progressive forces across the country.



CLC - WTF?

Anger in the labour movement against CLC partnership with bosses

by: **Ritch Whyman**

The decision by the Canadian Labour Congress leadership to join with the notoriously anti-union Chamber of Commerce and support ex-finance minister Bill Morneau's desire to be the head of the OECD has been met with scorn and condemnation across the labour movement.

It was his firm Morneau/Shepell that over saw the dramatic slashing of Stelco pensioner's benefits, when US Steel was in trusteeship. While slashing benefits Morneau was happily pocketing fees and enriching himself on the backs of retired steelworkers.

Morneau and his firm have spent the better part of their existence lobbying and fighting to change pension laws to enable Bay Street to be able to plunder them.

As Finance Minister Morneau oversaw repeated attacks on worker's rights. He pushed for Bill C-27 which if successful would have

rolled back pension plans and jeopardized retirement security for millions of workers. He further was a central part of Liberal Government that broke the postal workers strike, refused to fix the Phoenix pay scandal that left and continues leave federal employees unpaid.

That any labour organization would endorse Morneau for any-



thing short of the gallows is nothing short of a betrayal.

This action and other by the CLC, such as partnering with the Chamber of Commerce over COVID recommendations, makes it clear that it is time for rank and

file workers to demand their leaders clean house at the CLC.

Already many unions have condemned this. USWA, NUPGE, CUPW, UFCW, numerous labour councils and locals have come out in opposition.

But changing the top of an organisation that has become nearly irrelevant in the fight for worker's rights won't fix the problem.

What is needed is a strategy to build power at the base of the unions, in the workplaces and through mobilizing members to fight the coming COVID austerity measures.

But that will take demands from workers that their leadership step up and move beyond tired postcard, lobbying and email campaigns. The actions of Alberta nurses, Dominion store workers

in Newfoundland, and Cleaners in BC show that where there is a clear lead workers are willing to fight back.

Endorsing Morneau only shows how far the CLC leadership is from the mood on the ground.

US election

Trump lost but the battle is just beginning

Why did so many Americans vote for Donald Trump? Barring any remarkable challenge to the results - which Trump is pushing - Trump has lost his bid to be reelected President. But he came very close to winning. And the anticipated blue wave for the Democrats didn't materialize. The left needs to understand why millions of working class Americans put their faith in Trump - and what must be done to shift this terrain.

The Biden campaign squeaked out a victory after voters in cities like Philadelphia, Detroit and Atlanta gave the Democrats the win.

There is real relief that the racist Trump is on the way out. We cannot dismiss the importance of voting out a man who was overtly encouraging a fascist movement. He will, of course use the next months to sow havoc and try to use his racist base to undermine the election result. But far-right groups in the US and around the world will not have a megaphone in the White House, and this is important.

But the months ahead promise to be phenomenally unstable. With the Senate tied at 48 for each party, and two run-off Senate elections in Georgia in early January, both parties will be in a battle with each other, and likely with their own base. If they stay true to type, the corporate Democrats will push to suppress demands to tackle unemployment, COVID support, climate, police racism, detention centres, to put forward a status quo platform. The Republicans will vacillate between whipping up racism and reaction and trying to pull votes away from the Democrats in tightly fought campaigns. This situation provides opportunities for both the left and right.

The Democratic party used networks created by the mass mobilizations led by Black Lives Matter as a base for their campaigns, which is why many of the cities that held huge BLM protests voted Democrat.



The Democrats will not, however, provide a real alternative to the Republicans on most issues. Biden's history of racism - from writing the Clinton-era crime bill that resulted in mass incarceration, to his support for the war in Iraq - shows he will not ultimately stop the push to the right.

The fact that Biden - a pro-Wall Street candidate his entire career - was chosen by the Democrats showed an utter disdain for the mass movements that erupted since the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in June. Indeed, in a situation where they should have won by a landslide, the fact that the race is this close shows how out of touch they were with the mass of voters.

If there had been a credible pro-working class option, there could have been a very different outcome. In These Times reports that

the largest socialist organization in the US, the 80,000 strong Democratic Socialists of America endorsed 29 candidates and 11 ballot initiatives across the US. 20 of those candidates and 8 of the ballot initiatives won. As well, there are DSA caucuses in 15 statehouses. Many Americans will vote for socialists, if they are given a chance.

We also saw this trend in a number of other ballot initiatives and in exit polls. Florida voted for Trump - but also for a minimum wage increase to \$15. Exit polls showed most Americans were concerned for their jobs, but majorities also wanted universal healthcare and millions (70%) held pro-immigrant views. This shows that the electorate is more progressive than the electoral options on offer.

As in 2016, the Democratic party's campaign focus of getting back to the status quo was not

compelling. Restoring America's democracy is meaningless to working people for whom that "democracy" has always led to a win for corporate America. In the last month of the campaign, corporate money began flowing to Biden as he is seen as a stable set of hands to continue the US imperial project. Trump has become too reckless for corporate America; Biden will keep the profits flowing with less disruption. This is not good news for working people.

The COVID crisis means that people are concerned about their ability to feed and house themselves. Confusion over COVID measures means people are susceptible to Trump's calls to open up the economy. This will not slow under Biden who is unlikely to do anything that would challenge the profits of the 1 percent, such as widespread lockdowns and meaningful subsidies to support working people who lose their jobs. As is the case around the world, the ruling class is more than willing to sacrifice workers to keep profits flowing.

There is a similarity between this US election and the Canadian election of 2015. At that time, people were happy to see Stephen Harper and the overtly racist Conservatives booted from office (remember the "barbaric cultural practices" hotline?). But the Liberals provided no relief. Trudeau began by buying pipelines, attempting to gut pensions and attacking Indigenous land defenders - objectively encouraging the far right. Lesser evilism is a bitter pill.

Voting under bourgeois democracy is the lowest form of politics. Real progress only comes from the mass movements that can reshape people's ideas rapidly and win concrete material gains. The real political fights will happen outside this electoral process. The ongoing mass movements against racism, the union fights for jobs, and the climate strike movement will be key. This is a country that has had 1,100 wildcat strikes since COVID started. That is where the hope lies.

What do US voters want?



Screenshots from Fox news polls on election night show that a majority of US voters are to the left of the Republicans and Democrats on key issues. Huge majorities want a public healthcare plan, to leave Roe V. Wade as it stands now and are in favour of granting immigrants, even "illegal" ones a path to citizenship. Centrist Democrats blame the left for poor results in some races but the numbers tell a different story. Every Democrat who supports Medicare-for-All won their races.

Territorial Acknowledgement

As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.

Never miss an issue.

Yearly subscription **\$30**
Institutions, 1st Class & U.S. **\$50** international: **\$60**

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

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

WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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.

Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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.

Read the full statement at: socialist.ca/ourstand

Join the Socialists

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Fill in the form and send to **International Socialists**, PO Box 339 Station E Toronto ON M6H 4E3 416.972.6391 / reports@socialist.ca



continued from back page

This is the kind of energy that can spark a broad fightback against the Ford government agenda of cuts and privatization and translate the anger that is simmering under the surface into the militant action that is needed.

As well as articulating the demands of the strike, many picket signs also said simply “Black Lives Matter”. The majority of the board, managers, workers and clientele of Tropicana are people from racialized communities who all may have rallied, marched and participated in other forms of action as a part of the movement for Black lives in the last number of months. But the board and

“We pour our hearts and souls into the work we do for Tropicana because we love the community. But we can’t live on such a low wage. Striking is really the last thing we want to do, but after over a year trying to bargain in good faith, we are running out of options.”

the management experience a different material reality from that of the frontline workers and the clientele they serve. According to the 2019 sunshine list, the executive director of the agency made \$100,000 while workers’ wages have been frozen for more than a decade. Black workers’ lives matter, and the fight for a living wage and good working conditions is an important part of the fight for racial justice and equity.

There are other approaches than doing the Ford government’s dirty work, which is the Tropicana management approach. The idea of defunding the overblown budgets of the police department, and reallocating funds to programs and services that help BIPOC people overcome the barriers that they face living in a racist society has gained traction with the rise of the movement. And we must demand that these redistributed funds be used to pay a living wage to the frontline workers delivering these essential services.



Support SEIU Local 2 union members on strike for a first contract including a wage increase and greater respect from management to the workers delivering the services.

NDP MPP Jill Andrew, who used Tropicana services as a youth, has written a letter of solidarity with the strikers; members of CUPE, USW, the carpenter’s union and labour council have visited the picket line to show solidarity.

To get all the details about the strike go to TropicanaStrikes.ca.

Contact Executive Director Raymund Guise at (416) 439-9009 to urge that Tropicana workers be given a pay raise and that they bargain in good faith.

REVIEW

The Trial of the Chicago 7

by: **Kim McAuley**

This is not a documentary. It’s an Aaron Sorkin movie, produced by Spielberg’s Dreamworks. If you’re utterly bored or don’t know anything about what happened in the 60’s, you may find it entertaining. Likely, many reading this will feel patronized, annoyed, and hopefully agitated. That doesn’t mean it’s not worth watching, especially if critiquing liberals or analyzing how and why something could be so much better provides fun for you.

The movie is an at times decent, but simplified and sensationalistic take on the charges drummed up by the FBI, Mayor Daley and the ruling class’ racist police force and justice system in Chicago, 1968 & 9, during the lead up to, during and after the Democratic convention; and what happened to some of the activists trying to organize against the Vietnam war. Spielberg felt the time was right for this story and Aaron Sorkin wanted to work with Stephen Spielberg. So Sorkin read some books and wrote and this is that. The movie turns a sympathetic eye on Tom Hayden, student organizer for the SDS at the time who (God rest his good intentioned, conflicted, democratic socialist soul, he is not a revolutionary socialist but

likely always wished he could be) and during one brief, dangerously galvanizing moment, he departs from his own belief system, ignores caution from a very seasoned and well respected organizer (David Dellinger), incites a riot and provides the catalyst the cops need to unleash

their pent up rage. The movie provides strong caution for any organizer who wants to go off message, ignore his/her comrades unified voice, and act solo – and what can and does happen when splits happen. Violent chaos ensued. A lot of good people got badly hurt.

Much more compelling and not given nearly enough focus is the treatment of two revolutionary socialists - Bobby Seale, Chairman and Fred Hampton, deputy Chairman of the Black Panther Party - and everything Bobby, Fred and the Party stood for. The police assassinated Fred while he was asleep in his home on December 4, 1969. Bobby’s February, 1970 interview from



jail, where he served four years on trumped up charges is a short, incredibly compelling piece outlining a strong revolutionary socialist perspective. In it, he boils down crucial understandings of: what happens in spontaneous riots and situations lacking proper organization; how

the capitalist state – judicial system, elected officials, intelligence agencies; mass media, cops – criminalize peaceful civil disobedience using provocation, racism and twisting truth; how that same system attacks and removes leadership of revolutionary organizations and then goes after the rank and file; how racism is used by the ruling class to divide us; facism; revolutionary struggle; some of what the Black Panthers were actually all about; why they did not advocate violence and had strict rules and training around gun control – no panther can break a gun law unless his life is actually in danger; why cops are called pigs; how chauvinism is interlocked with racism and the ruling class; and so much more. It all stands out.

To quote two of Bobby’s many unifying statements from it “...I think the most obscene thing is the ruling class’ refusal to relate to the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of those who culturally refuse to go along with its norms. We say human beings have a right to live and survive.” And “Our objective is the education of the people. I don’t think we’ll make the same mistake that the Communist party made in the 1950s ... You have to go out and fight the battle for the oppressed people – white, black, red, brown – wherever they may be. The party’s recent formation of the National Committee to Combat Fascism represents a change, a good one, in that it creates an organization in which movement groups can come together and coalesce to fight the oppressor.” These words and ideas can help guide us now. If you are looking for a guide for action listen to Bobby and Fred, not Sorkin’s movie.

Fighting the GM closure in Oshawa: Company Town review

by: **Brian Champ**

Company Town, available to view on CBC Gem, is a fascinating and heartbreaking look at the struggle in Oshawa to fight back against the GM closure of the plant that happened at the end of 2019. The GM plant had operated continuously for over 100 years - Oshawa is a car town, at it’s peak employing over 23,000 workers in the facilities in all parts of the city, eventually concentrated in the massive facility at the south end.

The closure affected 5,000 workers, half in GM’s own facilities, half in the facilities of parts suppliers. But many more beyond these workers have been affected.

The documentary follows a cast of characters from the time of the closure announcement on November 25, 2018 up until the final day of production on December 19th, 2019.

Unifor national president Jerry Dias has a presence throughout the film. He declared “They are not closing our plant without one hell of a fight” to satisfy the anger of the rank and file who walked out after the closure was announced. But when his negotiations only saved 300 jobs he said he was just “making the best out of a bad situation” and that GM had “lied to us and betrayed us”.

Kevin Craggs, a fork lift driver who works for CEVA Logistics had a different take: while agreeing about GM’s lies he said “What’s the surprise is how we were treated by our union. I’m a unionist through and through. But there



was a hell of a lot more that they could have done for us.”

The complexity of the local agreements with GM and the many parts suppliers is made clear, and the bitterness of Unifor members in parts plants is palpable as the future looks bleak for many. Colin James, Local 222 president said “I don’t know what replaces those jobs. I really don’t see it getting better for a

long time.”

While these are bitter pills, there was honey as the camera followed the Green Jobs Oshawa campaign. In the words of Rebecca Keetch, a long-time assembly line worker at the GM Oshawa plant: “We are here today to talk about whether electric vehicle production is possible in Oshawa? Whether government investment in production is possible in Oshawa? Is maintaining the productive capacity of the Oshawa assembly plant possible? And is building a new way of thinking that prioritizes the environment, the community, and citizens of our country over corporate greed possible? The answer to all of these questions is yes. We need to address the climate crisis. We need good jobs to fight inequality and precarity. We have a plant, a skilled workforce and a big idea. All we need is the political will”.

Rebecca is shown speaking in front of thousands of young people articulating a vision for a just transition led by workers at the November 29th Climate Strike at Queen’s Park in Toronto.

I would have liked to have seen a little less focus on the union leadership and more on rank and file workers, but I recommend watching Company Town for a look inside the fight against the GM closure in Oshawa.

Support Tropicana strikers

by: **Brian Champ**

On Monday November 9th workers at Tropicana Community Services in Scarborough went on strike after talks with management failed to bring an agreement. The workers organized with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 2 in July 2019, but an agreement on a first contract has proved elusive. Workers voted overwhelmingly to strike on October 21st. Adrian Yusuf, a job placement service worker, explained his “yes” vote:

“It’s been over a year that we’ve been trying to negotiate a fair deal with management. Some of us have had 15 years of wages freezes and they want us to accept another 3 or 4 years. I can’t hold on for that long.”

At the same time that frontline workers are told they will not get wage increases, the Tropicana board has awarded at least one bonus to a manager. This and a general lack of respect for workers from management has increased the bitterness in the workplace.

Tropicana is geared towards serving the Caribbean, Black, and African communities and the people of Scarborough have long benefited from their services, including job placement, youth programs, and childcare centers. These services are delivered by predominantly racialized workers who have a strong connection to the communities they serve. In an open letter to donors urging them to put pressure on the organization to treat the workers fairly, the strikers put the case:

“Tropicana bills itself as a social justice organization ... But this hasn’t stopped Tropicana from engaging in years of poor treatment and wage freezes, leaving workers behind as Toronto’s cost of living escalates. These poor working conditions have shrunk Tropicana’s workforce by 32 people over the last year

alone.”

The management has drawn out talks over a first contract while forcing existing workers to take on the work of those lost to attrition. And many Tropicana workers, such as those in the daycare centres, are frontline workers during these pandemic times. One of the questions asked by the strikers is “Why is Tropicana management refusing ... to pay a fair wage for essential work? ... to treat workers fairly and with respect?”

Instead, starting on the first day of the strike, Tropicana hired strike-breakers from MeLor Inc., a child care staffing agency along with extra security guards. It’s disgraceful that a publicly funded agency is undermining workers’ right

to a fair collective agreement. Early Childhood Assistant worker Edith Solano explained, “The parents did not want to leave their kids with these strikebreakers. They turned back and brought their kids back home. Some of them could not move their work shift right away but said that they would leave work early to pick up their kids. They don’t support management in hiring strikebreakers that they don’t know and trust.”

Everyone who cares about the community services that improve workers’ lives has a stake in supporting the Tropicana workers in their fight with the boss. But the boss is not just the agency board: it’s also the Ford government, whose Bill 124 restricts wage increases on

average to 1% for public sector employees, which includes workers at non-profits that receive Ontario funding of at least \$1 million. According to their annual reports, Tropicana currently receives \$5.76 million from the Ontario government, 66% of their revenue, mainly to fund their employment services.

But in 2016, this funding was \$9.1 million, then 80% of their revenue - in 2017 it dropped to \$5.4 million, a fall of 41% in one year. This is emblematic of cuts to programs that have happened under both Liberal and Tory governments. More recently, the Ontario government’s Trillium foundation total grant money was cut by \$15 million in 2019, a cut of 9.4% to this lifeline of support for community programs and services. But this general atmosphere of cuts to social services and programs is no excuse for Tropicana management as their wage freeze was already standard operating practice.

Nevertheless, these cuts are just one part of the Ford government’s broad cuts to health-care, education and public services that have already happened, or are slated to happen soon. And on top of that they have suspended labour rights for public service workers and thrown out environmental protections with powers they’ve given themselves due to the Covid emergency.

Like many workers in the public and non-profit sectors, the Tropicana workers care deeply about their clients and the services they deliver, but their frustration level has reached the breaking point. In the words of Edith Solano “We pour our hearts and souls into the work we do for Tropicana because we love the community. But we can’t live on such a low wage. Striking is really the last thing we want to do, but after over a year trying to bargain in good faith, we are running out of options.”

Continued on page 7



Labour solidarity with 1492 Land Back Lane

by: **Carolyn Egan**

On a beautiful Saturday afternoon in Caledonia, Ontario cars began to arrive in a parking lot on Argyle Street South. They came from Brantford, Hamilton, Aurora, Toronto and Kitchener. Members of the United Steelworkers gathered with others from CUPE and the Ontario Federation of Labour to walk past the Ontario Provincial Police cars lined up on the road to a barricade made up of an abandoned school bus and car. It had been set up by Haudenosaunee Land Defenders in a dispute with developers over stolen land.

They have been in a stand-off with the OPP fighting for their treaty rights and have suffered arrest and harassment. Their land is a sacred trust handed down to their nation for generations, and they intend to maintain it for their children, grandchildren and generations to come. Labour activists and Caledonia residents came out to show their solidarity.

When the trade unionists and socialists walked the kilometer to the encampment that had been set up they were warmly greeted. There were elders, children and people of all ages cooking food, playing games and enjoying the November sunshine.



Skyler Williams is a spokesperson for the Land Defenders who have been occupying the disputed area for over one hundred days. He said that if they leave, they will lose it forever

and that they intend to stay until they win. He’s a member of the Iron Workers as is his father and uncles. He said, “It’s trade unionists and Indigenous people who know what to do with

injunctions.” His father who was present just received his fifty year anniversary watch as a union member.

Logan Staats, an award-winning singer born on the reserve, gave a concert for those who had assembled. He sang, among other compositions, songs that spoke movingly of his people’s struggle and their right to their land. Kahsenniyo Tahnee Williams delivered a powerful spoken word performance, and the National Director of the United Steelworkers, who was urged to attend by rank and file members, was asked to speak. He pledged the support of the union and made a donation to the legal defense fund on behalf of the members.

This action and others across the country from coast to coast from the Wet’suwet’en to the Mi’kmaq are part of a growing movement of Indigenous peoples who are fighting for their land and water against big capital. As Merv King, a Steelworker and Algonquin activist said in the car driving back to Toronto, “This is an historic moment. We have to continue to build the solidarity among trade unionists and First Nations. If we do, we have the power to win.”

• Support for legal fund can be made here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/legal-fund-1492-land-back-lane>