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Canada out of Wet'suwet'en



On New Year's Eve, the BC Supreme Court granted CGL an injunction "giving them access" to Wet'suwet'en land to continue construction of the fracked gas pipeline from the BC interior to Kitimat on the coast. They have obtained approval from the band councils, whose leaders are chosen by democratic elections on the reserve. But the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs maintain that this is their unceded territory, and the band councils have no authority over their land.

Title for the land was recognized as belonging to the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs in the landmark 1997 Delgamuukw decision at the Supreme Court of Canada. The injunction has been granted as if this

Constitutional question did not exist.

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs responded on January 4 by invoking their law on their unceded territory by evicting CGL employees from their land, and calling for provincial permits to be revoked and for nation to nation talks with the PM, the BC Premier and the commissioner of the RCMP.

All eyes on Wet'suwet'en

Immediately calls for solidarity actions went out across the country with rallies, marches and other actions happening in Smithers, Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax and many smaller communities in the week of January 7 through 12. There were also

actions in Seattle, San Francisco and even in Slovenia.

The struggle gained an international dimension on January 6 when the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called for the halting of 3 BC projects, including CGL, because of the lack of "free, prior and informed consent" from the rightful holders of title.

The hypocrisy of the BC government is staggering. Just months after passing new UNDRIP legislation, supposedly in the spirit of reconciliation, Horgan refuses to honour the rightful title holders under Canadian law with even an in person visit, much less actual nation-to-nation diplomacy.

The RCMP established a road block and

"exclusion zone" on January 13 on the road to Unist'ot'en camp. Wet'suwet'en people were turned away from their own territory, media was blocked from access and lawyers not licensed in BC have been refused access, which has affected the Legal Observers group that was there to monitor the conflict. This is similar to the tactics the RCMP used before invading and arresting land defenders this time last year.

Police violence

Last year's violent raid caught many outside Wet'suwet'en territory and particularly in non-Indigenous communities by surprise.

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Danger: Tories at work

Supporters of the Doug Ford Tory government – possibly the big real estate and construction corporations that keep Conservative coffers flush with donations – are pitching in to help bust teachers’ unions and wreck public education.

Despite the government’s best propaganda efforts, support for teachers among Ontario parents is at record levels. Parents oppose increasing class size and forcing students to take on-line courses, the two central issues Ford’s hatchet man, Education Minister and MPP for Vaughan Stephen Lecce refuses to budge on. He and Ford insist, despite all evidence to the contrary, that parents really side with them.

And as January ended, expensive, full-page ads appeared simultaneously in the Globe and Mail, National Post and Toronto Star. (We will leave readers to speculate why no ad appeared in the Toronto Sun.) The ads were sponsored by

a group called VWF – Vaughan Working Families. How grass roots is that.

“We represent working people from every occupation who live or

was taken from a stock photo.

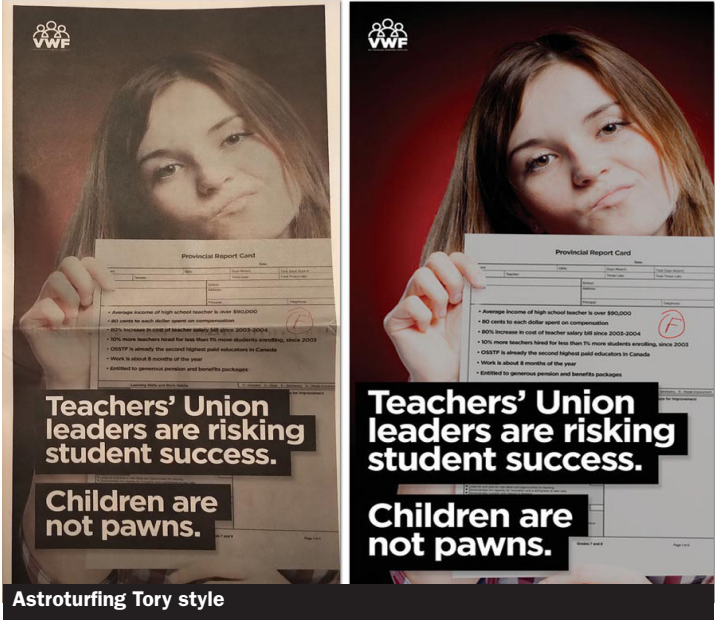
Only a few days earlier Lecce’s twitter account featured a photo of happy toddlers in class. He neglected to mention the picture was stolen from the cover of a book on early childhood music education. Maybe the Minister needs a class in copyright infringement.

Oddly, VWF had absolutely no address or contact information, no history of fundraising to pay for \$100,000 (dare we say it, a conservative estimate) worth of advertising, and social media presence whatsoever.

But wait. Just hours after the PressProgress expose went viral,

a new twitter account appeared in the name of VWF, with 12 followers and a single retweet of a Stephen Lecce post.

The marvel of all this is not how sneaky and low the Tories are. It is how inept and ignorant they are. No wonder they want to destroy public education – they want to drag us down to their level.



work in Vaughan, and we’ve never heard of such an organization,” John Cartwright, head of the Toronto & York District Labour Council, told PressProgress.

Hot on the trail, PressProgress revealed that the disgruntled Ontario mom pictured in the ads is actually a semi-professional model in Poland. On top of that, the snappy VWF logo

Doug Ford rewards his real estate backers

Premier Doug Ford has been laying low, letting his education minister Steve Lecce take the point in his fight against Ontario’s teachers.

But he hasn’t let up his quest to destroy public services and give real estate developers free rein to destroy safety regulations.

The latest Tory proposal is to allow developers to hire their own building inspectors. That will allow them to do an end run around municipal inspectors and regulations. Not surprisingly, real estate lobby groups are all in favour of the “modernization”.

But for most it is obvious why this plan is a potential disaster. According to Will Johnson, Toronto’s chief building official, this proposal would “create the perception of a conflict of inter-

est.” That is putting it mildly.

Sara Singh, the NDP deputy house leader was more succinct, “It’s like the fox guarding the hen house.”

Developers are at the top of the heap of corporate donors to the Tory Party and candidates.

Mattamy Homes gave \$61,394 to the Tories between 2014 and 2016. Nashville Homes donated \$36,350.

Merit Ontario, an organization representing union-busting contractors and builders, was the single biggest donor to Tory coffers, giving \$900,000.

New research shows that modern homes are already bigger fire risks than those of the past. Cheaper materials and mass produc-

tion techniques make houses that burn four times faster than they did 20 years ago.

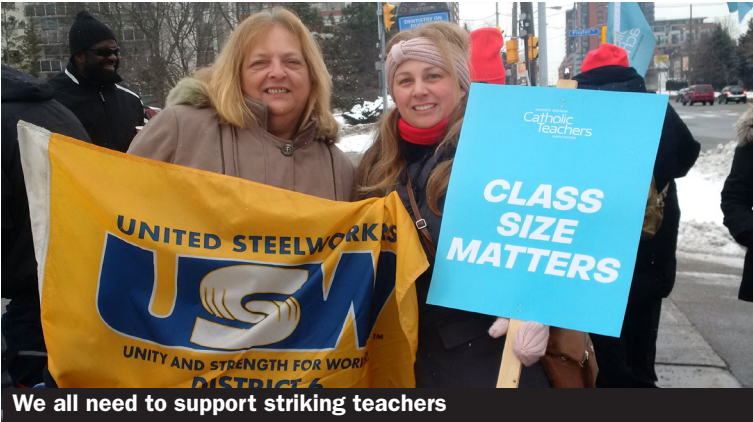
This is yet another example of Ford making life easier for the 1% and making the world harder and more dangerous for the rest of us.



Ford meets with developers and offers free reign to destroy the greenbelt

Greenbelt grift

Readers may recall a leaked video of a back room meeting between Ford and developers, where he promised to give them free access to protected Green Belt lands if they supported his election bid.



We all need to support striking teachers

Solidarity with the teachers! If they win, we all win.

by Carolyn Egan

We have suffered through generations of neo-liberalism where governments have slashed the social safety net. We have seen downsizing of the public sector, forcing workers to work longer hours at lower wages, closing plants as we have seen at GM Oshawa, rolling back the implementation of a \$15 minimum wage, and attacking unions.

Teachers in Ontario are leading the fight against these assaults. They have drawn a line in the sand and are refusing to give in to concessions. They have garnered strong public support from parents and students and have refused to be intimidated by the Tory government. Four teachers’ federations have been coordinating walk-outs across the province in a series of one day, rotating strikes and withdrawal of services. If you have walked the line with them, the support is tangible, car after car honking support, parents and students coming to the pickets, deliveries of donuts and pizzas etc.

The teachers have put the needs of the students front and center highlighting the issues of class size and e-learning which will diminish the quality of education particularly for immigrant, racialized and poorer students. The Tories have tried to separate the community from the teachers, saying it’s all about salaries, and failed. Parents, students and rank and file teachers from diverse communities are speaking out together refusing to fall into the trap of divide and rule.

Parent groups are now setting up solidarity camps for elementary school students in houses of worship, community centres and union halls when the teachers walk off the job, so that parents are able to have their younger children cared for when the teachers strike. This idea is now moving from town to town and is a concrete example of community being on side.

It is reminiscent of historic strike solidarity which helped to broaden and strengthen support and resolve, such as when thousands of women struck the textile mills in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts in the early 1900s. Families throughout the state took in their children so they could devote their full efforts to the strike and in the end defeated the robber barons. The song which has become

the anthem of the women’s movement “Bread and Roses” came out of that struggle.

Workers are angry in this province as they are all over the world. Look at France, India and so many other places where they are fighting in large numbers. At the recent Ontario Federation of Labour convention rank and file members were calling for the leadership to act and were demanding broad mobilization of the unions against the Ford government attacks, up to and including a general strike. The leadership is feeling the pressure and therefore has called a mass rally at the Tory party convention in Niagara Falls on February 22nd. We must organize broadly for this and push for more.

We need to see the building of rank and file organization as absolutely key to putting ordinary workers at the forefront of the struggle for change. It’s a question of how activists can bring more and more of the members in any workplace into activity. Whether it is a workplace issue, the climate crisis, or solidarity with the teachers, these are activities that can initiate a broader and more militant fight back against the Ford government’s attacks.

Without pressure from an organized and active rank and file, leaders will often succumb to the pressure of employers or governments, taking a step back when they could be taking a step forward. We have to depend on ourselves to push the leadership. The Clyde Workers Committee made up of shop stewards in a large UK ship yard in the early part of the 20th century said, “We will support the leadership as long as they rightly represent the workers, but will act immediately when they misrepresent them.”

This is the attitude we need today and requires building a base with other activists in our workplaces and our unions. We have to increase the confidence of ordinary workers to fight back on their own behalf and on the behalf of others in struggle such as the teachers. We can not wait for the leadership to do it for us. There are important discussions to have with fellow workers about the need for unions to move forward in the interest of the membership and how we can make this happen. We can combine the class bitterness with a growing willingness to fight and build a broad movement for real change.

All out on February 22nd!

Unifor co-op workers locked out

By **Brian Champ**

Unifor Local 594 members at the Co-op refinery in Regina, Saskatchewan were locked out by their employer, Federated Cooperatives Limited (FCL), on December 5th after the union garnered almost unanimous support for strike action. This was after the contract negotiations broke down because FCL wanted to make deep cuts to pensions. The union members have taken a stand for their future as retirees and have displayed a militancy that has not often been seen in recent labour struggles.

On January 20th Unifor National President, Jerry Dias, joined the line with members of his executive and other Unifor members to stop scab labour from going in, a very dangerous prospect in an oil refinery, not to mention a union-busting move. “Rogue corporate executives at Co-op have picked a fight with our entire union,” said Dias. “We will continue to escalate job action and do whatever it takes to protect our members’ pensions from corporate greed.”

That same day the Regina police

attacked the picket line, in a failed attempt to force scabs through, and fourteen union members were arrested, including Dias. These were to enforce politically motivated injunctions granted by the courts to force through the picket lines. And by defying the injunctions, Unifor has incurred a \$100,000 fine.



But this has only inflamed the struggle.

After the police failed to break up the line, union members erected fencing and used disabled cars as barricades against further police attacks.

After being released, Dias said “Since the arrests last night, our members are flying in from across the country in droves to get here to

Regina, because they’re not going to watch the police bully and push around our members.”

International and cross-union solidarity has been strong, with support from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Seafarers’ International Union of Canada. The president of SIU Canada, James Given, relayed a message from the International Transport Workers Federations, which represents 12 million workers in almost 700 unions around the world, “well you bring a message from me,

and you bring a message for our 12 million members of the ITF. We know what’s going on here. 11 and a half million union members are now focused on Regina.”

The union also called for a boycott of FCL retail outlets, which operates throughout the prairie provinces, including pickets delaying vehicles at the fuel storage facility in Carseland, Alberta.

and we cannot stand idly by.” She called out the RCMP for their violence, but then called for Canadians to hold their police to account: “We are doing everything we can to protect your children. Everyday Indigenous youth get criminalized like this so your children can have a future: so what will you do?”

As we go to press the RCMP have stepped up their harassment of people trying to enter or leave Wet’suwet’en, and more police are setting up in nearby communities. Clearly this is both preparation for invasion and intimidation ahead of promised talks with the province.

Solidarity

Because of the strong stand taken by the Wet’suwet’en, activists all over Turtle Island have responded to calls for solidarity. So far the RCMP have not attacked, but we know this project is being championed by the federal government, the BC government along with the corporate interests, and there is a significant divide within the Wet’suwet’en First Nation between the band councils and the Hereditary clans.

This means we have to continue building Wet’suwet’en solidarity more broadly because a win for Wet’suwet’en self determination will give confidence to other Indigenous land defenders to resist these encroachments on their land, and inspire new layers of climate justice activists that there is hope.

We have to demand that the RCMP stand down, dismantle their road block and “exclusion zone” and leave Wet’suwet’en territory. BC Premier Horgan, Prime Minister Trudeau and the commissioner of the RCMP need to meet with the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs as they have requested, for nation to nation discussions. No construction can happen without free, prior and informed consent by the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs.

Union struggle and just transition

There have been statements of solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs and Clans from BCGEU, CUPE and CUPW as well as nurses and teacher groups, and we should continue expanding these layers of support. But the power of the working class is on the picket line, and there is currently a militant struggle of Unifor Local 594 workers who have been locked out at the Co-op oil refinery in Saskatoon, to protect pensions they thought they’d won long ago. The lockout was imposed after union members had almost unanimously voted to strike.

Fossil fuel infrastructure and infrastructure development at the frontlines of these two struggles have been shut down, and they are both confronting corporations drive for profit that is poisoning Indigenous lands and driving down labour (and retirement) conditions. But there are divisions to be overcome: the refinery workers haven’t framed their struggle in terms of climate demands or support for Indigenous sovereignty. Pensions for workers are not at the top of the priority list for Indigenous land defenders and those in the climate movement. But there are many in the labour movement who are scared and worried about the climate crisis and what it means for their children. Climate justice means fighting in unions for solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en people and other Indigenous land defenders: making solidarity statements, donating money for the front lines and publicizing the struggle and making the links to workers’ struggles. It also means concretely building within the labour movement to support a just transition to a sustainable economy, which promises many more jobs than the oil business.

Go to unistoten.camp for details on how to support. Get your community group, union, student union or congregation to draft a solidarity statement. Look for local actions in solidarity.

No Access without Consent!

Liberals tar sands disaster

by **Bradley Hughes**

In July, the joint Review Panel established by the Federal government and the Alberta Energy Regulator recommended approval of Teck Resources’ Frontier open pit mine. This tar sands mine will destroy an area of 240 square kilometres. That is an area greater than the cities of Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster combined. The mine will also extend to within 30 km of Wood Buffalo National Park. The report is waiting for the federal cabinet approval. Given Trudeau’s endless thirst for more oil and gas extraction, it’s hard to imagine that his government will turn it down.

Despite approving the project the panel found many problems with the proposed mine. They wrote,

than 25% of the disturbances have been reclaimed. In addition, the presence of tailings deposits on oil sands sites may delay reclamation timelines, thus delaying development to old-growth status.” In other words the estimate of a return to old growth forest by 2180 is much too optimistic.

Seventeen First Nations and Métis groups presented to the panel. Although several Indigenous groups have reached agreements with Teck Resources, “in general the panel found that the project effects on use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, their cultural and physical heritage, and asserted rights will be adverse and significant for those groups close to the project.”

Given how much damage the panel expects this project to create, why would the panel approve it?



Indigenous activists at the COP meetings oppose the Teck mine

“the project is likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects to wetlands, old growth forests, wetland- and old-growth-reliant species at risk, the Ronald Lake bison herd, and biodiversity. The project is also likely to result in significant adverse effects to the asserted rights, use of lands and resources, and culture of indigenous groups who use the project area. The proposed mitigation measures have not been proven to be effective or to fully mitigate project effects on the environment or on indigenous rights, use of lands and resources, and culture.”

Emissions

The panel also predicts that this project will increase greenhouse gas emissions in the production of oil from the tar sands by 5.4% more per year than in 2016. This ignores the gasses produced by burning the oil. The mine is expected to remain in production for 41 years after it opens. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has determined that we need to reduce our greenhouse emissions by more than 45% in the next decade, and bring them to zero in 30 years.

The panel predicts that the company’s plans for reclaiming the site will result in a return of the old growth forest after 2180. The panel found that, “this implies a loss of habitat for many species of old-growth-reliant species, including species at risk, until at least 100 years following closure.”

But that won’t be the same forest we have now. The panel found that, “plant species that are unique to peatlands and rare plants are permanently lost. The effect is long term, extending past closure.” Despite Teck Resources plans for reforesting, the panel noted that “The current state of reclamation in the oil sands region is such that less

In their own words, “Although we find that there will be significant adverse cumulative effects on certain environmental components and indigenous communities, under our authority as the AER, we consider these effects to be justified and that the Frontier project is in the public interest.”

For the oil industry executive appointed to lead the panel, “the public interest” starts and ends with the profits of Canadian companies.

Despite hundreds of submissions, years of work and a report that runs more than 1200 pages long, this was always going to be the conclusion. Now this recommendation goes to the Federal Liberal Government who will approve it just like they approved the Trans-Mountain pipeline. But the public interest of the 99% is not the same as the interests of the 1%. Good jobs, decent wages and a livable planet are all harmed by dedicating our collective wealth to expanding the tar sands. There are alternatives, but they’ll never come through parliament.

Here is one alternative, the panel believes Teck Resources’ claims that the project will create thousands of jobs and will pay more than \$70 billion in taxes to various levels of governments. Coincidentally, Trudeau’s government plans to spend at least that amount building 15 war ships. We could cancel the ships, and draw back from Canada’s endless wars, and the savings would cover the projected taxes on this mine. And we would get the money a lot quicker, the mine will pay taxes over 41 years, but the \$70 billion spending on war ships is supposed to take only 25 years.

Teck Resources and all the rest of Canadian capitalism will never let us vote away their hundreds of billions “invested” in the tar sands. The only climate plan that will work is if we take it from them.

*Wet’suwet’en
continued from page 1*

This year many more people all over the world are paying attention, putting pressure on politicians and the police to respect the Hereditary Chiefs.

On January 14 the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) and the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union (BCGEU) along with a law professor from the UBC Allard School of Law held a press conference to decry the RCMP tactics and urging Wet’suwet’en territories and rights be respected. The BCCLA brought forward legal complaints against the RCMP blocking of Wet’suwet’en Clan members who were delivering food, medicine and warm clothing to their territories. All present urged that police violence not be used. Since then the UBCIC and the BCCLA have brought forward more first hand accounts of the improper and unlawful actions of the RCMP in implementing and enforcing the checkpoint and exclusion zone.

On January 20, Climate Justice Toronto occupied the office of Christia Freeland the Deputy PM. Extinction Rebellion led a protest that blocked the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal and delayed ferries for over 2 hours. The next day, Indigenous youth occupied the office of BC Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and stayed overnight. The police arrested 11 Indigenous youth, after many non-Indigenous supporters had gone. The arrests took place with guns drawn, and the police violence caused damage to their personal belongings and regalia.

In a press conference after being released, 18 year old Ta’kaiya Blaney of the Tla A’mín Nation in BC, spoke of the motivation for the protests: “When Canada tries to destroy our lands for profit, what they are trying to do is extinguish who we are, our spirits as Indigenous people

Islamophobia and imperialism

We just passed the 3 year anniversary of the Quebec City Mosque shooting and unfortunately, Islamophobia is still growing around the world. From the Citizenship Amendment Act in India to the ongoing horrors of the Imperial wars in the Middle East, capitalism is continuing to fuel the hatred. We look at what is behind the bigotry and how we can work to end the attacks on Muslim people.

From Iran to Palestine Imperialism and Islam

Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu could hardly contain their glee as they unveiled what Trump called the “deal of the century”. The new peace plan, devised by Trump’s son in law Jared Kushner, was supposed to be a roadmap to peace between Israel and the Palestinians but it showed nothing but contempt for the Palestinian people. They were not even consulted in the process. Yet the bravado that accompanied the announcement shows something else: the Imperial powers don’t care at all about the predominantly Muslim populations in the Middle east. They are seen as nothing more than a barrier to profits and Imperial control.

Who did we get here? Why did the entire population of more than a billion people become disposable to the capitalist system?

The word “Islamophobia” emerged as a reaction to a systemic targeting of Muslims due to imperialist war in the Middle East and the response to immigrants and refugees fleeing those wars towards the West. Today, stoking anti-Muslim sentiment to capitalize on fear in a world made unstable by war, economic failure and climate change has become a permanent feature of mainstream politics.

Islamophobia is a form of racism, but it is different from other more ex-

PLICIT forms. It relies on progressive people, who genuinely believe in the need for a secular society, confusing real secularism with singling out a particular religious and ethnic community for reasons that have nothing to do with secularism. It is racism of a new kind, because it is associated with a religion that transcends ethnicity and nationality. But it has a very important use for Western intervention in the Middle East.

Firstly, Islam has become widely demonized as a faith through consistent efforts to link terrorism not only with Arabs as a people, but also with Islam as a religion and “Islamism” as a political movement.

But secondly, politicians and media today cannot rely exclusively on the threat of terror to justify ongoing war. They must also appeal to people’s better natures under the guise of defending “humanitarian causes” in the Muslim world. This has involved the demonization of Islam in other ways in order to equate it with social repression, and in particular, with the oppression of women.

But a Western government outcry about Islam and women’s rights really only emerged after 9/11, when the West, including Canada, suddenly “discovered” the Taliban’s oppressive policies regarding women after years of complete indifference – and

at times, even support.

Islamophobia helps to reinforce the argument that justifies Western military intervention as the only way to spread “civilized” values.

Laying claim to supposed human-

Islamophobia serves to divert attention from a war at home against poor and working class people towards racist scapegoating. Scapegoating is not new. But the hatred of Muslims has become one of the lynchpins of



itarian causes in Muslim countries inevitably led policy makers and the media to the idea that targeting “the enemy at home” would be more effective if it did not merely involve jailing people but could also appeal to seemingly progressive concerns. And so, the sudden concern for women’s rights in the Muslim world took the form of objecting to the hijab (headscarf) and niqab (full covering but for eyes) throughout the West under the pretext of “liberating” women.

that agenda, to bolster not only a crackdown on religious symbols, but also calls for immigration controls and “values tests” throughout the West.

In the same way that opposition to Islam has been deployed since even before 9/11 under the pretext of defending women, it is now used as a “defence” of the white working class whose jobs, safety and security are supposedly threatened not by the owners of Walmart, Suncor, or

Bombardier, but by Muslims, and by all immigrants and refugees.

Islamophobia is still linked with more traditional forms of racism based on skin colour and other physical characteristics. But the connection to religion serves a particular purpose: it gives it a progressive gloss. Sadly, the false defense of women’s rights has been the sugar-coating to help the bitter pill of racism go down more easily – even for many on the left. The focus on Islam as the problem has given racism a pseudo-progressive face.

Islamophobia is rooted in the economic and political needs of capitalism, just as all forms of racism are. It is both key to justifying war and also to cementing divisions in the imperialist countries amongst people who would otherwise have common cause to resist austerity. Along with racist policing and incarceration of racialized and Indigenous people, and the long history of blaming immigrants for both job loss and crime, Islamophobia has served not only to divide and conquer but also to misdirect anger and insecurity.

This article is an excerpt from **“Islamophobia and Capitalism”** by Chantal Sundaram. Email: reports@socialist.ca to get your copy.

A new political consciousness in India

No to Islamophobia No to Austerity

by Rohit Revi

In the past few weeks, a series of political demonstrations have taken place in India in response to three popular issues. Firstly, we are witnessing an organic coalition between the civil society, various faith-based groups and the Ambedkarite constitutionalist groups – against a new Islamophobic legislation that was passed by the Modi regime to selectively disenfranchise migrants of the Islamic faith, namely the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Secondly, students at public universities have come together in resistance after an unprecedented tuition hike in Jawaharlal Nehru University – a public university known for its historically critical and anti-capitalist academic space. This is only one among the numerous waves of revitalised student movements across the country that have been ongoing since the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula – a Dalit scholar at a public university who took his own life in 2016 after facing severe caste-based oppression. These movements have been brutally suppressed by the Indian state, most recently in Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI) and Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

Thirdly, a coalition of 10 central trade unions called for a general strike on January 8th against the longstanding economic policies of the Modi government that have brought about hostile labour laws, historic rates of unemployment and stagnant minimum wages. Close to 250 million workers participated in this successful one-day strike, which was a display of the continued organizational strength of trade union coalitions in the country. The tentative convergence of these political currents is historic and finds precedence only in the mass movements of the 70s which led to the ultimate resignation of the Indira Gandhi administration. As the future of this renewed political consciousness continues to be hopeful but uncertain, socialists are faced with important questions.

Tensions within the base of the BJP

The historical ascension of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as it exists today is the political result of a new consensus struck between three major political forces of contemporary India: the new bourgeoisie that emerged post-Independence, the fascist organization of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded by Hindu nationalists in 1925, and sections within the aspirational middle-class that grew post the liberalization period of the 1990s. What has resulted from this consensus is a political concoction that simultaneously accelerates the neoliberal tendencies of the previous governments, while also developing a political voice for the fascist currents of RSS and allied organizations (together known as the Sangh Parivar). Today, as the Indian economy slips deep into a historic slowdown, this consensus has shifted in its balance towards the Sangh Parivar, significantly strengthening the fascist strands within the constitu-

tive base of the BJP and moving the overall government towards authoritarianism.

As this shift intensifies, the second term of the Modi-regime continues to be marked by a further movement towards unabashed Islamophobic populism, increase of aggressive and expansionist foreign policies as an extension of this Islamophobia, the further demonization of socialists and communists as “anti-national terrorists”, and a further increase in communal violence that has taken the

politically sustainable in the face of the growing crisis of capitalism in India.

At this particular juncture, there are two possible directions that lie ahead. It is either the fascistic tendencies of the BJP that will solve the crisis for the bourgeoisie, or the working class of India will have to be the vehicle for a new future. It is either barbarism or socialism. In the second term of the Modi-regime, we already witness the germination of the former. The question is: from the waves of demonstrations that have erupted in response,

addressed without also absolutely centering the issue of caste-based oppression and religious persecution – a program that needs to be at the heart of any growing socialist movement in India. The historical overlap of caste oppression and class exploitation has yet to find a popular mass response that puts forward an economic system capable of annihilating caste oppression. However, the movements for annihilation of caste and the emancipation of the working class have not seen eye to eye – especially in the

landless labourers continue to be from backward castes, whose experience of economic exploitation is compounded and intensified by the experience of social oppression. While the Ambedkarite method is radical constitutionalism and parliamentary representation as a means for social liberation, the new wave of Ambedkarism has also become a formidable space that articulates anti-Islamophobic and anti-capitalist politics with a broader agenda. Thus, we find one of the central faces of the anti-CAA protest today is Chandrashekhar Azad ‘Ravan’ – the insurrectionary leader of Bhim Army, one of the numerous Ambedkarite groups that have proliferated in the country in this decade. While there are ongoing tensions between the different Ambedkarite thinkers and positions – sometimes about the nature of the relationship to be had with the Left (given that Dalit representation within Communist parties has been historically low) and with Maududist organizations (which do not necessarily share the class interests of the Dalit communities), there is also a strong consensus within this new wave of autonomous politics, which is drawn from the radical constitutionalist, democratic socialist and secular legacy of Ambedkar himself. Therefore, the Citizenship Amendment Act, when framed rightfully as an attack on the secular values of the Indian Constitution, naturally finds a powerful response today in the form of a defense of the Ambedkarite constitutionalist legacy. It remains to be seen whether this defense can merge with the interests of class emancipation or evolve dialectically alongside an organized form of revolutionary labour politics.

Prospects: Hopeful but Uncertain

As the fascistic tendencies of the Modi regime continue to strengthen, the Indian working class and oppressed castes find themselves in want of a revolutionary political voice. Today, the Sangh Parivar has simultaneously tightened its grip upon the political and administrative apparatus of the country, while also unleashing violence upon students and religious minorities. It is time for the working class to reveal itself as the tribune of the oppressed. While the organizational deficiency of the left remains a crucial impediment, the present period of political revival is also a period for new organizations to develop – as was the case with the movements of the 70s which were, however, to later turn reactionary.

At the intersection of a centrifugal mix of two emancipatory projects – the radical constitutionalism of the oppressed castes and the revolutionary drive of the working classes – lies the hope for a radical transformation of this society, which has long suffered at the hands of colonial occupation, caste oppression, majoritarian religious persecution and capitalist exploitation. As the world continues to be shaken by global uprisings and revolts, the Indian working class – a sleeping giant – is going through a renewal of its political consciousness, at a period when everything is at stake.



As many as 250 million workers struck against Modi's austerity and Islamophobia

lives of many Muslims in these years. The Citizenship Amendment Act is the most recent political expression of the fascistic spirit of the RSS that has been historically latent but present within the BJP. A founding ideologue of the former, MS Golwalkar, once infamously identified Muslims, Christians and Communists as the three threats to a Hindu nation.

The two tendencies that uphold the BJP today – that of crony capitalism and cultural fascism, also explain its fundamental strength in electoral politics. The combination of enormous donations from the capitalists with the cadre strength of the fascists has resulted in the formation of a powerful electoral campaign machinery. Over the last few years, BJP has become the richest political party in the world and subsequently has made legislation that obscure the sources of its electoral funding. As a thank you note to this enormous capitalist support, the BJP has overseen and implemented numerous austerity cuts – especially to public education, has exacerbated the agrarian crisis which has been the reason for numerous farmer suicides in recent times, and has systematically weakened labour laws in the country. This tendency, however, runs formally counter to its appeal as a populist party, whose constitutive base also includes the economically backward sections, some of whom are also affiliates and cadres of the Parivar. To address this contradiction, the party has struck a weak compromise – offering ineffective and token welfare measures which have been amplified through the disproportionate voice of the corporate big media. The whole picture offers an enormous electoral success which is, however, not po-

can we also excavate the potential for the latter?

Radical left in India

India has a strong history of communist movements which were decisive particularly during the anti-colonial period. Faced with both state repression and ideological crises, much like their European counterparts, the Communist parties took a turn towards radical parliamentary politics in the post-colonial period.

While the unions and peasant organizations remained relatively strong and organized, there has been a consequent recession in the capacity for revolutionary organizing. The parties committed themselves to build regional social democracies in Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal, and resisting the neoliberal pressures of the central governments.

Although in the last decades, the communist parties have lost power in both West Bengal and Tripura, they remain strong in Kerala and continue to resist Hindu nationalism to their limited capacities. Despite being reduced to the position of a regional pressure group within parliamentary politics, the strength of the communist parties continues to be sustained in their relatively undiminished organizational capacity at the level of trade unions, student unions and farmer organizations – as we were able to witness in the historic strike of January 8th, as well as the farmer marches and student movements of recent years. This strength, however, is yet to find a revolutionary political voice.

Today, especially with the rise of Hindu nationalism, the question of ongoing class exploitation cannot be

recent times, and this divide remains the biggest impediment to overcome today.

Insurrectionary Dalit politics, CAA and socialism

Over the last decade, there has been a consistent growth of autonomous politics of the oppressed in India, especially in university campuses, led by people belonging to the marginalized Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi communities. DBA autonomous politics inherits the political legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar – the radical constitutionalist, socialist and caste-abolitionist leader of the Indian anti-colonial movement, and remains largely suspicious of the capacity of the parliamentary Left to create meaningful social transformation in India, especially on issues of representation of oppressed minorities. Though often derided by sectarian elements within the Left as mere “identity politics”, the political growth of this new wave of Ambedkarism can be seen to mount incremental attacks on the politics of Hindu nationalism of the Modi-regime, by bringing to the foreground several questions about the persistence of caste-based oppression and stratification within Hindu society, religious persecution of Muslim minorities, as well as that of severe material inequalities that continue to intensify, resulting from years of liberal and neoliberal economic reforms.

Although the label of “identity politics” is often used in the West to denote the presence of multiple class interests within a movement, such frames do not apply to Ambedkarite politics. The largest section of the Indian working class, rural poor and

‘At the core of the Holocaust was an industrial killing system’: 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz

A new book from author and poet Michael Rosen looks at the awful impact of the Holocaust on his family. In it Michael details how his father’s uncles, Oscar and Martin, were rounded up in France and sent to the Auschwitz death camp.

The Missing—The True Story of My Family in World War Two was published ahead of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz this month.

The Nazis murdered more than six million Jews in the Holocaust, two thirds of Europe’s Jewish population, between 1941 and 1945.

Another five million people deemed to be “*untersmenschen*” or subhuman were killed.

Auschwitz, the site of the biggest mass murder in history, was at the centre of it. Michael said the Holocaust is “unique”.

“At the core of it was an industrial killing system,” he told Socialist Worker.

“It was scientific and worked out, and it gives an extraordinarily chilling view of a particular type of regime. It represents that scientific genocide.” The Holocaust, an industrialised effort to wipe out an entire group of people, was a genocide like no other.

Auschwitz, in occupied southern Poland, was the size of a small town.

Jewish people from across Nazi-occupied Europe—from Slovakia and Hungary to France and the British Channel Islands—were crammed into cattle trucks and transported there.

From May 1944, a branch from the main railway line brought people right into the Auschwitz II-Birkenau site of the camp.

The line was constructed in anticipation of the arrival of over 400,000 Jewish people from Hungary, a puppet state that had recently been occupied by the Nazis.

At the end of the line were gas chambers and crematoria 2 and 3. Today only ruins remain as the Nazis blew up the two buildings in January 1945 to try and hide the crimes they had committed.

Separated

Rows of brick and wooden prison blocks line either side of the railway line. They housed anywhere between 400 and 700 people at a time. Paramilitary SS “Death’s Head Units” decided who would be worked to death and who would be gassed immediately.

Families were separated into two columns—women and children in one, men and older boys in the other. SS “doctors” arbitrarily chose people’s fate. Children, older people, and anyone who looked too ill went straight to the gas chamber.

Only about 20 percent of people on average would be selected for work.

People were stripped and told they would have a shower. Doors to an underground room



were closed behind them. Then from hatches in the roof, blue pellets of the insecticide Zyklon B were dropped inside and turned into a deadly gas as they came into contact with the air.

It would take between ten and 20 minutes for everyone to suffocate.

Afterwards special units of prisoners, known as the *Sonnderkommando*, would hose down the rooms and take the bodies to be burnt.

Michael has been holding lessons in schools in the run-up to Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January.

“It is hard to describe and explain because it is so beyond our experience,” he said. “You’re describing premeditated killing in rooms—that’s what these gas chambers were.”

He added, “Auschwitz is symbolic for Jews, but many other people were killed there. Auschwitz in particular shows the range of people who were in the sights of the Nazis.”

Yet antisemitism remained key to the Nazi regime. And the growth of Auschwitz helps to tell the history of how the regime’s antisemitism developed from discrimination to the death camp.

Auschwitz was a huge complex made up of 45 sub camps, two of which form part of a museum and memorial today.

Auschwitz 1, a former army barracks, was opened in 1940 to house prisoners of war (POWs) and political prisoners after the German invasion of Poland.

The Nazis experimented with a gas chamber to kill prisoners at the Auschwitz 1 site. Prisoners were seen as a source of forced labour and worked in the armaments and chemicals plants of the various sub camps.

The infamous and sinister sign above Auschwitz 1 reads, “*Arbeit Macht Frei*,” or, “Work sets you free.”

Construction on the Auschwitz 2-Birkenau camp had begun in 1941 as a place for Russian

POWs. From 1942 it became the site of genocide against Jews. From their seizure of power in 1933, the Nazis had opened concentration camps to imprison their political opponents.

They rounded up communists, socialists and trade unionists, liberals, conservative and religious opponents.

The Nazi state had run campaigns to whip up antisemitism. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 had codified antisemitism into law. For instance it banned marriages and relationships between what the Nazis classified as Jews and Germans, and barred Jews from German citizenship.

And *Kristallnacht*, “The night of the broken glass,” saw regime thugs destroy Jewish shops on 9 November 1938.

Antisemitism was a key part of Nazi ideology—and grew in importance after the Second World War began. From 1939 the Nazi regime took over large swathes of territory across eastern Europe.

In areas that fell under their control, the Nazis forced local Jews into over 270 ghettos in Warsaw, Lodz and other towns and cities.

Meanwhile the SS’s “*Einsatzgruppen*,” or deployment units, organised mass murder in the wake of the German Army’s advance into Poland and Russia.

In the 1941 Babi Yar Massacre in the Ukrainian capital Kiev, for instance, they shot over 30,000 Jewish people and threw them into a ravine.

As Michael explained, “Auschwitz is not the whole Holocaust.

“A lot of the killing was done by troops turning up in a village, rounding Jews up and shooting them in the square.

“There are many ways genocide can take place. The importance is to get across the horror of Auschwitz. This machine was the summit of the mania of the Nazi regime.”

Support

As the war dragged on, the regime ran into setbacks. It turned more and more to antisemitism to try and hold together its support.

“You are seeing the climax of supremacy,” said Michael. “At its height in 1943 and 1944 it was grab and kill, grab and kill. One of my father’s uncles was rounded up as late as January 1944. You look at the state of the Nazi regime then, but it’s still rounding up Jews in France.”

Michael described the horror of “the way in which the net closed around” victims of the Holocaust, including his family members. Some were close to escaping but didn’t. “It’s the idea of the arbitrariness of genocide,” he said.

Michael said this also “gives an insight into the way in which the government operated”.

“In France you’re talking about collaboration by the Vichy regime,” he said.

“We’re used to the idea that governments act against people because they have done ‘something wrong’.” But they had been given the J word, they could describe someone as Jewish, so they’d done something wrong.”

His father’s uncle was arrested on 31 January 1944. Michael has a piece of paper from the time instructing police to “arrest all Jews”.

He explained how the targeting of Jews came “from the Nazis to the Vichy regime and down to the police”. Michael said what struck him is “what Hannah Arendt called the banality of evil”. “The police report is quite staggering,” he said.

“It says of one victim 1 metre, 61cm, brown hair, and regular nose. The banality of that—and that’s state sanctioned murder.”

As anti-racists mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the far right, antisemitism and racism are on the rise.

To make “Never Again” more than a slogan we have to fight against the forces stoking antisemitism and racism.

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.

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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.

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Big business, big flu

Rob Wallace is a Marxist, an evolutionary biologist, and an expert on the links between capitalism, industrial agri-business and emerging diseases. He has written a sobering essay that demolishes the racist responses and puts the blame squarely on the drive for profit.

As Wallace points out, runaway development in China results in “humanity’s unprecedented connectivity”. What should be a boon for humanity becomes, under capitalism, a mortal threat. In China, air travel has increased eleven-fold just since SARS in



2003. In the same period the world has faced a parade of potential pandemics:

“This century we’ve already train-spotted novel strains of African swine fever, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, Cyclospora, Ebola, E. coli O157:H7, foot-and-mouth disease, hepatitis E, Listeria, Nipah virus, Q fever, Salmonella, Vibrio, Yersinia, Zika and variety of novel influenza A variants...”

What’s worse, nothing has been done to address the root cause: massive agri-business development on one hand, and poverty on the other. Health officials scramble after the facts, reacting once the latest pathogens are already on the loose, trying to minimize the damage.

In an era of austerity, public health is viewed through a dystopian lens: the isolation of Wuhan’s 11 million people is accompanied by their immiseration. Thousands of deaths are considered part of the price of doing business in the global trade in food.

So far we’ve been lucky – the flu and virus strains have so far only become communicable after their symptoms appear. But viruses evolve and mutate quickly and predictive models say it is just a matter of time before we see one that spreads before showing symptoms. Such a virus will make a mockery out of our “business-as-usual” public health measures.

Root cause

Cities like China’s Wuhan make perfect breeding grounds for new pathogens. There are traditional open-air markets existing along-side – and dialectically interacting with – immense capitalist livestock factories; and millions of workers crammed together, many in poverty and many with still-fresh connections with rurality.

Wallace’s prescription is nothing short of revolutionary: “I would recommend we err on the side of viewing disease causality and intervention beyond the biomedical or even ecohealth object and out into the field of ecosocial relationships.”

That means a revolution in how we produce what we eat, a revolution in how we relate to the planet. This goes far beyond lifestyle choices and consumerism. It means overthrowing a mode of production based on profit rather than human health and welfare.

REVIEWS

Sexism, Hollywood and Little Women

by **Faline Bobier**

This awards season seems to be reverting to type – a plethora of mostly white, mostly male and extremely non-diverse field of nominees. Saturday Night Live, which can be hit or miss, had a quite funny and accurate bit where one of the regular SNL players, Melissa Villaseñor, performed songs about the best picture nominees that all ended the same way – ‘It’s white male rage.’

And if you think about Joker, The Irishman and Once upon a time in Hollywood... she’s kinda right. Now one of those films – The Irishman – I would argue is about a lot more, including mortality and the price paid for hyper-masculinity and violence. But it’s telling that women really have no voice in these films. In Tarantino’s film the Sharon Tate character is supposed to represent a kind of wide-eyed innocence. She has barely any lines and is rewarded by surviving at the end of the movie, whereas the women who play the followers of Charles Manson are dispatched in extremely violent and funny (or at least for the audience I watched with) scenes. The violence is so over the top that it’s literally hard to watch.

In Joker, there are two main women characters – Arthur’s mother (who is a fragile and broken creature) and his neighbour down the hall on whom he has a crush. Their interactions play out entirely in Arthur’s mind, not in reality.

In The Irishman De Niro’s character is alienated from his daughter as she becomes aware of what her father does for a living. However, the only way her disapproval is allowed to be voiced is ironically through her complete silence in the movie.

All this by way of preamble to looking at Greta Gerwig’s new movie Little Women, which couldn’t be farther away from the above-mentioned films. Although her film has gotten a best picture nod at various award venues her name is noticeably absent from the best director category, which has angered some of the actors who worked on the movie with her.

Rightly so, I think, since Little Women is obviously a directorial labour of love and invention and meticulous choreography, about aspiring to be a female artist. Louisa May Alcott’s long-time favourite novel, particularly with young girls, is set during the Civil War. Gerwig filmed in Alcott’s home-town of Concord Massachusetts.

And although Gerwig stays true to the historical period, with painstaking attention to details of costume and place, Little Women is also strikingly modern and speaks to what is obviously

still a contemporary reality, the belittlement of what are seen as ‘women’s issues’, as evinced by the current crop of award-nominees and those obviously overlooked.

Alcott was a feminist and an abolitionist. She and her family participated in the Underground Railroad and helped shelter slaves fleeing to freedom. She grew up in poverty and had to work from a young age to help support her family. Before Little Women begins we see this quote on the screen, which comes from Alcott: “I’ve

erupts into physical fighting or acts of revenge, as when Amy gets back at Jo by burning her novel-in-progress.

Gerwig’s Little Women is constantly moving and succeeds in transmitting the energy and vivacity of youth, as when Jo and the poor little rich boy who lives next door, Laurie (played to androgynous perfection by Timothée Chalamet) find a way to dance that will not shame older sister Meg, who has told Jo she must hide the burn in the back of her dress.

But what Gerwig does with the movie that really makes it original is to turn it into a meditation on the artist, on what it means to be a female artist. The kind of writing Jo does – stories of swash-bucklers and intrigue – has to do with the need to make money for her family, which was the experience of Alcott herself.

When we see Jo at the beginning of the movie selling her first story to a publisher in New York he gives her some advice on how to properly portray female characters. “If the main character’s a girl she should be married by the end. Or dead. I don’t really care which.”

When Jo moves away from writing ‘scandalous stories’ that sell, to writing more intimate portraits of herself and her family the same financial constraints apply. The same New York publisher who is happy to buy her scandalous stories tells her that the first few chapters of her book based on her home life are boring and would not sell. It’s only when his three daughters insist on knowing when he will get the other chapters of what will become Little Women that he sees it might make financial sense to publish.

He does eventually, although he insists that the character representing Jo must be married at the end of the book. When Jo says her character has repeatedly insisted that she will never marry the publisher replies, “Who cares?” He knows what sells and Jo must bow to that logic. This is something Gerwig has said she relates to absolutely, having had many such meetings with studio heads and others she has tried to convince of the viability of projects that are about truthful portraits of women’s lives.

Which is not to say that Little Women is not also a very enjoyable and sympathetic portrait of the March women.

It subtly and persuasively portrays how the fertile soil of the sisters’ experiences growing up becomes the inspiration Jo will use to fashion herself into a working artist. And it puts to rest the notion that what preoccupies girls and women is not also the preoccupation of all of us, regardless of gender.

SAOIRSE RONAN EMMA WATSON FLORENCE PUGH ELIZA SCANLEN LAURA DERN TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET AND MERYL STREEP

LITTLE WOMEN

FROM GRETA GERWIG
THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR OF LADY BIRD



had lots of troubles so I write jolly tales.”

Little Women is semi-autobiographical. The book is loosely based on Alcott’s childhood experiences with her three sisters. Jo March (the aspiring writer in Alcott’s book and her stand-in in the novel) is played by Saoirse Ronan, older sister Meg by Emma Watson, next youngest sister Amy by British actress Florence Pugh and Beth, the quiet piano-playing sister, by Eliza Scanlen.

Gerwig’s film is the seventh film adaptation of the 1868 novel but she brings fresh eyes to Alcott’s work. She plays with the chronology of events, which can be a bit confusing at the beginning, but which actually works well to group themes and events.

Gerwig gives the character of Amy, who is often portrayed as the spoiled, self-centred one, her due. She and Jo are in some ways the central counter-points in this story, in unspoken competition with each other, which sometimes

Coronavirus, racism and capitalism

A 60-year-old man has needlessly died of heart failure in Sydney, Australia's Chinatown. Witnesses say bystanders refused to apply CPR, for fear of coronavirus.

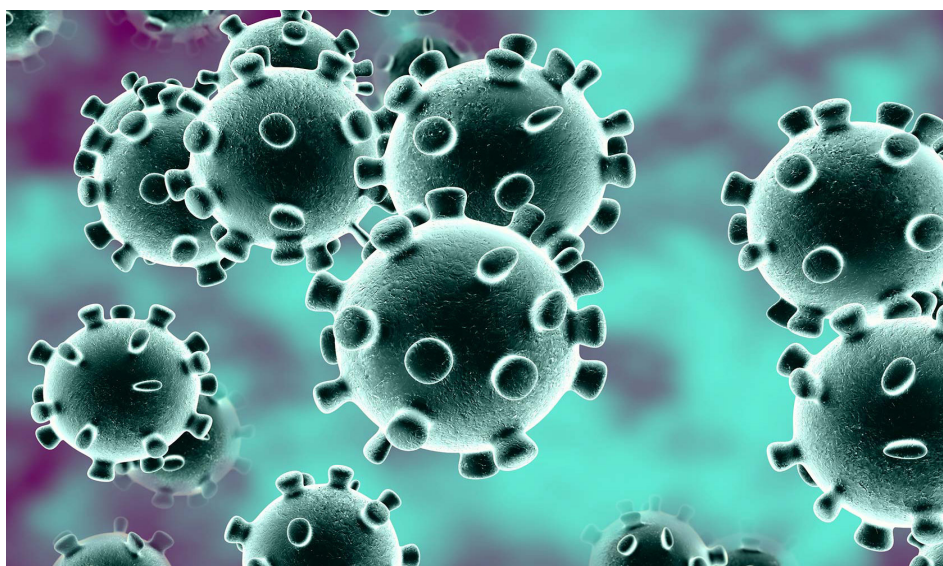
As with the SARS outbreak of 2003, the Chinese community is particularly hard hit. Businesses are suffering, workers are having their hours cut, and Asians are being denied services.

CTV reporter Peter Akman posted a photo of himself next to his Asian barber (the latter wearing a surgical mask) with the caption: "Hopefully ALL I got today was a haircut." He has since lost his job.

In Toronto, a suburban restaurant is victim of a racist photo showing a woman eating a bat with chopsticks, and a slew of racist comments infect its web site. At a private high school in Toronto catering to Chinese students, teachers are refusing to work.

"I do give people the benefit of doubt because they're scared, but why can't they give me the benefit of doubt? Fear is no reason to be racist. Statistically, as a British citizen who hasn't been to China in two years, I have the same risk level as a white person," Dr. Zhou, a scientist told Britain's Guardian, after encountering racist treatment.

The "bat soup" prank has gone viral, with racist claims that the virus is the result of lax



Chinese hygiene. In France, the tabloid press is using the term "yellow peril", or the headline "Alerte Jaune".

Some facts:

As of this writing there are 3 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Canada; one of those has been released from hospital to recover in quarantine at home.

Worldwide, there have been almost 10,000 victims, with 213 confirmed dead.

This is a serious public health threat, and authorities are right to take serious precautions. But to put these numbers in context is not to minimize the risks – we are still in the disease's early stages and those numbers could climb exponentially if health officials don't take action.

According to the US Center for Disease Control, some 8,000 Americans have died this winter from the flu, many of those deaths being preventable if victims had their flu shot. Deaths are not just due to the virulence of the disease; many Americans cannot afford treatment.

Even in places with public health services, many workers succumb to flu – and spread it around – because they cannot afford to stay away from work to recover.

And far more people die from infectious diseases like measles (140,000 deaths in 2019) which had almost been eradicated. They are making major comebacks, thanks to a growing number of ill-informed parents refusing to have their children inoculated.

Obviously there is more at play with coronavirus than just concern about disease. Because this strain originates in a specific area in China and, like SARS before it, originated in livestock and spread to humans, latent racist attitudes are stoked.

There is a sense in which it is not accidental that coronavirus (and other dangerous potential pandemics) originate in China. It doesn't have anything to do with cultural practices, hygiene or over-population. It has everything to do with China being on the cutting edge of massive, capitalist agri-business development.

Article continues on page 7

Defend striking teachers!

The Ford Tories have decided to go to war with teachers. Their plan to cut funding for education, introduce more e-learning classes and increase class sizes is an assault on public education.

Ultimately, the goal of the Tories is to push for more private schools like the charter schools in the US.

This would be a disaster. It creates a multi-tiered education system where the rich kids get all the advantages and the poorest get sub-standard schooling.

And although the charter schools in the US are supposed to be not for profit, they often come with huge salaries for CEO's and sweet deals that allow private corporations to hold assets like land and buildings privately even if they are paid for with public money.

This would be good news for Ford's Bay street friends but it is very bad news for local governments and, of course, students.

Ford may think that this will be an easy fight but given the support shown to teachers he is in for a rough ride. More than two thirds of parents polled are angry at the



cuts and are siding with the teachers. The strike mandates from the teachers unions are remarkably strong with high school teachers voting 95 per cent in favour of a strike and elementary

teachers voting 98 per cent in favour.

Still, we should expect to see the fight get dirty. Indeed, we are already seeing some slimy tactics used by the Tories including setting up

fake "concerned parents" groups to attack teachers. And the online vitriol against the teachers is clearly being organized.

Ford and his education minister Stephen Lecce, have said that they need to make these cuts to eliminate the deficit. Don't believe them. They gave a \$3.9 billion tax cut to the richest in the province and raised the salaries of his deputy ministers and bureaucrats by 14 per cent. He didn't ask any of those people to take the deficit into consideration.

It will be up to community members, unions and student groups to stand with the teachers and to make sure they are not isolated and vilified by Ford and his cronies.

There are rallies, picket lines and community support events happening all over the province as this fight ramps up.

Find a local picket line or rally in your area and stop by to show your support for the teachers in their fight for quality

public education.

More coverage on the teachers on page 2