



The labour movement and the fight against racism and fascism

page 3

Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 631 | February 2021

socialist.ca

The system is failing us

FIGHT FOR A PEOPLE'S VACCINE

SEE CENTRE PAGES



LEFT JAB

by John Bell

Jason Kenney slides into oily frenzy

If the election of Joe Biden does nothing else, it has revealed Alberta Premier Jason Kenney to be unhinged.

Among Biden's very first acts as president was to sign an executive order canceling permits for the Keystone XL pipeline that would have carried Alberta's diluted bitumen from the tar sands to Texas refineries.

The move was no surprise. Biden had made it a campaign promise, and the Obama administration had set the precedent, also canceling the project. Only Donald Trump had breathed new life into it and erased environmental regulation that hindered it.

When his United Conservative Party was elected in Alberta, Jason Kenney bet the farm that Trump would be re-elected in 2020 and the KXL would be completed. Service cuts to health and education freed up \$1.5 billion that Kenney recklessly invested in the pipeline. Even when Alberta crude prices fell to nearly nothing Kenney doubled down on oil and gas.

So Biden's decision exposed both Kenney's financial mistake and short-sighted leadership. He reacted with tiresome predictability, calling for more assistance from the federal Liberals who have been all too willing to underwrite an unprofitable oil and gas business. But this time Kenney was demanding more than cash.

Kenney called on Justin Trudeau to declare war on the US—a trade war, but war nonetheless.

"The government of Canada must impose meaningful trade and economic sanctions in response, to



defend our country's vital economic interests."

As if to underscore the irrationality of his position, Kenney's very next statement was the need to sit down with the US for some "respectful dialogue".

Kenney has been furiously doing the rounds of news shows—including Fox News—for media outlets that almost religiously repeat the gospel

of gas and oil. Even the CBC's "Power and Politics" panel featured a former Harper cabinet minister, a conservative pollster, and the pipeline loving Mayor of Calgary, all speaking about what an injustice had been done to Canada's oil and gas economy. Not an environmentalist in sight. CBC news reader Adrienne Arsenault described the canceling of KXL as a "punch in the face" to Canadians, literally ignoring the millions of Canadians who have been protesting the pipeline for years.

Many of us are feeling remarkably unpunched.

What is a blow to us is Kenney's plan to kickstart open pit coal mining. Kenney removed environmental regulations, leaving the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains open to destructive mining operations. Happily, Albertan's opposed the projects so loudly that Kenney was forced to backtrack, putting his plan on "pause".

Finally it should be noted that Kenney and his ilk are relying on the big lie, that tar sands bitumen is somehow environmentally friendly. Part of his sales pitch for the Keystone pipeline is that the energy needed to operate it would come, not from oil and gas, but from sustainable, renewable sources. This self-own has to be the last gasp of the dying petro-economy.

DoFo cancels his critics

The next time you hear Doug Ford or his gang moaning about "cancel culture", keep this in mind:

Dr. Brooks Fallis was the respected head of the ICU at Brampton's William Ostler Hospital. By all accounts he worked tirelessly to deal with COVID-19 that has hit Brampton particularly hard. From his position he made loud criticism of the pandemic policies of Doug Ford's government, as was his right.

In November he angrily reacted to Ford's plan to ease restrictions and reopen business. Then he told the CBC: "there is no question more people will die because of these decisions." That turned out to be an understatement.

He was called before the hospital's CEO and told to stop his public criticism, for fear that it would threaten future financial support from the province. He carried on, and was fired. At his exit interview, January 22, the VP of Medical Affairs repeated the assertion: "some of your remarks have been misconstrued as being harmful to the government so our funding can be put at risk."

He was also told that the CEO had received an angry, personal call from Doug Ford demanding Fallis be removed from the public eye.

When the Globe and Mail followed up on Fallis's story, both

the hospital and Health Ministry denied any political interference. They cited vague medical reasons for his dismissal. His colleagues disagree. 23 Ostler ICU doctors published an open letter supporting him: "Over the past year, Dr. Fallis has been an exemplary leader, not only for the ICU but for Osler as a whole."

Fallis refused to be silent in his defense of public health, and lost his



job due to political interference. The people of Brampton lost a dedicated doctor when they need him most.

And if that wasn't enough silencing for Ford he and his thugs in Ford nation weren't done.

Dr. David Fisman is an epidemiologist and researcher at University of Toronto. He has made no secret of his objections for

returning Ontario's kids to in-person schooling. He was on record as being an expert advisor hired by EFTO, the elementary teachers' union. So it was a bit of a surprise when Doug Ford's government chose his to sit on their COVID-19 scientific round table.

Perhaps they thought they might co-opt him and get him to tone down his criticism.

It didn't happen. Fisman continued to speak his mind.

So Ford used his unofficial mouthpiece, the Toronto Sun, to run a slanderous article insinuating that Fisman had hidden his connection to the union, to discredit his opposition to re-opening schools.

The rat-bags at the "Ontario Proud" website repeated the slanderous charge of conflict of interest and called for U of T to fire Fisman. Far-right scandal sheet, The Post Millennial went even further, alleging

the EFTO connection amounted to a "bribe".

We hope Dr. Fisman sues them for libel.

Meanwhile support from the scientific community rolls in and Fisman isn't holding back. He informed his twitter followers: "This is not about me. I'm one voice of many and I'm not going anywhere."

Teacher solidarity fighting for a safe school reopening

by: Jen Reid

With the return to classroom teaching in the fall of 2020, my school and classroom were not the worst in terms of health and safety compared to many other teachers in the province. But like many others my workload suddenly increased: I had to shift all planning, programing, and curriculum with very little notice.

And though the kids are so happy to be back in class, and we are so happy to be back with them, we are with them 100 per cent of the time, with no assemblies, filed trips, or any of the pre-COVID breaks in our teaching time to prepare. Luckily, we have had no cuts to Educational Assistants, but still our workload has increased as a result.

The biggest thing the pandemic has highlighted is what we already knew before it hit: classes need to be smaller. Now the pandemic has shown that classrooms are too small for distancing, but the number of students was already too big for teaching.

Pandemic online/hybrid teaching is not the answer either: the emergency measures shouldn't become a permanent feature of education after the pandemic.

An Ontario-wide forum was held in early December on the problems with the hybrid classroom/online model by Ontario Educational Workers United (OEWU). This is a grassroots coalition of individual education workers in the whole field of education and education activists across Ontario (though mainly centred in Toronto and Peel). They also submitted a petition to the Ministry of Education for more funding and produced a Toolkit for a Safe September.

Organizing and unity

OEWU was formed in August 2019 and built support for the teachers' strike that preceded the pandemic. It has some union support and some support from parents, through the Parents' Action Network.

The provincial section of ETFO also held a Town Hall and a survey about pandemic workplace conditions. These are great steps, but local organizing by teachers, students and parents is key.

In addition to my official role as Chair of the Halton ETFO local's Political Action and

Political Relation Committee, in the summer of 2020 I also decided to take action as a concerned teacher in my region: I was part of starting an ad-hoc "Concerned Teachers Group." We held a local meeting of 25 people in August and though we didn't get what we wanted right away for a safe return to the classroom we formed an ongoing group: "Halton Education Workers Strong" (HEWS), which has well over a 1,000 members on Facebook.

HEWS is connected to OEWU Ontario-wide, and both are connected to ETFO. It's a very dynamic energy locally. For example, when they amalgamated all these self-contained classes and somebody posted it on the Facebook HEWS group (a closed group), I wrote immediately: "everybody start writing emails to the trustees." The trustees can be allies, and they can get in touch immediately with senior admin.

2021 Ontario lockdown

Just before the winter break, 13 schools in the Toronto/GTA area shut down due to outbreaks. Now, all are suddenly shifting back to virtual teaching in the New Year, at least until January 25.

It remains to be seen what this will mean for teacher workload and teacher support, but also for support for parents and families, for kids with special needs, and the impact on mental health and quality of education – and what it will mean for a truly safe return for all next time around.

But again, the key will be organizing unity amongst teachers, parents, students, and the community.

On Saturday January 2, OEWU held a protest to demand more pandemic support for families: education workers converged on Queen's Park in a honking car caravan around the legislature calling on the province to provide financial help to parents, students and workers faced with the challenges of the school closures.

This is the kind of solidarity and pressure that needs to continue.

Jen Reid is a Grade 3 teacher in the Halton District School Board and a member of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO). She is on the Executive of the Halton ETFO Local and the Chair of the local Political Action and Public Relations Committee (PAPR).



Ontario Education Workers United led caravan at Queens Park, January 1

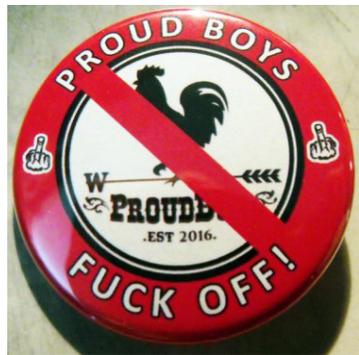
NDP heading down a precarious path

by: Sid Ryan

The recent announcement by NDP leader Jagmeet Singh calling for the Proud Boys to be “banned” and branded a “terrorist organisation” is a dangerous double-edged sword that down the road could easily be brandished against the left by its political enemies. There is no doubt or argument about the fact the Proud Boys are a repugnant bunch of fascist and racist creeps who ought to be challenged whenever they crawl out from underneath their rocks. However, the way to fight their abhorrent actions is not by encouraging government to utilise tools that can easily be used to shut down and label legitimate forms of protest or civil disobedience as “acts of terrorism”. It is not a stretch to see the Doug Ford government or a future Erin O’Toole government label legitimate ‘Days of Action’ type protests or wildcat strikes in the public sector as “acts of terrorism” in particular if they cause a degree of public disruption. Likewise, the Labour Movement and their allies have traditionally utilised peaceful occupations of government offices and buildings as a legitimate form of political protest. During the Mike Harris era we saw the government allege most forms of public protest were acts of criminality and indeed they had the police shoot an unarmed Dudley George, when the Stoney Point Ojibway band occupied the Ipperwash Provincial Park over land claims. They also reserved particular scorn for the political actions of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) who very effectively took their membership into the streets to engage the authorities including the police to highlight the plight of Toronto’s homeless. These traditional and legitimate forms of civil disobedience and public protest could very well be placed in legal jeopardy by future governments if we start down the road of branding organisations we vehemently disagree with as “terrorists” or encouraging governments to “ban” them altogether.

We need to publicly and openly

engage the racists, the fascist, the neo-Nazis, the bigots, the white supremacists and others and not drive them underground where they will continue to flourish and grow their vile movements. There is no government law or edict that will defeat the evil ideologies and beliefs of the Proud Boys and their ilk. It



will take the hard work of educating, mobilising and politicising the 3.4 million union members in our workplaces and communities. Of course, that means we will need a functioning Labour Movement with enough of a vision to see we are heading down the same road as the United States and therefore we need to dedicate organisational and financial resources to combat the threats these creeps present in our workplaces and communities. It will take a serious effort to pull together a Common Front of the community organisations who are already on the front lines fighting for social justice on a daily basis. I’m talking about Black Lives Matter, Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Migrant Worker organisations, Idle No More and other indigenous organisations, Workers Action Centre, Women’s organisations, OCAP and numerous others whose skills and dedicated volunteers we need to join up with the Labour Movement in the struggle for social justice and equality.

Unfortunately, the Labour Movement is not in a position to be able to play that role right now due to internal petty squabbles that has hobbled the movement’s ability to function as an effective central organiser for a Common

Front. These internecine wars see union leaders pull their resources out of the central labour bodies such as the CLC and Federations of Labour and thereby, destroy their financial resources and ability to adequately reach out and mobilise their membership base or community allies. One of the ways this lack of resources manifests itself is the inability of the labour movement to effectively communicate with its 3.4 million members on social media platforms. The tiny right-wing political organisation Ontario Proud has 442,000 followers on its Facebook page compared to the CLC’s 26,000. To compound the problem there is no discernible political ideology driving the Canadian Labour Congress with its membership now splintered between the Liberals, NDP, BLOC, Quebec Solidaire and in some cases the Tories. The Socialist policies of the CCF have been expunged from the NDP and in large measure from the CLC itself. The dominant ideology now appears to be transactional where Liberal supporting unions ask government to shovel taxpayer dollars into the coffers of the wealthiest corporations in the world and in return they promote the Liberals to their membership at election time. Ditto for the union(s) who support the Tories.

It is into this vacuum of leadership and lack of direction at the CLC that the NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh announced his terrible and populist idea of banning the Proud Boys and branding them as a terrorist organisation. If we had a properly functioning Labour Congress, they could have advised the NDP leader of the Laws of Unintended Consequences and how we should not be encouraging our political enemies to pass laws that will ultimately come back to haunt the organisations who defend and advocate on behalf of the working class. If we are to defeat the racists and fascists in our midst then the Labour Movement had better get its act together before we have the emergence of a Canadian MAGA fuelled by disgruntled and disillusioned union members.

Tories whitewash their white supremacy streak

When Tory MP Derek Sloan ran for leadership of his party, he coined the slogan “Conservative. Without Apology.” His platform included support for NRA-style gun laws, opposing LGBTQ rights, climate change denial and rescinding the carbon tax, opposition to “political correctness”, and withdrawing from the World Health Organization.

He had set out to be a figurehead for social conservatives in his party, regularly making embarrassing headlines and challenging Erin O’Toole’s leadership. O’Toole has been walking a tightrope, trying to keep his base engaged and keep the racist, homophobic and pro-Trump rhetoric on the down low.

So when Sloan was caught accepting a donation from well-known neo-Nazi Paul Fromm, he gave O’Toole a pretext to kick a dangerous rival out of the party.

He lived up to his slogan, he refused to apologize. He tried justifications: the fact that Fromm used his full legal name Frederick P. Fromm instead of his more notorious “Paul”; and the fact that Fromm had officially joined the party and voted (for Sloan, natch) in their 2020 leadership convention. And when an undisclosed majority of Tory MPs voted to eject him, Sloan got downright threatening: “It shows an absolute cowardice, an absolute failure to address the real issues that animate much of our base. This was the worst mistake they ever made and they will regret this. I’m positive of it.”

He called on his supporters to make his expulsion an issue when the CPC meets in March for its policy convention.

The Sloan saga played out just when O’Toole was desperately trying to establish himself as a new Stephen

Harper: always able to keep the white nationalist Reform Party gang on a short leash with a wink, a nod and a dog whistle.

There is lots of talk about the CPC being a “broad tent”, but how do you make a home for xenophobes and bigots without them scaring everybody else away? This why conservatives love/hate Donald Trump. Polling has found that even after Trump’s election defeat, even after the January 6 white riot at the Capitol, almost half of CPC member would have voted for Trump.

The base of the CPC remains old, white, straight and grumpy. After a decade under Harper of biting their tongues while being tantalizingly close to power, the bigotry “without apology” is coming out of the closet, led by creeps like Sloan. No wonder Nazis like Paul Fromm can find a home in the Conservative Party.



Protest at the Steve Bannon lecture in Toronto

Stopping the growth of the far right: Labour must be there

by: Carolyn Egan

As Fred Hampton, the Black Panther leader who was murdered by the US government in 1969 said, “Nothing is more important than stopping fascism, because fascism is going to stop us all.”

If there was any doubt about the growth of the far right in North America, the festival of reaction that took place in Washington DC on January 6th made it clear that many have been drawn to these ideas. The racist, anti-Semitic march in Charlottesville, Virginia a few years earlier, which left one anti-racist activist dead, was a glimpse of what was brewing. This is not just a US phenomenon. We have seen the rise of neo-Nazis and the far right in France, Greece, the United Kingdom, Germany and so many other nations.

Canada is not immune. The Proud Boys, one of the groups which played a significant role in both Virginia and the attack on the Capitol Building, was founded in this country. Far right groups have openly marched in many provinces spewing their hate speech and attacking those who challenge them. On January 29, 2017 we saw the horrific attack by a white nationalist on a Quebec City mosque, leaving six dead and many wounded throughout the building.

Beating Golden Dawn

It is critical that progressive people actively organize against them wherever and whenever they appear. We have seen how the Golden Dawn, a neo-Nazi organization in Greece, was defeated by trade unionists, immigrant and refugee groups, socialists and others coming together and demonstrating against them. These mobilizations made it clear that the majority of people did not support their hate and bigotry and their influence waned. This broad based organizing is the way to counter the growth and influence of the far right, demanding that all people have the right to live with the dignity

and respect they deserve and pushing governments to provide the resources and services to allow this to happen.

After the attack on the Quebec City mosque in 2017, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council along with anti racist organizations such as the Urban Alliance on Race Relations organized a mass meeting on March 21st, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. They joined with many others around the globe using this day to raise consciousness about the growing racism and Islamophobia, and to put out a call to action.

Labour rapid response

Soon after delegates to the labour council established a rapid response network. It was intended to support local mosques which were being harassed by anti-Muslim bigots, and to counter actions by groups such as the Proud Boys, PEGIDA, Soldiers of Odin and others who were regularly demonstrating at public venues such as City Hall square.

Unions such as the United Steelworkers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Workers United and others mobilized members to take on these expressions of racism and hate. They joined with anti-racist organizations, faith groups, students, LGBTQ groups and outnumbered the bigots. As time went on, their forces became demoralized because every time they appeared, progressive forces were there to counter them. Eventually they stopped rallying.

But it is clear that they are not gone, and today we must be very vigilant, keep our organizations strong and continue to counter the expressions of hate. Whether it be nooses at building sites, harassment of racialized people, police violence, attacks on mosques, or marches in the streets we have to be there to stop this bigotry and hate. Trade unions must be an active part of the resistance.

Health before wealth

It is increasingly clear that capitalism and the drive for profit above all else is killing working people and the planet. The COVID crisis has laid bare the brutality of the system and has further entrenched inequality. The campaign for a people's vaccine will be crucial in the fight to bring about an end to the pandemic.

Capitalism fuels pandemic chaos

The COVID-19 crisis is much worse than it needs to be. The capitalist system, and our government leaders who run the show, have shown themselves completely incapable of dealing with this pandemic. We are moving from one ineffective half-measure to another. Rates of infection may fluctuate, but the underlying problems with the system mean that millions more will die before we are able to get the disease under control.

As author Andrew Nikiforuk, who specializes in epidemics and the natural world states in an article in *The Tyee*, "The current approach begins with incomplete lockdowns with no defined goals, travel restrictions that let the rich get away with murder and endless public health chatter about bending curves followed by careless and incoherent openings. Exponential viral growth then roars back, jams the hospitals with the sick and surprises our daft politicians, igniting the whole abusive cycle all over again."

Why is that the case? With all the advanced technology and production facilities that capitalism has on offer, it would seem we are better suited to ending a pandemic than at any time in history. As Marx noted in the Communist Manifesto, "The bourgeoisie has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together." Yet despite these advances, the system is failing miserably.

The capitalists and their governments are more concerned about

profits than people. The best way for us to really control the virus is to go into a comprehensive lockdown to reduce cases and to follow up with proper tracing and isolating of the virus. But if the system goes down profits will ease to be produced. And the politicians and bosses won't let that happen.

And for a lockdown to be effective, there needs to be support for workers that are off the job. Workers need paid sick days, effective income supports for those furloughed and other measures like an eviction and mortgage moratorium. This cuts directly at the heart of the profit system and is being vigorously resisted by the rich - many of whom are making billions during the pandemic.

In Canada we are reeling from one crisis to the next. New hot spots are emerging faster than the system can react. From the warehousing of people in for-profit long term care homes, to workplaces where non-essential workers are forced to labour in close proximity to one another, to schools where students are crowded into classrooms with inadequate ventilation, we see governments desperate to return to normal but providing no resources to make that possible.

The poor and the racialized are the ones who are suffering the most.

Many are low-income essential workers. In the city of Toronto, people of colour make up 79 percent of all COVID cases.

And the inequalities don't end at the border. Poorer countries with

few resources are being shut out of the vaccine race. A recent study by Oxfam found that, by September of this year, rich countries (representing 13 percent of the population) had already bought up 51 percent of the expected available doses of the vaccines.

Human Right Watch has pub-



Healthcare workers in London call for people not profit

lished a letter to the world bank saying that, "Key barriers that need to be addressed to ensure lower-income governments are able to procure vaccines in a timely manner and at affordable rates, are pricing, vaccine scarcity, and complex intellectual property barriers." At present the responses have been wholly inadequate. There is still a cost for vaccines in poorer countries that may be too much to pay.

No place is harder hit than Africa

when it comes to drug costs. Over the past few decades, pharmaceutical giants have pushed for more security for their patents on drugs. They have used international trade agreements to make sure that no country can produce generic versions of drugs on their own. As a result, thousands have died when

resource extraction profits and debt repayments than they send to the continent each year. In a report from 2017, they estimated that more than \$40 billion was being extracted in profit over and above aid payments and investments.

And the results have been devastating. According to Oxfam, 64 countries in the global south paid more in debt repayments than on health care in 2019. There will be little they can do to avoid further debts as the COVID crisis hits. Despite some attempts to provide a vaccine more cheaply, such as through the COVAX Facility, designed to provide cheaper drugs, many countries in Africa still have to pay for the vaccine. Many will have to take out loans that they cannot afford to pay the pharmaceutical corporations.

As we have seen throughout the COVID crisis, we are not all in this together. Billionaires are making more money than ever - the top 44 richest people in Canada have pocketed \$53 billion since the crisis started. Those who will pay the price are the poor and racialized, not just in the advanced capitalist countries but also in those countries under the thumb of imperialism.

Join the call for vaccines to be produced for people's needs, not for profit. Demand that vaccine patents are removed, so any country can produce their own vaccines. Push Canada and its allies to write-off debt in the global south, so that that money can go to the healthcare they need. Fight to end capitalism.

The fight for a people's vaccine

The following is a transcript of a talk by Baba Aye - Health and Social Sector Officer of Public Sector International based in Lagos, Nigeria and Co-President of the Geneva Global Health Hub. He spoke at an International Socialists Canada meeting, "COVID 19: Race, Class, Nationality and A People's Vaccine". Watch the whole panel discussion at: <http://socialist.ca/node/4258>

The topic of a people's vaccine is of utmost concern to us all. The pandemic, has put into sharp relief the economic inequality that we have endured for decades of neoliberalism and centuries of capitalism. And the brings it into sharp relief because it has exacerbated the differences and inequalities between classes and between richer and poorer countries. We have had over a year to show a relative level of commitment to do something to end the crisis.

The junction where we are now is about stopping this inequality and for producing a vaccine. There are many vaccines being produced but in rolling these out we still have the problem of the maximization of profit coming before concerns for people.

In reporting to the executive board, the director general of the WHO said that there were 40 million doses being released but 95 percent of those doses went to 19 countries. And in the poorest of countries there are 25 vaccines - not 25,000 or 25 million - but only 25 that have been administered as of mid January while 39 million vaccines have been distributed in rich countries.

If this is not remedied, only one in 10 people in poorer countries will be vaccinated by 2024.

This is not only against the supposed fundamental human right to health, but it is also short-sighted in that it fails to see that if you do not have universal access to the vaccines, no one will be safe. We have seen that the disease has already created new variants that are spreading. And without

more vaccines it is creating space for new variants to emerge.

The longer you have periods where millions are not being given access to the vaccines, the worse it will get.

Despite pronouncements from global leaders and governments

committing to equitable distribution of COVID vaccines, medicines, and technologies, people still come a distant second to profit.

The corporations that have driven this process have been fully backed by governments of the

richer countries.

The World Health Assembly in May of last year set up the access to COVID technologies accelerator which drew together vaccines as part of the COVAX process. At the same time the CEO of Pfizer said that it would be nonsense to imagine that Pfizer would be part of that because they had put money into developing vaccines and need to be compensated. What he didn't say is that a huge chunk of the money used for the development and research of vaccines are taxpayers' money and the money of working-class people.

Pfizer and Biotech are expecting to make tens of billions in profits and we saw their stocks rise when the vaccines were approved

The struggle for a people's vaccine is about putting people before profit. It is about putting health before wealth. It is a campaign that trade unions, civil society organizations and socialist organizations are taking up - and must take up - with all our strength.

We need to fight for vaccines that are free and available to all. Key to this would be waiving the so-called intellectual property rights of corporations to the vaccines. They did not pay for the development of the vaccines and have no moral right to withhold the formulas and technologies needed for vaccine production.

This is not just about vaccines. The same thing is happening with other products used to fight COVID. In Italy when health care workers began to find new ways to produce masks and valves using 3D printers, 3M threatened to invoke trade rules to shut down production.

We demand the waiving of patents for vaccines, but also for diagnostic tools and medications. We also demand universal public health that is free and available to all.

The pandemic, the climate crisis, the economic crisis, and the question of social inequality are all interlinked. They boil down to the fact that the current system - the capitalist system - not only puts people below profit but it is also

unsustainable.

As the director general of the WHO said at the beginning of the pandemic, "We are entering an age of pandemics" and so the victories that we win now will be important in the future as well.

We now stand at a point in the struggle for socialism where capitalism is in itself a catastrophe.

In entering an age of pandemics, it is not simply the case that we are choosing a future of "socialism or barbarism" as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out. We are in a situation where millions and indeed billions are suffering while the corporations profit. We are living through barbarism right now. We now stand at a point in the struggle for socialism where capitalism is in itself a catastrophe.

So on the question of patent waivers we need to call out countries that are standing against this. There are 10 countries along with the EU that are against this including Australia, France the United States and Canada. People in Canada and socialists need to mobilize against this anti-people and anti-working people position of your own governments. Tell them they don't represent you.

Working class people across the world have a common cause of putting people before profit and this we can do if we stand in unity demanding a people's vaccine. But even if we do this some poorer countries still may not be able to produce the vaccine. More supports will be needed.

International solidarity with trade unions demanding a people's vaccine contributes to redefining the struggle as a global struggle for people before profit.



Trudeau's shameful opposition to health justice

Canada was one of only 10 countries who voted against sharing patents for coronavirus vaccines with poorer countries.

The COVID-19 Technology Access Pool, or C-TAP, was designed to share technologies and vaccine patents. Countries around the world voted to join the initiative and support broader access to much needed health supports.

But the Liberals are onside with the pharmaceutical giants who are

making billions while limiting the number of people who will have access to the drugs.

This is in keeping with their support for big business in all the fields of international trade.

The argument from the drug companies is that they have spent too much time and money on the vaccines and therefore they should be able to reap the rewards.

But this is false. Stephen Lewis, the former UN



Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa told CTV news, "The great mass of funding that has gone into the discovery and manufacture and delivery of these vaccines has come from public funds, and we shouldn't be giving patents to individual drug companies for the circulation of the vaccines."

In January, India and South Africa joined the chorus of countries calling on the WTO waive COVID patents and support generic manufacturing.

The campaign for a people's vaccine is gaining steam and we in Canada need to offer our support.

Unions, particularly in the health sector are being asked to join the call for a waiver on the Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) agreement at the WTO meetings in March.

To learn more or to join the campaign please see Public Services International: <https://publicservices.international/>

Bill C-15: UNDRIP as cover for ongoing colonialism

by: **Brian Champ**

Last February an unprecedented movement of Indigenous land defenders, along with Indigenous and settler allies, blocked rails, ports and roadways from coast to coast to protest the RCMP invasion of unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. Two weeks into the #ShutDownCanada movement that erupted in solidarity, \$425 million in goods were being stranded each day, described by the business lobby in frenzied terms as a "catastrophe" for the economy. Trudeau, who came to power in 2015 vowing to make Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples his number 1 priority, lectured that "patience was running out" and that the blockades "must come down", making clear the determination to continue colonial practices that had tested Indigenous peoples' "patience" for centuries.

Upside down Canadian flags with "Reconciliation is Dead" scrawled upon them at blockades and solidarity events denounced the Liberal hypocrisy. Symbolic of this was the image of RCMP officers chainsawing through a gate into Unist'ot'en camp marked "Reconciliation" that was widely shared. Only the Covid-19 pandemic saved the Liberal government from a militant movement that was growing in strength and mobilizing increasing numbers of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, across Canada.

Almost a year later Trudeau tried to revive the Liberal reconciliation project. As reported by Russ Diabo, an Indigenous leader from the Mohawk nation at Kahnawake: "On Dec. 3, the Trudeau government, in its trademark style of symbolism over substance on Indigenous policy, and after only six weeks of selective behind the scenes 'engagement' with National Indigenous organizations, the provinces and industry, introduced Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Act, into Parliament. Left out of this process, as they always are, were Indigenous rights holders—the actual Indigenous Peoples from across the country. They were not consulted or even shown a draft before the Bill was tabled and now the Trudeau government is planning to rush Bill C-15 through the House of Commons in breakneck speed when it resumes in January 2021."

The Liberals hoped that the conditions of the pandemic will allow them to slip this legislation through quickly and uncritically when Parliament resumes on January 25th. But "a group of experts from several Indigenous Activists Networks, including lawyers with constitutional and international experience" analyzed the bill and have concluded that "once you look past the flowery words of the preamble, Bill C-15 is not only full of empty promises, it actually delivers the opposite of what the government and its team of Indigenous salespersons are promising."

This is because this legislation uses the term Indigenous peoples as defined under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (1982);

similarly the bill "is construed as upholding and affirming" the Rights of Indigenous peoples as defined under the same section 35 "and not as abrogating or derogating from them."

Section 35 of the repatriated Canadian constitution is an important product of past struggles for Indigenous self-determination: nevertheless it "is heavily based on the colonial Doctrine of Discovery, which strips Indigenous people of their land ownership and

government was forced to bury the extinguishment/assimilation policies in the short term, but these goals have never been abandoned by Canada's rulers, rather they are now couched in terms that are less politically explosive: Instead of "extinguishment" of Indigenous peoples' land rights, now what is sought is "certainty" for investors, which amounts to the same thing.

The Indigenous movements that emerged out of this opposition to the White Paper included

sense to wide layers of settler society who are more and more aware of the disastrous history of colonialism in Canada and are looking for solutions that put people and the planet before corporate profits. Therefore it matters that we oppose Bill C-15 and any other attempt by Canada to bury UNDRIP under crown land, where Indigenous rights are superseded by resource industry profits. For consent to be meaningful, Indigenous peoples must have the right to refuse these developments on their lands.

We have to remember that section 35 of the repatriated constitution was only made possible by the grassroots mobilizations led by a minority of radical Indigenous activists driven to preserve Indigenous conceptions of "land as a system of relationships and obligations" in opposition to ongoing colonialism, that demanded their rights be protected. Similarly, UNDRIP was only made possible by mobilizations coordinated by Indigenous peoples from all over the world.



land rights", subsuming them under crown land.

BC Bill 41, very similar legislation, was passed just months before the RCMP invasion of Wet'suwet'en territory, but the BC government claimed that it could not be used to stop the CGL pipeline. It leaked out later that in reality the BC government had called in the RCMP under the guise of a provincial emergency. These laws are intended to paper over ongoing colonialism, not usher in a new era of peaceful coexistence.

The fact that the Trudeau government feels compelled to pursue such legislation is a testament to the determination of Indigenous peoples' struggles for their land over centuries against French and British imperialism and, since 1867, against the intensified colonialism of the settler colonial state of Canada. These nation building efforts on stolen land forced Indigenous peoples' onto marginal reserve lands, assimilated Indigenous children through residential schools and the sixties scoop, accompanied by justifications based on anti-Indigenous racism that is ruled the settler colonial state of Canada. At every step there was resistance.

Like father like son: Pierre Trudeau's White Paper

In 1969, a previous Trudeau government release the White Paper which called for the "extinguishment" of Indigenous peoples' land rights and for their assimilation into Canadian society within 5 years. A grassroots rebellion in Indigenous communities immediately set out to oppose these genocidal measures and re-assert Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Because of this resistance, In the early 1970s, the federal

waves of occupations of Indian Affairs offices by Indigenous Youth against the policies coming down from the federal government. Indigenous activists also developed connections with Indigenous peoples around the world to counter the power of the settler-colonial nations. George Manuel of the Secwépemc people in BC was a leading force in pulling together the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) that brought the struggle for Indigenous rights to the international stage. The wording of UNDRIP was greatly influenced by the submissions to the UN in 1977 by the WCIP. Indigenous activists were involved in every step of the way in developing UNDRIP, including forcing a Canadian delegation to back down when they proposed weakening the language of the declaration.

There are limitations to the usefulness of the declaration, given the contradictory nature of the UN. Far from being an organization that is able to bring harmony to the world, it's security council concentrates the world's most powerful nations to deliberate and plan actions for maintaining their own dominance. Because each security council member has veto power, any decisions that counter any of the interests of these powerful nations will lack force. The General Assembly is certainly a place where broader debates occur, and where UNDRIP was passed. But General Assembly declarations lack an enforcement mechanism, and the fact that the nations that oppress Indigenous peoples have prominent seats there creates barriers for meaningful implementation.

Despite this, UNDRIP is an ideological tool for Indigenous land defenders and their allies to wield against ongoing colonialism. The demand for "free, prior and informed consent" makes

Building Solidarity

Under pandemic conditions, the support that was mobilized for 1492 Landback Lane in Caledonia, for the Mi'kmaq fishers under attack in the Bay of Fundy and for the Algonquin nation denouncing the destructiveness of the non-Indigenous Moose Hunt on their lands proved that this movement hasn't gone away.

There are many fronts in the struggle for Indigenous rights, including the struggles for justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit People; the fight against the anti-Indigenous racism of the courts, the police and the prisons; the fight against deadly racism in healthcare and other social services. An important impetus for the struggles today was the rise of the Idle No More movement in 2012 that has emboldened new generations of Indigenous activists to engage in a militant struggle against ongoing colonial development.

Crucially, fighting for Indigenous rights means building support in communities and workplaces for the continuing struggles of Wet'suwet'en land defenders against the CGL pipeline, those of Secwépemc land defenders against the TMX pipeline and of all Indigenous nations who are fighting for self-determination on their lands and in so doing struggle against the settler colonial capitalism that rules Canada.

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.

Find us on: @socialist_ca /socialistca socialist.ca

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

Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency

War Communism in the Twenty-First Century

by: **Bradley Hughes**

As the pandemic spread in early 2020, many countries reacted quickly and trillions have been spent on relief efforts. Overnight the business press went from arguing for austerity to explaining how deficits and debt don't matter. Many on the left have pointed out how this proves we can quickly transition to a green economy. Malm takes a less celebratory, and more enraged look at these development. Malm's book was published in April and he starts by asking the question: why were our ruling classes willing to do so much so quickly in the face of the pandemic, when they have refused any meaningful action on climate change? One can think of plenty of other examples of inaction. Why has nothing been done about providing a safe supply of opioids to end the tens of thousands of overdose deaths in Canada? Why has nothing been done to end the murders of Indigenous women and girls in Canada?

A tale of two crises

After reviewing numerous arguments about the similarities and differences between the disasters caused by climate change and by the Corona virus, Malm concludes that the different approaches to the two disasters are simply because rich people can avoid most of the consequences of climate change, but everyone is vulnerable to the virus. Of course, bankers and CEOs can stay tucked away in their mansions with staff to deliver their every necessity, which protects them in ways that nurses and grocery store workers cannot protect themselves. Of course, working people suffering and dying, is of little concern to the 1%, and the deaths of retired people who no longer produce profit, concerns them not at all. The problem they face however, is if too many of us get sick all at once, the hospital system can break down and no matter how much money you have, you need some doctors and nurses and open beds in the hospitals in case you get sick.

Since the book was published in April, we

have seen that our politicians are even willing to risk that sort of collapse in their attempts to keep the economy healthy. No doubt the spirits of prime ministers and presidents everywhere have been lifted by the recovery of Bolsonaro, Trump and Johnson from the virus.

Malm goes on to show that just like the climate crisis, this pandemic is a predictable consequence of capitalism. As capitalism has accelerated its destruction of wilderness so has the rate of emerging infections diseases accelerated. As mining and palm oil plantations and cattle farms destroy more and more tropical forest, more and more species are forced to flee and come in closer contact with humans. Some of their diseases can cross over into us. Malm lists Nipah, West Nile, Ebola, Zika, SARS, MERS, and of course COVID-19, as diseases that have crossed from animals to humans since 1998.

COVID-19 comes originally from bats. Bats are hosts to more viruses per species than most other mammals and they generally don't suffer from this. Since they fly, and roost under eaves and roofs, they are in a unique positions to drop saliva and guano onto us and our domestic

animals. They also travel long distances and can roost in very crowded conditions, sometimes containing multiple species. Malm quotes one study that calculates that worldwide, bats are

home to 3,000 coronaviruses. As long as they are out in the forest and far from us and our farm animals, they and their many viruses are of no consequence for us. MERS, SARS and COVID have both been traced to bat species. Around the world forest are being cleared for commodity production, 40% of forest loss is now due to the production of only four things: beef, soy beans, palm oil and wood. Wood is the least destructive of these four and beef is the most. Those commodities are grown mostly in the global south and travel around the world to produce profit mostly in the global north. As long as there is money to be made by a few, the vast majority will suffer from the new plagues unleashed by capitalism.

Malm looks to the experience of War Communism during the civil war after the Russian revolution as a model to save us. He points out that many look to World War II as

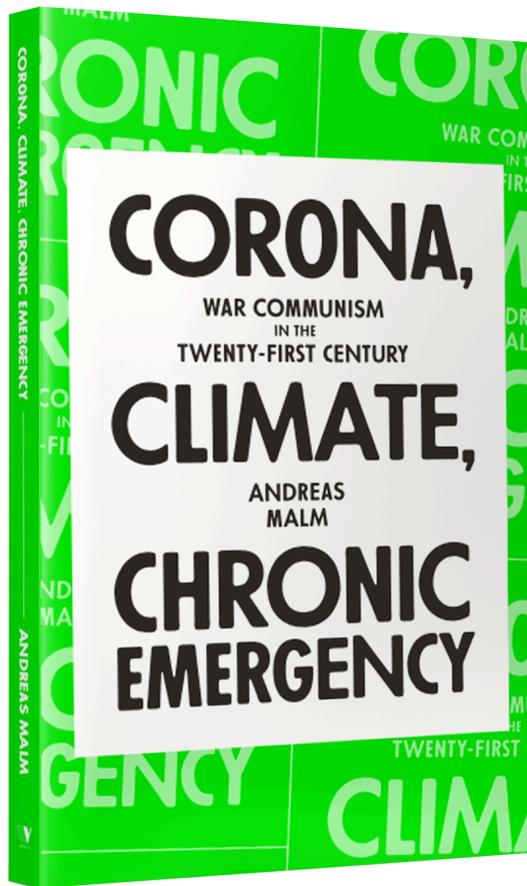
an inspiring model for the fight against climate change, but the drawback is that the sacrifices people made were all in aid of their respective ruling classes. Now, we need people to unite in their own interest and work together against global capital.

War Communism refers to the policies that the worker's republic adopted in desperation as the civil war, funded and supplied by the world's imperialist powers, encircled them. In short order, the entire economy was organized in order to keep people alive, to keep factories producing, to battle disease and to win the civil war.

Similarly we are in a catastrophe that will never end as long the 1% run our economy to provide profit for themselves. As he points out, not only do we need to dismantle the fossil fuel capitalism, but we need strenuous efforts to remove CO2 from the atmosphere. This is a task that makes no profit, because it produces no goods or services for sale.

The one flaw with this quick book - that I expect that the author would freely admit to - is that he cannot point to how people can get organized to make these changes. The state that enacted War Communism was initially as state built up of democratic workers councils organizing in every community and workplace. Even after the toll of the civil war ground down those councils, the resulting state still had the support of the majority of working people and was answerable to them. (Unfortunately, he states that resulted from the civil war's destruction of workers' democracy would turn on its own workers to create Stalinsim.)

I can see no way to create an anti-capitalist state without mass workers' uprising around the globe. Only by workers' seizing control of production in their own workplace and imposing their collective will to plan production across the economy can we deal with the climate crisis and the many coming pandemics. Explaining how that is possible and why it is desirable is the urgent task of socialists everywhere. This book will anger you and steel your resolve for the struggles to come.



Public Forum

**Capitalism is the crisis.
Socialism is the solution.**

**online conference
sunday, feb 28
1pm eastern | 10am pacific**

Sessions on:

How we fight racism and the far right
Marxist economics: Why capitalism can't solve the COVID crisis
 Climate crisis & Indigenous Sovereignty
Why workers have the power to change the world
 The fight for a socialist future

Jointly hosted by:



Paid sick days now!

by: Carolyn Egan

Most manufacturing plants in Ontario do not have paid sick days and workplace spread of Covid 19 is growing significantly. There is an uproar in many of these plants because people are concerned for themselves, their families, and their fellow workers. It's not just manufacturing, precarious agency workers have no choice but to take low wage jobs in a range of sectors which provide neither benefits nor paid sick days. Many of these workers are women of colour who take public transit and live in neighbourhoods with the highest rates of infection in the city.

The Ford Conservatives took away two paid days, which had been won by a strong campaign targeting the previous Liberal government. While the campaign was a step forward, two days were nowhere near enough. Because of the strong business lobby, Doug Ford callously threw the health of workers under the bus. The call for ten paid days has strong support and should be implemented immediately. So many workers cannot afford to stay home if they are feeling unwell, and this is clearly contributing to the spread of the virus.

Public health officials have been demanding paid days for some time, and now the medical officer of health, as well as the mayor of Toronto have taken up the call. There is

a strong campaign on the ground with community organizations and unions pressing the provincial government hard. On one hand the premier is screaming that we must "stay at home", and yet makes it impossible for workers to do so if they are sick without losing the income they so desperately need to keep roofs

not able to do their jobs from home that are most at risk, but once again it is profit over people. The statement that "we are all in this together" rings very hollow, and once again class, race and gender make all the difference when we see who is most vulnerable.

It has also recently been made public that



over their heads and food on the table.

It is the essential front line workers who are

many of the workers, primarily racialized

women, in long term care facilities who were

promised a \$3.00 an hour temporary wage increase, have never received it. They need this money immediately, and it should be a permanent raise for these essential workers who are toiling long hours every day to keep the elderly alive through the pandemic. It is the for-profit companies such as Chartwell and Extencicare which are paying out dividends to their shareholders that are refusing to give monies owed to these workers. Past Tory premier Mike Harris, who pushed the province down the road to privatization in the 1990's is the chair of the board of Chartwell, making money while residents die.

Pressure has to be put on the Ford government to immediately raise the pay of long term care workers, increase staffing levels, end privatized care, and immediately implement four hours of direct care daily to residents. Coalitions of families and health care activists as well as unions are fighting hard for these necessary improvements.

The pandemic has shown vividly the existing horrors that so many live under every day. We have the real possibility of making some significant breakthroughs, paid sick days and the overhauling of long term care are two of them. These campaigns must be strongly supported. Victories here can make all the difference, giving confidence to the broader working class that it can take the offensive, and push back the ongoing attacks that we are facing in these hard times.

Capitalism, not overpopulation, is driving ecological destruction

by: Brian Champ

An article in the Guardian on January 13th called attention to a new report titled, "Underestimating the Challenges of Avoiding a Ghastly Future" that has been published in the "Frontiers in Conservation Science" journal. The report's authors describe the alarming reality that the climate and ecological crisis is getting worse and the lack of political will to tackle it means that we are destined for terrible consequences unless immediate drastic action is taken.

While the call for urgency is clearly warranted, the authors of the report put the blame on rising consumption and overpopulation. One of the co-authors of the report is Paul R. Ehrlich, author of "The Population Bomb" in 1968, who argues that it is rising populations that are putting humanity out of whack with planetary ecology.

They cite the approximate doubling of global population since 1970, now nearly 7.8 billion people, as proof - linking increased biodiversity loss, soil degradation, increased plastics and toxic chemicals directly with population growth rather than agribusiness and petrochemical company practices.

Arguments like these accept that there is



no alternative to capitalism, leading to calls for government policies to curtail population growth and consumption along with actions for individuals to reduce their ecological footprint. These can veer into xenophobic arguments for immigration controls and other draconian measures that dangerously seek

more state powers over people.

They also grossly underestimate that contribution of the ruling drive for profit in ecological degradation: gross world product by 2019 had grown to over seven times its measure in 1970. Furthermore, the incredibly unequal distribution of wealth and

responsibility for ecological destruction is hidden by these statistics. It is the advanced western economies that are most responsible for this destruction as it is corporations in these states that dictate terms to nations that are dependent on producing for the world market. Rather than individual consumption, it is the destructive consumption inherent in the production process that is most responsible for environmental degradation.

Far from being the problem, people are the solution where they organize collectively in communities and workplaces to challenge the rule of corporations that run roughshod over people and the planet. We have to resist these attempts to blame working people for this planetary crisis and instead organize to overcome the divisions between people that allow this rotten system to continue.

This includes fighting racism and xenophobia, sexism and misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and other oppressions to build a force that can challenge the capitalist system that is destroying the planet. Workers and other anti-capitalist forces have the power to challenge the rule of capital before it's too late.