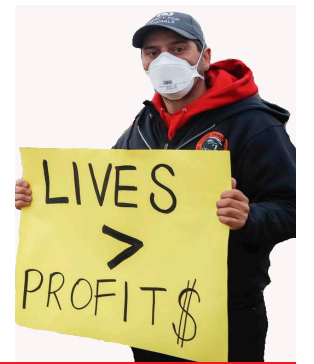




Bosses make billions but workers are fighting back

pages 4-5



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WE WON'T DIE FOR THEIR PROFITS



Jeff Bezos made \$24 billion during the covid pandemic. His workers are fired for speaking out and many are getting sick.

Long term care: Death for profit

I am a senior. I am a lung transplant recipient reliant on medication that suppresses my immune system. As a side effect that medication has destroyed my kidneys, so I must attend hospital 3 times a week for dialysis. If I encounter Covid-19 it will almost certainly kill me.

That's bad enough. But if the virus kills me, it will be aided and abetted by a gang that argues that protecting "the economy" is more important than protecting human life.

That includes BC Tory MP Marc Dalton. He tweets: "Most deaths are in care homes where average life expectancy is 2 years and 65% usually pass in the 1st yr. Time to start moving Canada back to work?"

If I'm considering those sobering statistics about LTC facilities in Canada, my first thought isn't "Well fuck 'em, let 'em die." It is "That's disgraceful. What can we do to make them safer and better."

But hey, who cares what I think. I'm old, I'm unproductive, I'm costing the system more than I'm "worth" and I'm going to die anyway. I am one of about a billion people—the old, the very young, the sick, the unemployed—on Earth who are surplus to capitalism's system of production and consumption. So why not let the virus do the dirty work, cull the herd.

South of the now-closed border, Indiana congressman Trey Hollingsworth couldn't agree more. He says it is time to "put on our big boy and big girl pants" and sacrifice useless, unprofitable geezers like me on the altar of capitalism: "[i]t is always the American government's position to say, in the choice between the loss of our way of life as Americans and the loss of life, of American lives, we have to always choose the latter."

And it isn't just elders whose lives are disposable. TV quack Dr. Oz wants America to "get our mojo back" by re-starting the economy, starting with schools: "Schools are a very appetizing opportunity. I just



LTC workers protest for protective equipment in Bradford

saw a nice piece in The Lancet arguing the opening of schools may only cost us 2 to 3%, in terms of total mortality. Any, you know, any life is a life lost, but ... that might be a tradeoff some folks would consider."

Mass murder advocates like these trivialize the lives and deaths of human being with statistics. About 56.6 million kids attended US schools in 2019. So Dr. Oz is blithely shrugging off the potential deaths of between 1,132,000 and 1,698,000 children. Very appetizing.

Death for profit

There are some 5 million Canadians over 65, as of the last census. Of those about 7% live in LTC facilities, about 355,000 people. That is a small percentage of the population, yet more than half of our deaths (540 as of April 15) from Covid-19 have occurred in LTC facilities, retirement residences or residential care facilities.

You can look at this two ways.

You can join the "Nature is a killer, screw the old and the weak" school of thought with Dalton/Hollingsworth/Oz and the rest of the open-for-business crowd.

Or you can ask, as I do, what is there about our LTC facilities that makes them death traps.

First, for profit LTC is big business. If those 355,000 seniors spend an average of \$2000 per month for residence that comes to around \$17 billion annual revenue. Granted, some facilities are publicly run, bringing the number down a bit. But still—big money.

Most LTC residents do not have private space. Usually they live 4 to a room and social distancing is impossible. "Isolation" is a matter of pulling a curtain.

LTC care jobs are low paid, often minimum wage jobs. To keep labour costs down, workers are hired as contract or part time workers. This means

bosses don't have to pay for sick days and benefits. So workers have to find work in two or more LTC locations; if infected, they spread the virus among the most vulnerable population. Dr. Donald Low, in his book SARS: Lessons From Toronto called these workers "superspreaders".

Ford failures

In Ontario, the Ford government waited until April 14 to prohibit health care workers from attending multiple locations. They knew this was unsafe but let the bodies pile up until they could no longer resist the public outcry.

But wait—at the behest of the LTC industry lobby, Ford exempted casual or temp employees from his ban. That means that a significant proportion of the LTC workforce are still functioning as superspreaders. Ford responded by saying that only 2% of LTC nurses and nurse practitioners are temps. He carefully neglected to

mention that the bulk of temp workers are cleaners, food prep workers or other vital support staff.

On top of this, provinces were slow to restrict family and friends from visiting LTC facilities. There are heart breaking stories of dealing with the guilt of learning that they carried in the virus that killed their loved ones.

But visitors were allowed in because they performed free labour, providing care that their loved ones might not otherwise receive from over-stretched staff.

All of the issues leading to high mortality rates lead to the fact that this system is designed not to prioritize care, but to make money. For profit LTC is always looking for ways to cut costs, especially the labour of a workforce that is predominantly female, drawn from new Canadian populations, and underpaid regardless of their skills and dedication.

Racism, ageism and misogyny play their role in spreading Covid-19. Underfunding of public facilities parallels the private ones. A year ago Ford froze the pay for this sector. All but the most expensive facilities provide minimal care.

From a human care point of view, from the point of view of the workers, the crisis in LTC started long before Covid-19. I encourage you to read this interview SW published last August, describing the wretched conditions faced by residents and workers alike.

It is true that the LTC population is vulnerable, but with real isolation, better working conditions and an approach that put human life over profit, many live could have been saved.

Don't buy the merciless crap being spread by ghouls like Dr. Oz and Tory MP Dalton. The death toll isn't just up to nature. It is the result of a social system, of ruthless, conscious decisions. If it gets me, put their share of the blame on those who want to treat me and my generation as disposable.

Kenney attacks Alberta's rural health care

The Alberta United Conservative government of Jason Kenney is leading the way in using COVID-19 as an excuse to destroy public services and workers' lives.

Kenney and his rogue health minister Tyler Shandro just announced they will invest \$500 million of public funds into privately owned surgical services.

"Albertans deserve a world-class health system that delivers the right care, in the right setting, at the right time," said Kenney, careful to include all the buzzwords. The speech doesn't explain why the same money invested in public health care wouldn't have the same or better outcomes.

To be fair, Kenney started attacking public health before the pandemic arrived. His government slashed funding for nursing and ripped up doctors' contracts in February, arbitrarily cutting their pay by 20%. All told the UCP plans to cut \$1.9 billion from health spending, and privatizing the whole range of services like

catering, cleaning and lab work.

Kenney has targeted family medicine doctors, the practitioners who actually spent time getting to know their clients. Preventative medicine is to be replaced by on-line or phone consultations with privately owned, anonymous doctors who don't know the patient's full history.

Doctors are shutting down their practices and leaving the province as a result.

Conflict of interest

But privatizers like Health Minister Sandro are making out just fine. He and his wife own and operate a for-profit health services and insurance company called Vital Partners. Shandro angrily denies this amounts to a gross conflict of interest. Kenney is ignoring calls to fire him.

Educators are also waiting for the axe to fall on public education. One of Kenney's first acts was to order Alberta school boards to remove the word "public" from



Alberta nurses protest Kenney's cuts to health care

their names and all their correspondence. Cuts have already caused the loss of thousands of teaching and education support jobs.

Rural no more

One thing holding the UCP back

from privatizing more was a legal commitment to support health care in rural communities. That support was never generous. According to Al Kemmere, president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, small towns supported 20% of the

population but got only 5.8% of the health budget. And it was hard to attract doctors—since Kenney's cuts it has become near impossible.

The regulations allowed rural doctors to charge the government a premium, as a way to keep them in the communities.

On April 25 Kenney announced that more than a 140 small towns and villages would no longer qualify as "rural". The explosion of anger in the Conservative hinterland was immediate and total.

The next day Shandro tried to walk it back, saying the change was a clerical error. Even Tory supporters didn't believe it. NDP health critic David Shepherd simply called Shandro a liar: "The minister clearly lied when he was asked to define. He knew he was changing that definition on Friday. His bulletin says he has changed that definition"

It remains to be seen how much political damage the privatization stumbling has cost Kenney and the UCP.

Racism, Imperialism and COVID-19

by Sid Lacombe

Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State stated that there is, “enormous evidence” that the coronavirus that produces COVID-19 was produced in a lab in China. This is nonsense. Pompeo himself presented no evidence that this is the case and his statement comes soon after the official US intelligence report saying completely the opposite. Most scientists agree - there is no evidence that the virus was deliberately produced by China.

This should come as no surprise for those of us who have watched US politicians lie about everything from weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (there weren't any) or that the war in Afghanistan was being won by the NATO (it wasn't). Yet despite the lack of evidence, Trump, Pompeo and their right-wing followers are using this statement to further ramp up attacks on China which inevitably results in more racism against people of East Asian backgrounds.

Racism and Imperialism

Like Islamophobia, this racism is deeply rooted in the needs of western imperialism. Muslims are targeted because the states that many of them live in are sitting on top of enormous oil wealth and key strategic areas of the world that the US wants to control. In the case of China, successive US governments have been deeply worried about the possibility that China could become a serious rival for US dominance of the globe and some in the US see the COVID crisis as a chance to ramp up the pressure to reduce China's standing.

There will be problems for the



Anti-Chinese racism in Nanaimo, BC

sections of the US ruling class - those businesses that rely on China as a manufacturer of cheap goods or as a place to dump western products. But so far during the Trump administration they have kept quiet just as along as the tax cuts and corporate bailouts continue.

Trump's concerns over China are not unique to his administration. Under Barack Obama, the US focussed more attention on the region as well. Obama's, “pivot to Asia” was designed to slow Chinese influence in the immediate area and as a show of military force to stop Beijing from expending.

The “belt and road” initiative launched by China in 2013 to provide an alternative source of development money for poorer countries was seen as a direct challenge to the US dominated global order set up after WWII and was part of Obama's justification for sabre rattling.

The economic crisis will make this confrontation hotter. Economic competition will be increasingly fierce between the rival blocs and the possibility of trade wars and or

military actions is increased.

Canadian conservatives get their cue

It didn't take long for Conservative racists to take their cue from Trump and start their own attacks. The specific target for many of them has been Dr Theresa Tam, the Chief Public Health Officer in Canada.

Derek Sloan, the Conservative MP for Hastings - Lennox and Addington made headlines when he tweeted that Dr Tam, “needs to work for Canada. Not for the WHO or any other foreign entity.” He wasn't the first. Alberta premier, Jason Kenney had already launched his own attacks on Dr Tam a week prior. Kenney said he disagreed with her assessment of the COVID-19 crisis saying, “this is the same Dr. Tam who was telling us that we shouldn't close our borders to countries with high levels of infection and who in January was repeating talking points out of the PRC (People's Republic of China) about no evidence of human-to-human transmission.”

Kenney managed to include the 3 racist talking points all in one

sentence. In his mind, migrants, China and, by extension, the World Health Organization are all to blame for the crisis.

For Trump and Kenney the racism will help divert attention from the failings of their own governments. The litany of failures by Trump has been well documented from underfunding the Center for Disease Control to the elimination of the pandemic preparedness program. For Kenney, he is overseeing the collapse of the Alberta economy and needs a scapegoat. He is desperate to get people back to work in meat packing plants in Alberta, despite the lack of proper protections for the workers. Kenney is literally sending people to die at work and laying the ground-work to blame China for the fact that they will get sick.

Racist Attacks

This rhetoric has resulted in a dramatic increase in attacks against people of East Asian backgrounds. In Vancouver, the Chinese cultural association was vandalized. There are daily reports of racist attacks across the country. The Chinese Canadian

National Council of Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) commissioned a poll that found a huge rise in racism with almost a quarter of people surveyed saying that they would not sit next to anyone who looked East Asian on a bus. The Korean consulate in Montreal has been forced to issue warnings after a Korean man was stabbed in a racist attack in Montreal. The Canadian Union of Public employees in Manitoba surveyed their members and found that more than 20 percent of those who identify as East Asian have faced a racist attack while working in health care since the virus began. The list goes on and on.

To be clear, the government in China, and the WHO do have things to answer for in relation to this crisis. But so do many other governments. Trump literally called out the failures of the Chinese government right before suggesting people inject bleach into their bodies. He is not a credible arbiter of what constitutes an appropriate response.

Either way, people are not responsible for the actions of governments and the attacks on China are motivated by much larger geo-political machinations.

As the economic crisis deepens, we will see ruling classes increasingly look to military adventurism and scapegoating to divide and rule workers. The right wing is using this increased racism to build their forces and they can be seen at the anti-lock-down protests erupting throughout the world peddling their conspiracies.

But we have beaten them back before - by confronting the bigots in the streets and by building the alternative to a system that wants to keep workers divided and weak. Those efforts will need to be re-doubled in the coming months and years.

Support laid off transit workers in BC

Over 1500 workers, including 1200 transit operators, have now been laid off by Translink as the public's use of the service declines drastically. But don't worry, we're told, there are still cuts in pay for executives.

This. Is. Ridiculous.

The Globe and Mail reports that the use of these services by the public has declined by 83%, down to roughly 75,000, resulting in the loss of \$70 million in April and likely to get worse. Translink may be owned by the provincial government, but the provincial government does not have any control over how the enterprise works. The service collects its revenue through property taxes, taxes on gasoline and through fares, of which there are almost none now. All the main sources of Translink's funding have sharply declined.

Turns out, Translink is not governed by municipal governments and therefore

cannot be backed up by the city's reserves. Translink functions like a capitalist enterprise, with boards of directors and a CEO. Only last year in 2019, the Vancouver Sun reported that these executives decided to give themselves an increase in pay, with the 6 executives previously earning a combined total of 1.7 million in 2018. After the raise, the CEO's salary had been bumped up to \$406,634-\$517,443, when previously it was \$325,092-\$406,634, an increase of 25%. The executives saw a raise in income by 11%-18%. Even though in the years leading up to this, workers had seen an increase in wages by 18% (since they are unionized), the pay disparity between the workers and the top executives is appalling and above all: undemocratic.

The following must not come as a surprise: legally, Translink simply cannot lay off 1500 workers arbitrarily. As a result, they now



have a legal challenge on their hands. Unifor has announced, as reported by global news, that this is a violation of the labour relations code. According to the labour relations code, workers are to be given a 60 days' notice before any lay off of this kind. Unifor is now calling for these workers to either be re hired or be paid during those 60 days.

The case for a true industrial democracy

Here's a potential solution: give total ownership to the railway workers and give them managerial control over the transit system. The solution to deal with

the crisis cannot be small cuts in pay for executives and the destruction of the livelihood of thousands of workers; doesn't sound like a generous trade off. What must happen is that the executives should be put out of a job, since they aren't that many and then the workers should be given permanent ownership and managerial control. You will now have far less people losing their livelihood, since it's fair to say that the executives have enough money saved up to weather the storm and workers remain on their paychecks. Furthermore, if the executives are to be put out of work, the chunks of the revenue that would otherwise be directed towards the income of the executives, the distribution of this saved revenue can then be democratically decided by the workers.

Now, since we are in the midst of a pandemic, it would be good if essential workers like railway

and transit workers, get a rest and appreciation for being in the frontlines. So, if they are to be sent home, for whatever reason, the bosses have absolutely no right to lay them off without pay. We, as a society, pay lip service to the work being done by transit workers and other essential workers and yet, the financial realities of their jobs are not reflective of this praise. If transit workers are essential, this should reflect in the way in which they are compensated. We must ask ourselves, whether in a true democracy we would let over a thousand workers be laid off without pay. This again, shows that we do not live in a true democracy for if we did, democracy would begin in the arena that people are dependent on for their livelihood; workers have no option but to work under a corporate dictatorship. This is what socialists and anti-capitalists are fighting for and must continue to fight for, all over the world, now more than ever.

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS

Workers, class consciousness and the ruling class response to COVID

by: **Zain ul Haq**

In Canada, during a time when we now have millions not working - 4.5 million already having applied for emergency unemployment and a potential unemployment rate of around 25% in the near future - it is causing workers to ask: Why is it that the concept of unemployment exists in the first place? Why do we have a situation where we need to work to avoid economic catastrophe? The answer is complex but we have to recognize one factor that is staring at us in the face, which is the following: We live in a country and indeed in a world, where society is divided into the categories of workers and bosses. This is regardless of the fact that we have now seen quite clearly, as we do during every economic downturn, that bosses and CEO's are dispensable and in fact a burden, while workers are necessary and are the back bone of the economy.

Jobs that bourgeois society is supposed to view with scorn and pity: grocery store workers, technicians, hospital workers, cleaners, janitors and essential drivers are now being recognized as "essential", without whom our economy will fall into chaos and poverty. Workers serve as an essential pillar of bourgeois comfort and workers are now seeing it. This pillar developing its own class consciousness could lead to a real challenge to the ruling class.

Cutting corners

Jolson Lim, with IPolitics reports that an analysis by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, authored by Economist David Macdonald, reveals that one third of the 2.7 million unemployed work force will get nothing in the form of EI (Employment Insurance) support. That's 862,000 Canadian workers.



Toronto transit workers walk out protesting lack of protective equipment

The layoff has resulted in job losses for more than 1.5 million workers, who will surely be followed by many more in coming weeks and months. The report also reveals that workers who haven't shown that they earned \$5000 a year before they were laid off, will also not receive a dime from CERB (Canadian Emergency Response Benefit). That's 257,000 Canadians. According to Macdonald as reported by Huffington Post "If you were unemployed before Covid-19 hit, you get nothing from CERB..." This needs to be seen as a sign of the government's extreme incompetence and failure to provide support to Canadian workers, especially when there is a Prime Minister who comes out of his man cave, looks straight into the camera and say "we have your back, we're going to be there for you". This is either deception or incompetence.

Trudeau considers it to be his responsibility to constantly repeat anecdotes of this company here and that company there doing something minor in order to deal with the cri-

sis, like saying "Autoliv is looking to make medical gowns out of material they'd normally use to make airbags". This however, is an example of how Trudeau thinks that it is somehow these anecdotal examples that balance the millions who are to be laid off by businesses all over Canada. In a more honest mood, someday, perhaps we will see him come out and make the aforementioned statement, followed by the latest unemployment statistics and then followed by a facial expression that may reveal the recognition of the absurdity of the entire mess.

Killing the environment

Jason Kenney has announced that Alberta's unemployment rate is very likely to go up to 25%, much worse than the great recession. Over a week ago, Kenney announced a \$6 billion loan guarantee in the Key Stone XL pipeline project. The premier is also pressuring the government to have a "credit backstop" that will make it easier for banks to extend credit to corporations.

"Our estimate is that the quantum required in terms of liquidity for the sector now is in the range of \$20-30 billion," said Kenney, as reported by CBC. Needless to say, these pipeline projects are going to be disastrous for the future of this country and indeed the world. Once again, projects that impact the lives of millions outside of the project are conducted and function through the decisions made by a small group of a few dozen people at the top of these corporations and government officials and technocrats doing their bidding. We all have to live with the consequences of these decisions but don't have a say in it at all; an insult to democracy.

Workers' control of production

Now, why is it that we are so often expecting and celebrating the charity of a few businesses to produce medical supplies, respirators and other medical equipment? The answer is simple: It is because the decision of what to do with the profits of a com-

pany is determined by a board of directors and not workers. If it were workers who were to make these decisions, there wouldn't be the occasional headline of a few companies producing medical equipment, but all enterprises, if run by workers, would likely be doing so, since it would be in the interest of the workers. We also know that if productive enterprises were owned and being run by workers, there would be no such thing as "unemployment". In such a scenario workers would be recipients of the entirety of the profits of the enterprise, instead of much of it going to shareholders, CEOs and boards of directors who do not do any productive work. However, a democratic workplace would be the end of capitalism and that's why we don't have it right now. In worker run enterprises like the Mondragon conglomerate in Spain, workers learn many different aspects of production and division of labor, so, during a pandemic and crises, a shift in labor is easy to coordinate amongst the workers.

As the crisis of capitalism deepens under the pandemic, the line between the ruling class and the working class is as clear as ever. Workers are now seeing how the economy can come to a halt if people stop working for weeks. We are in the midst of an involuntary general strike and any future labor organizing will naturally have to involve this recognition. During crises like the one we are in the middle of right now, we must not forget that this can be seen as an opportunity for workers to resolve the problems faced under capitalism, which is to organize in order to seize control over production and extend democracy into the workplace, if we want to avoid the many side effects of pandemics, for this is not the last one to hit us.

Nationalize GM Oshawa



**MANUFACTURE N95 MASKS
IN OSHAWA NOW
Sign the Petition**

Workers at the GM plant in Oshawa are calling on the federal government to nationalize the idle auto plant and to retool the facility to make urgently needed PPE. Sign the petition to support the campaign at: <https://www.greenjobsoshowa.ca/petitionn95.html>



Delivery workers deserve hazard pay!

by **Paula Greenberg**

Thousands of packages are processed daily by private courier companies and postal service workers across Canada. While shipping and handling corporations continue to operate during the pandemic, the health and safety of workers is a growing concern. In the US, there has been illnesses and deaths among workers prompting a walk-out of Amazon FedEx and Instacart workers on May Day. We must support these actions as these workers deserve respect. They are deemed essential workers and are putting themselves at risk to keep goods moving across the country. They deserve hazard pay, they deserve proper safety regulations.

In Canada, there is a very similar anger growing among postal and shipping workers. Speaking to a worker at the one of the largest courier distribution facilities in Canada, their fear of workers getting sick and dying is becoming real as more and more are missing from work. The corporation is not denying nor

confirming there is an outbreak in the facility leaving workers in the dark if they have become exposed to COVID19.

“We can’t say anything... we might be fired... we are putting people’s lives at risk.”

Even though management is claiming they are taking precautions by giving gloves and masks, there is no transparency of how many are ill. Both the corporation and the union have failed to provide information to workers about the possible cases in the facility. “We can’t say anything... we might be fired... we are putting people’s lives at risk.” said the worker as they expressed that the company is built on their hard work. If they called in sick, they would

have to self-isolate for 14 days without pay or come in sick.

Another significant point that this worker stated is that many of the workers are from the Jane and Finch area, and “who cares if we die?” Black and brown communities are disproportionately affected by COVID 19. As many racialized workers are in the service industry, many do not see sick pay or hazard pay.

When talking about the government response, the worker said, “the employees have no outlet to speak up and there is nobody to listen to them, there’s no Ford, there’s no Trudeau.” The governments’ response to a \$4 top up for essential workers fails to extend to those in shipping and handling. Due to the public nature of this industry, workers are routinely exposed.

There needs to be respect for postal workers for the essential service they provide. They spend their day making sure the packages and goods we send to our loved ones are delivered on time. They too, like the healthcare workers, deserve better pay and working conditions!

Capitalism is a Junkie and Its Drug is Profit

by **Carolyn Egan**

The carnage goes on as the vulnerable continue to suffer and die. As of this writing, almost 3000 health care workers in Ontario have been diagnosed with Covid-19. Four of them have lost their lives, three personal support workers and one sanitation staff. Sharon Roberts was fifty nine years old and worked at Downsview Long term Care Centre in North York. She was loved by those she cared for, and her fellow workers. In that facility fifty six residents have been infected, fourteen have died, and forty six workers have contracted the virus, most are women and people of colour. These are preventable deaths and illnesses which can be directly blamed on the provincial government.

It’s unconscionable that the province of Ontario deregulated this sector. Only nine planned inspections took place last year. The conditions that the personal support workers and other staff have to endure resulted in the devastation: the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), part time work that forced PSWs into part time jobs, rushing from one facility to another, with low pay and no benefits. As a union representative said in a statement, “We’re hearing a loud chorus of cries from health care workers asking for masks, being withheld due to rationing.”

Fellow workers at another facility held a “physically distanced” demonstration decrying the death of a sister and a cavalcade of cars joined them. Workers and their union, the Services Employees International Union (SEIU), organized another “car demonstration” from different locations surrounding the provincial legislature. Health workers should not be demonstrating alone and as many as possible should join these actions decrying the conditions.

The Ontario Health Coalition held a virtual Day of Action on May 1st, international workers day, which was quite fitting. It is calling for: no more “for profit care”, immediately improved access to PPE, permanently improved wages and full time work, four hour minimum care standard, and better infection control.

The call to end “for profit” facilities is an important demand on the government, upping the stakes, taking on corporate greed, protecting our public health system, and taking back gains made by the privateers. There is huge support for improved standards in long term care because of the horror that has been exposed. We can win these demands through broad based organizing and every union should come out publically supporting them.

But it is not only health workers, you need only look at North American meat packing plants. There

have been significant outbreaks of Covid-19 because of the conditions in which people are forced to work. At Cargill Meat Solutions in High River, Alberta there have been 900 cases and one death in a work force made up of 2,000 mainly immigrant workers. The plant shut down and was scheduled to reopen May 4th. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) went to court to try to stop it, but the chief medical officer of health for the province said that “all means are being put in place” to allow it to resume production. The workers and their union dispute this. The husband of the worker who died, Bui Thi Hiep, held a press conference and others demonstrated outside the plant.

JBS is another multinational that also has a huge facility in Alberta which had significant outbreaks of the virus and one death. Hundreds are not showing up for work. Between the two companies they make up 70% of beef production



in the country and are showing a racist disregard for the health and safety of the workers in the interest of profit. These are massive plants with harsh conditions, workers are close together, the lines are very fast with discipline if you slow down, and a lack of protective equipment. The situation is intolerable for the employees and their families who are also contracting Covid-19.

Workers at Tyson, JBS and other plants in the US are facing the same situation and have been refusing to go to work. As one said to the media, “I have family and grandkids that I love and I’m not going to risk their lives to cut some damn hogs up.” Several fellow workers have died at his plant and he stated, “Tyson has no morals for me or for my life”. The workers are facing this life and death situation every day, and are fighting back with high rates of absenteeism, demanding better conditions on the line, at shift change, in the cafeterias etc. There is no social distancing, they are pushing hard for PPE and defying their bosses. One demonstrator held a sign saying, “We are essential but not disposable”, expressing the anger of the workers and their families.

The corporate greed and the racism is shocking when you look at the statistics on who is getting ill and dying in these workplaces. The owners and their lackeys in governments are running rough shod over the lives of working people whether in long term care, meat packing or any other industry where workers do not control their conditions. As was once said, “capitalism is a junkie and its drug is profit”. The system is corrupt to its very core and must be taken on. We have to provide solidarity to all those who are being exploited and oppressed, and continue to fight for real change in a transformed society in a post Covid world.

Indigenous sovereignty, pandemic and the Wet'suwet'en struggle

by **Brian Champ**

At the beginning of March, immediately following the end of the talks between Liberal government ministers and the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, CGL began preparing for continuing the construction of the fracked gas pipeline over unceded Wet'suwet'en land.

Indeed, the RCMP and CGL never left the territory since they occupied it in early February. Rallies, marches and rail, port and road blockades by Indigenous land defenders and settler allies across so-called Canada in January and February interrupted the pipeline dreams of the 1% and forced the federal government to negotiate.

But there is a disjuncture between recognizing Wet'suwet'en territorial rights while allowing RCMP and CGL free rein of those territories. Similar to the Reconciliation process, rhetorical flourishes recognizing Wet'suwet'en legal title mask the same colonial policies that have operated for more than 150 years.

The disastrous COVID-19 pandemic has put a damper on the protests that shook government and industry earlier this year.

Eve Saint, one of the Wet'suwet'en land defenders who was arrested at Gidimt'en checkpoint during the RCMP invasion on February 7 put it this way:

"The year 2020 has certainly been historic for some already with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs evicting CGL, living on the land the way we are meant to be, RCMP raid, Shut down Canada and now a Pandemic that has actually shut down the world, it's definitely a peculiar time. But not a time to let this stop our progress in fighting climate change and standing for Indigenous rights."

And the pandemic is dangerous for Indigenous people not just because it has paused the historic Wet'suwet'en Solidarity movement but also because First Nations communities and Indigenous people remain among the most vulnerable to the ravages of such infections. Lack of access to clean water or adequate medical facilities and supplies on many reserves mean they will struggle to follow public health guidelines regarding hand-washing, the wearing of masks, not to mention isolation and quarantine facilities and ventilators. Indigenous people off reserve face grave challenges as they are more likely to live in poverty, lack access to healthy food and decent housing or be incarcerated.

Saint described these challenges and what settlers can do to help Indigenous people and communities at this crucial time.

"We definitely need more help with resources making sure people can pay their rent, Indigenous people have been removed from their homes and land since colonization and we see a lot of displacement and homelessness in our Indigenous communities especially since Canada is stolen land we still see the impact til this day, it would be a great way to help Indigenous people who may face losing their homes it's hard enough to find an affordable apartment in Toronto.

There are families that may not have the means to get the food and supplies they need especially with jobs shutting down or be at more health risk going into public spaces if there can be some mobilization support especially for our elders in our community the ones who carry on our traditions, ceremonies, and culture. We need to keep our elders safe.

It's always a must to check in with the Indigenous organizers they see what needs to be done in their community or what resources they are in need of."

Highlighting these concerns, many First Nations communities have restricted access to their communities: on Haida Gwaii territory, where boats and planes are being turned away from the islands; on Six Nations territory, they are restricting access to limit overcrowding of visitors "due to the large amount of non-residents entering the territory to buy cigarettes

and gas."; Atikameksheng (Whitefish Lake) and Wahnapiatae Anishnawbek First Nations are restricting access; on Naotkamegwaning First Nation, in a remote location is shutting down access by air, the only way to access their community.

Shut down CGL

The challenge for the Wet'suwet'en people is that their ability to protect their own unceded territory has been impeded by the presence of RCMP arresting and harassing them and escorting CGL workers onto the territory to continue building the pipeline. And not only has construction on BC megaprojects continued, the industry has continued to flood BC First Nations with resource extraction proposals - 30 in the Skeetchestn First Nation alone. If a proposals is not responded to within 30 days, consultation rights for First Nations could be denied.



High school students march for Wet'suwet'en

Non-essential business is supposed to be shut down to protect public health by slowing the spread of this novel virus, and yet the CGL man camps are filling up with workers from all over the province and beyond. This is the modern equivalent of the smallpox infected HBC blankets that were used to exterminate Indigenous people in the past, with the man camps acting as incubators for this disease that none have immunity to. As Eve Saint explains:

"This is definitely enraging to me when I found out that CGL is continuing their work in Wet'suwet'en territories and all these outside workers coming from all over, coming into Wet'suwet'en territories putting our people at risk, our elders. I am currently in Houston in so called British Columbia right around the corner from the motel where these workers are staying and it's very disturbing. Our grocery stores and public places are at higher risk now of catching the virus. Again we are seeing Indigenous Genocide and the Canadian government with no regard for Indigenous life. Industry and the Government is using this pandemic holding us hostage to their advantage its disgusting and absurd."

For many in the movement for climate justice, it has been clear for some time that business as usual cannot continue if we hope to tackle this existential challenge. The prioritization of oil and gas infrastructure by the Canadian and BC governments in a moment when the world scientific consensus tells us we have to keep the carbon in the ground, shows the shortsightedness of an economic system that puts profits for the elites ahead of people or a sustainable environment. The Liberals have been contorting themselves to present the image that they are acting for the climate while they buy pipelines and double-down on tar sands development, arguing that they can't make drastic changes all at once.

Governments who tell us they are on the job have all been

cutting public health and healthcare budgets for generations, leaving us vulnerable for such a crisis. While Indigenous communities remain the most vulnerable for these criteria, people's ability to access social assistance and other services has been severely curtailed and real wages and working conditions have been driven down through decimation of good union jobs and the rise of the gig economy. Even as governments call for people to stay home, workers have had to stand up for their own rights to shut workplaces down. Those in essential jobs, such as healthcare workers and transit workers, have been forced to stand up for their rights to personal protective equipment (PPE) which have been in inadequate supply for the scale of the crisis.

Governments have shown their ability to fund drastic changes in a short timeframe, and people have modified their behaviour putting the lie to arguments against drastic changes to halt the climate crisis. But the solutions on offer from government in the middle of this crisis, where they bail out industry and let workers lose their jobs, or where pipelines are allowed to go through Wet'suwet'en land over the objections of Indigenous people across the country, it will simply pave the way for future economic and health crises. We need system change to build a world where food production isn't beholden to the interests of global corporations, but is subordinated to human need and sustainability. We need energy production that sustainably fulfills human needs, instead of meeting the profit requirements of the vested interests. Many Indigenous people, see that capitalism needs to be resisted and Indigenous communities need to act together to ensure traditional land rights. Saint is clear on what this means for the future:

"We are already witnessing the world cannot be sustained through industry and capitalism. We are too dependent on others that have no regard for our lives to provide us with clean drinking water, food, warmth and housing. The government already lacks immensely in these areas for Indigenous people and industry continues to destroy our lands, water, and communities. I really hope we can learn from this and move into more sustainable living, food security and protect our clean water. Let's take some more power back and put it in the hands of our people, for our health and well-being."

For socialists this points to a potential alliance between the working class and Indigenous revolutionaries, who both have an objective interest in the demise of the capitalist system of exploitation. For those in the working class it's important to champion Indigenous rights to free, prior and informed consent to projects on their own unceded territories. In addition, there are many Indigenous people who are workers, and working class revolutionaries must be the tribune of the oppressed, fighting for solidarity from the whole working class for those most marginalized by the system.

We can fight for a different world, to end the exploitation of labour at the point of production through workers' collective seizing control of their workplaces, for Indigenous Self-Determination on the stolen lands of Turtle Island and for the adoption of Indigenous principles of sustainability for the whole of society.

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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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 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

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Rent strike!

by **Sid Lacombe**

With unemployment rates soaring since the introduction of physical distancing and the closure of many businesses, many people around the world found that they could not pay rent. The call went up quickly to form tenant groups and organize rent strikes to support renters.

On April 1st most (roughly 80 per cent) of people in Ontario were able to pay their rent. This was mainly because people still had some income and could scrounge to pay that month. But as the crisis continues and the economy crumbles, there will be many more fights on this front in coming months.



Can't Pay Won't Pay Don't Pay



Doug Ford called on landlords to halt eviction proceedings against renters. This was not a decision he wanted to make. Remember Ford is a good friend of the developers - even offering to allow them to destroy the green belt so they could build fancy condos. But the reality is that evictions are continuing and the province has done nothing to stop them. This will get worse in the coming months. There are already new tent encampments springing up in Toronto as people are pushed from their houses.

Housing was already in crisis before the covid pandemic started. The average cost of monthly rent for a 1 bedroom apartment in Toronto was at \$1600 at the beginning of March. If renters had signed a lease in the previous 12 months, the average rent was \$2300. Rents were already far too high for most people.

The Canadian emergency response benefit (CERB) is set at roughly \$2000 a month which mean many renters will be deciding between food and shelter. It is an untenable position. Landlords have managed to get access to the CERB database and are telling tenants that they know they received the cash and are therefore demanding payment.

There is a long history of fighting for the rights of tenants and it would be good for us to learn from the tactics used in the past. In the days of the depression in the 30's, there was a mass movement that developed to stop evictions. People would gather at the homes of renters facing eviction and physically blockade the bailiff who were kicking people out. They also organized mass demonstrations to confront some of the most greedy landlords who were publicly shamed.

In Toronto, a recent action at the homes of landlords George Grossman (CEO, Pinedale Properties) and Daniel Drimmer (CEO, Starlight) called for an end to evictions and for rent forgiveness. These type of tactics - designed to shame landlords have been growing and will need the support of much larger forces if we are to stop the attacks on renters.

REVIEW

The life and thought of Frederick Engels

by **Faline Bobier**

This is the way Camilla Royle begins her *Rebel's Guide to Engels*: "Friedrich Engels was born on 28 November 1820 in Barmen (now Wuppertal) in what is now Germany. Despite being from a fairly wealthy family he went on to become one of history's most important revolutionary socialists. He was a disappointment to his parents and a traitor to his class."

This little book is a great addition to the previous *Rebel's Guides* on socialists and activists such as Marx, Trotsky, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai and Malcolm X, all available from Bookmarks.

There have been many attempts, often by academics, to separate Marx and Engels and to label Engels the less gifted thinker of the two or the crude materialist who could not follow Marx's genius. Royle's book does a lot to correct this false picture of Engels and to give him his due as a radical thinker in his own right.

But in a real sense the whole of Marx and Engel's output should be seen as a collaboration in many ways. Firstly, there is the fact that Marx's theoretical output would have been severely limited without the financial support that Engels offered to Marx and his family throughout their lives, particularly when Marx was toiling over *Capital*.

On a deeper level, though, the collaboration between these two radical thinkers and activists influenced the course of both their work and their lives.

Shortly after Marx and Engels met, when they were in their early to mid-twenties, they would collaborate on writing *The Communist Manifesto*, originally written as the founding document of *The Communist League* (formerly called *The League of the Just*). Both Marx and Engels had much to do with the transformation of the league's politics, signified by the change in the league's slogan from "all men are brothers" to "Working men of all countries, unite!"

Marx and Engels were influenced by the ideas available to them at the time, including the ideas of the Utopian socialists. But they would travel beyond the limitations of these utopian ideas, in fact turning them on their heads. Through their collaboration and their observation of workers' struggles and workers' material conditions (as in Engels first book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*) they came to see that it was through workers' interaction with the conditions of their existence and not through

some blueprint drawn up by middle-class socialists, that the impetus for change would come.

Their shared vision of socialism was put forward by Engels in a work which is still very valuable today: *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, a book which highlights their materialist philosophy and provides a critique of the ideas of Utopian socialists, no matter how much they may have admired



their efforts in the struggle for human emancipation.

After the death of Marx, Engels revisited Marx's notes on the work of anthropologist Lewis Morgan, who studied still existing hunter/gatherer societies to build a picture of pre-class societies.

Origins of Family Private Property and the State

Out of this work Engels published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* - still a ground-breaking and important book which established important insights into the origins of the modern state, the division of society into classes and the rise of the modern family, which Engels refers to as

'the world historic defeat of the female sex'.

Some of the evidence Engels cites has been subsequently shown to be inaccurate or questionable, based on the incomplete anthropological data available to him at the time of writing, but his general analysis stands. In particular, his understanding that the phenomenon of women's oppression is not some unchanging feature of human nature, but rather a historical and changing reality, depending on the kind of society human beings live in is of critical importance, as British Marxist Chris Harman explains:

"What is important is Engels' insight that there have been variations, even within class society, in the nature of the family and the character of women's oppression. The whole process cannot be subsumed under one single category of "patriarchy" in the way that many modern feminist theorists have tried to do. To say this is not to ignore women's oppression in each case, but to insist on the changes it undergoes - a precondition for recognising it is not some expression of human nature, but a product of concrete historical developments, something that can be done away with by further developments."

Other attempts to discredit Engels have involved looking for signs in his personal life of his hypocrisy or hidden sexism. Some of this has centred around his relationship with Mary and Lizzie Burns, daughters of Irish immigrants who lived in Manchester's most overcrowded slums. But the assumptions in biographical writings about Engel's life that portray the sisters as passive victims of the lustful Engels mostly show the bias of the writers themselves.

It is doubtful that Engels would have been able to write his book on the conditions of the working class in Manchester without the Burns sisters as guides.

This is not to argue that Marx and Engels were perfect, or untouched by the prejudices of the times in which they lived, but the real question remains: which

side were they on? In their life and work they show time and again their concern with the plight of the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, but more than that with their conviction that overturning the brutal system of capitalism was something that could only be accomplished by the same class that was under the thumb of the capitalist exploiters and on whom the capitalists depended for all their wealth creation.

Royle finishes her book this way: "Engels always maintained that another world is both possible and necessary. Today it is just as necessary to learn from his ideas and to fight for a better future." *The Rebel's Guide* is a good place to start if you want to learn more about this important revolutionary.

Liberals, NDP, exclude international students from emergency fund

by Zain ul Haq

The Liberal government's emergency student benefit does nothing for international students, and universities seem to be complicit in this. Trudeau's Liberals passed the \$9 billion Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) contained in bill C-15 on April 29.

In response, students and workers at Simon Fraser University have formed a "Covid-19 coalition", in an attempt to demand support from the government for international students in the country. The group points out that the CESB is not accessible to international students despite the fact that 1 out of 5 post-secondary students are from abroad and hold a study permit. Furthermore, internationals who do not have a valid social insurance number are also not eligible for CERB (Canadian Emergency Response Benefit). "Internationals at SFU face dire circumstances; without access to emergency income support, many are unable to pay their tuition in addition to rent and MSP fees." Their media release also notes: "their labour enriches Canadian culture, boosts the national economy, and helps subsidize domestic students"

Education cuts

An article in Policy Options shows how between 2009 and 2016 federal funding for Universities dropped by \$1.7 billion, which was almost exactly replaced by the increase of \$1.5 billion in international students' tuition fees. Both the size of international student fees and the number of students have been increased

dramatically as the Federal government and university bosses collude to make international students pay for domestic spending cuts.

This reality, which exists in many universities, should make us question the manner in which educational institutions work. What we can see here at SFU is part of a larger tendency of the realization that real power does not actually lie in the hands of the mass of people

have made the amount provided to students with a family unequal to the amount provided to others through CERB. Only after opposition by the NDP, the amount was increased to \$2000, making it equal to the amount provided under CERB, as reported by CTV. However, the NDP did not show responsible and appropriate opposition to the bailout package by advocating for the necessity to support inter-



who make the country, the economy and the education system what it is.

Here are some details on the \$9 billion bailout package: The amount of money allotted to those considered eligible is \$1250 in most cases, while, initially \$1750 for those with a family or other needs. However, this would

nationals. This should tell us that if the Liberal party had it their way, the package would be worse for more students on average. The existing package that does not cover 1 out of 5 students is apparently an improved version of what would have been an even more unequal and unjust emergency response package.

Unemployment and monetary difficulties are contagious

Not only is this unequal treatment of people in the country immoral, in many ways, it is economically foolish and a guarantee for a future crisis. Since all international students and workers serve as essential participants in the economy, a failure to provide economic assistance to them means that you are disabling a large segment of the population from economic participation and purchasing power. If all of these participants have less to spend in the economy, this means that there is bound to be a decline in the production of goods and services, often basic ones and therefore, an increase in unemployment. Economic support cannot be provided based on national status; the economic conditions of each and every one of us have an impact on the rest of the population.

A potential lesson that could be learned from the latest relief package is that Canadians do not have a mass workers' party. There isn't a party that is willing to make enemies within the status quo and go the extra mile so that all those who gather under our schools, educational institutions and enterprises get a fair and equal excess to basic necessary assistance. This is also a reality that can unfortunately result in a divisions within the working class. When a lot of people who are citizens, end up receiving the monetary support, it can often be easy to dismiss the needs of the many who are not citizens. This is summed up in the press release statement: "Students and workers make SFU what it is, and we all deserve a say in how our University adapts to this time of crisis".

Doug Ford (still) sucks

by John Bell

We are coming up to the one-year anniversary of the Toronto Raptors victory parade, notable for having about 1 million people chanting "Fuck Ford" when Tory premier Doug Ford tried to take a bow.

Remember how, during the last election campaign, Ford's reputation was so toxic that the federal Tories sent him into a bunker somewhere, out of the public eye and media inquisition.

Just before the pandemic hit, in December 2019, polls showed that Ford was Canada's least popular premier. A meagre 28% of Ontarians approved of his brutal austerity agenda, his targeting of vulnerable communities like people with autism, and his casual disregard for democratic norms.

Doug Ford was a political dead man walking. And then the virus struck. As of mid-April, Ford's approval rating was 83%.

How is this possible?

First, almost every political figurehead in the nation has received a bump in approval—with the exception of Alberta's Jason Kenney, who is using the disastrous collapse of fossil fuel production as an excuse to savagely attack public health care and education.

In February Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was wallowing with a 33% approval rating. Today, thanks to his policy of reassuring cottage chats and daily tossing a new crumb to some of

those needing support, his rating is near 60%. Quebec premier Francois Legault has an absurd 96% approval.

In times of crisis, especially in the early stages, people tend to rally behind their leaders. But no one has risen as far and as fast as Ford.

Ford declared he was giving a raise of \$4 per hour, danger pay if you will, for front line heroes.

But read the fine print. Whole categories of health care workers, like midwives, are excluded. This carries on the Ford government attacks on midwifery that culminated in the complete defunding for the College of Midwives of Ontario in December of 2018. The CMO not only regulated midwives but was a strong advocate for public health care.

Also denied the raise are lab technicians, paramedics, respiratory therapists and pharmacists—all front line workers essential for deal with COVID-19.

This is typical of how Ford has operated through the emergency. Make grand, sweeping

statements designed to appeal beyond his usual base. Media buys into the media announcement without checking the fine print. And people who should know better start saying things like "I'm not a Ford fan, but..." or "Ford's doing a good job compared to Trump".

So it seems like Ford is supporting health workers, when in reality his government continues to attack unionized sectors. He talks about respect for workers risking their lives, while health care workers have to stage walkouts and demonstrations to get supplies of essential PPEs.

According to CUPE Ontario there are over 3000 health workers who have contracted COVID-19, the rate is rising. Between April 27 and May 5 the rate of infection for health professionals rose by 43.5%. According to CUPE's Candace Rennick: "They feel abandoned by this government and the province's medical officer of health who seems immune to the surge in infections among health care workers. It's an infection rate that may soon overtake Spain's



happening on [Ford's] watch."

When Ford announced on March 22 that he was bringing in emergency measures to support health care, what he really did was rip up every union contract in the province. This gave unprecedented powers to hospital administrations and kick open the door for privatization of more jobs and services.

Ford pulled the same scam when he loudly declared: "If you have a choice between putting food on your table or paying rent, you're putting food on your table. The government of Ontario will make sure that no one gets evicted."

Sounds great, but the next words out of his mouth were about stopping tenants from organizing: "I heard there was a petition going around [saying] 'Just don't pay rent.' That's wrong. That's hurting people across the board. We're standing up for the tenants here so please don't take advantage of it."

But the big words were not backed up by any action. He just left it up to landlords to be nice. A few small scale landlords responded, but the big corporate landlords have not. The new owners of one King Street building have issued eviction notices to all its long term tenants, using non-payment during lockdown as an excuse.

A west end landlord has issued eviction notices and shut off water of tenants who couldn't pay.

The evidence is piling up as the rent comes due each month, and as front line workers fall ill and die. Ford does not deserve the pass he is getting from the public and the media.