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# Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 630 | January 2021

socialist.ca

## STOP THE RACISTS IN THE STREETS



**T**he attack on the US capitol has prompted many to call for the banning of far right groups like the proud boys and assorted racists.

Liberals and even some conservatives have united in opposition to the bigots. Joe Biden has taken to calling the mob “domestic terrorists” and has vowed to enact new legislation to target those who participated.

In Canada, the NDP has called on the federal government to ban similar white supremacist groups.

While it is understandable that people would want the state to intervene, it is dangerous to rely on that as a means of defeating the far-right.

We need to be very wary of any attempt to use the state to shut down any movements.

Whenever the ruling class is given the power to stop political opponents, they have turned those tools on the left.

In Toronto, after far right groups began organizing rallies at city hall in 2017 a similar plan to ban them was proposed by the city council. When the motion was made public, however, the first group named and targeted as extremists by the ban was the annual Al Quds day rally for Palestinian rights.

While there is a real desire to shut down the avenues for the right to grow, we know that the state will not get this job done.

The obvious collusion between the police and the support given to the far-right by highest levels of the US society, from Senators to billionaire business leaders shows whose side

they are on.

A state crackdown wont stop “Trumpism” of the rise of the far-right. That can only be done with a 2 pronged strategy:

We need to confront the bigots when they try and gather to take over public space and we need to get rid of the capitalist system that pits working people against each other.

Canada is a country that is built on the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the actions of the state itself are what are propagating the racism in our society. Trudeau may say nice things about opposing racists but he then pushes for more attacks on Indigenous land defenders. Racism comes from the top of society and those that perpetuate it will not stop it.

To see an example of how to defeat the

far right we need only look to Greece. The anti-fascist group Keerfa was able to defeat Golden Dawn fascists through organizing with immigrant and refugee organizations, the trade unions and the left. This broad mobilizing gave confidence to progressive movements and led to demoralization and drop in popularity of the far right. Yes, the courts intervened but the groundwork that really stopped the fascists was laid by the movement.

On March 21, the UN day for the elimination of racism, there will be demonstrations around the world with the goal of building a broad unity against the bigots. That will be day for us to push back collectively against the rising tide of the far-right.

more coverage on pages 2,4 and 5



# The roots behind the rage

As of 2016, more than 20 million Americans lived in so-called mobile homes. (The comparable number of Canadians is around 360,000.)

They are more than just cheap housing. They represent a remnant of what is known as “the American Dream”. The myth that every American is equal and any one, through strength of character and hard work can succeed. And success is defined by ownership, being rooted in the accumulation of commodities. That rootedness somehow gives you mobility—that’s dialectics for you.

Many people living in trailer parks are not even owners—they rent. Canadian census stats show that a majority of people living in mobile homes have no full time employment. They either depend on low-pay, no-benefit part time work or are unemployed. This is surely the case in the U.S.

It would be a gross over-simplification to say that 20 million mobile home inhabitants are automatically fodder for Donald Trump’s populist cult. But that’s a fair chunk of the 72 million who voted for him. If I were a far-right organizer, I could think of worse places to start recruiting.

## Trump’s mob

I say all this not to ridicule Trump’s mob; quite the opposite. Like it or not, the bedrock of Trumpism are legitimate grievances: under-employment, precarious work, rising cost of existence, declining hopes and expectations for future generations.

It is worth noting who has been arrested in the aftermath: a lawyer, the son of a state supreme court judge, a business owner, a new-agee hippie “shaman”. These are not the caricatured down-and-outers usually associated with Trump. It is the “middle-class” that leads Trump’s mob. And it is big, anonymous corporate donors who fund it, the same corporate donors who have been backing Trump all along.

In 1984, about 20% of American workers were in unions. By 2018 that was down to 10.5%, or just over 6% of private sector workers. Their manufacturing jobs were shipped offshore thanks to “free trade” deals. Their organizations have been under concerted attack from bosses, courts and governments for decades.

Even at its height, American trade

unionism had a morbid pre-condition: racism and white supremacy. This wasn’t accidental. It was fostered over decades. From the McCarthyite purges of the socialist left to Reagan’s smashing the air traffic controllers strike, the strength of working class solidarity—and along with it potential anti-racist action—has been systematically attacked and undermined.

This is not to say that American workers are born racists. Rather it puts the lie to any idea that Trump is an aberration, that resetting to the Joe Biden default will make any substantial difference.

The U.S. has been lurching, sometimes by inches, sometimes by leaps, toward fascism for decades. This is not a uniquely American condition, witness the rise of the far right across Europe. This a condition of capitalism.

What we saw on January 6 was not a coup. (People who keep using that word should be made to study what happened in Chile in 1973, a coup made with the encouragement and aid of the U.S. government. Democratically elected leaders



murdered by the military. Tens of thousands rounded up, murdered, imprisoned or “disappeared”. That was a fucking coup.)

But it was not a joke either. After 4 years of Trump inching toward fascism, it was a leap, a test of strength.

After coddling and abetting him for 4 long years, with less than 2 weeks to go, the U.S. ruling class is tripping over itself to somehow absolve itself of complicity. Repulsive Republicans like Mitch McConnell and Lindsay Graham are trying to recant after years of being Trump’s co-conspirators. Footage of Graham being chased through a D.C. airport by a howling MAGA mob gives an indication of how these last second conversions will play in the hinterland.

## We’re better than this

Watching the coverage of the white riot, a number of repetitious motifs

began to emerge. “We’re better than this.” “This isn’t who we are.” “Our sacred icons of democracy have been violated.” “Violence is never okay.”

What a pile of double-talk, and worst of all refusal to truly appraise and confront the reality of the event. So it is at once over-inflated (It’s a coup!) and trivialized (It’s Buffalo Horns guy, and the bozo who accidentally zapped himself to death by tazing his own testicles). The real dangerous forces at work on January 6 were not taking selfies in the Rotunda, they were moving in the shadows, planning how to use the event to recruit and organize.

Violence is never okay? This is a nation founded on slavery and genocide (not that it is alone in that). A 2017 study found that the U.S. had been involved in some sort of war for 222 of its 239 years. It isn’t called the “Military-Industrial Complex” for nothing. Violence is as American as chicken-fried steak.

It is interesting that the same voices denouncing “violence” were also lamenting that lack of violence from police.

It is telling and accurate that Black and POC commentators were quick to point out the difference in policing between this white riot and previous Black Lives Matter marches. Yes, if that had been an almost exclusively Black riot, they’d still be hosing the blood off the capitol steps. There are strong elements of fascism within police forces, and January 6 laid that bare. But how to bridge the double standard: less repression and violence at BLM events, or more at events like this?

History shows that for fascism to grow, socialism, working class self-organization and solidarity have to be broken. In the U.S. and elsewhere that counter-power has been deliberately weakened, but not smashed. If we allow January 6 to be trivialized, it will take its place in that weakening.

Instead we must take it as a call to organize, to reject the idea that Trump was an aberration and now we can get back to business, and to seriously take on the task of beating the far-right. The task is huge but unavoidable. And the first, giant step is to break with the liberal idea that there is some magical, middle way to politely defeat fascism without confronting the system—capitalism—that nurtures it.

# Liberals’ false climate plan

by: Brian Champ

The Liberal Climate Plan released in November to much fanfare from sections of the mainstream media sets forward a plan for net-zero emissions by 2050 – through pricing pollution to pressure a move away from fossil fuels and redistributing this money with rebates to average Canadians; “natural climate solutions” such as tree planting to sink carbon in forests and other conservation efforts; and a “Clean Energy Transition”.

While it is a step forward to set a goal declaring that Canada should be net-zero by 2050 (although 30 years is way too long to meet this goal), there are no enforcement mechanisms to keep the country on line to meet these goals. The primary way the plan purports to meet these targets is to put a price on carbon and have market forces “nudge” us toward low-carbon economies. Unfortunately, the transition from carbon intensive extractivist economies to the green economies that people and the planet really need will not be achieved by relying on market forces. Capitalist production relies on fossil fuels at every stage, and oil and gas companies are very influential on decision makers. In many ways our governments are captive to the oil and gas lobby, continuing to advance their agenda even as investment for pipelines, tar sands and fracked gas production dries up.

## Rapid transition needed

It’s hard to see how the rapid transition we need can be achieved by relying on these market forces. But it’s even harder to see how it can be achieved by allowing the development of TMX and other pipelines to continue, as this will further expand tar sands production when we know that the world’s climate scientists tell us we need to keep it in the ground.

But this is exactly the “Clean Energy Transition” plan: to “invest every dollar we earn from the Trans Mountain Expansion Project in Canada’s clean energy transition.” The plan further estimates that TMX could generate \$500 million per year upon completion, and that “this money, as well as any profit from the sale of the pipeline, will be invested in natural climate solutions and clean energy projects that will power our

homes, businesses, and communities for generations to come.” This shows exactly that this plan is a steaming pile of bullshit.

## Liberals’ false plan

The Liberals bought the TMX pipeline at a cost that continues to soar, estimated at \$12.6 billion last February. Far from a clean energy transition, this investment locks us in to relying on the most carbon intensive fossil fuels on the planet. To recoup the investment, it would take 25 years of operating the pipeline after which the plan is to sell it and allow it to continue operating. Furthermore, “clean energy” for the Liberals includes increasing fossil fuel energy efficiency, implying their continuing use. Exactly how this is a transition at all is hard to understand.

A real climate plan would start in-



stead by investing this \$12.6 billion in public programs that would actually make a difference in developing renewable energy, mass transportation, improving building energy efficiency and decarbonizing agriculture. A real plan would also incorporate Indigenous ideas and knowledge and centre the leadership of Indigenous people to combat this unfolding planetary disaster – instead of the continuing Indigenous genocide represented by the TMX pipeline.

The Liberal politics of climate change is a false plan that further entrenches carbon intensive capitalist development. We need a mobilization of Indigenous people, environmental activists and workers to press for the changes we need, building a community of resistance to fight for a livable world led by Indigenous land defenders, environmentalists and workers that can transform the world. The stakes are high and time is running low.

# Liberals try to make the poor pay

by: John Bell

In the midst of a second-wave COVID-19 lockdown, the federal Liberal government is attacking workers who received CERB in error.

The mistakes were not examples of fraud, as the right-wing would have it. The problem began with confusion over the terms of eligibility for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit posted by the government.

The initial published information said only that applicants had to have earned a minimum of \$5,000 in the previous 12 months. It did not stipulate whether the amount referred to gross or net income, a crucial difference especially in the case of

self-employed workers.

Only two weeks later did the government publish a clarification that would have made tens of thousands of Canadian workers ineligible for CERB. They changed the rules in mid-game.

Now more than 440,000 people have been sent letters from the Canadian Revenue Agency telling them they may have to repay the whole of their benefits.

The minister responsible for the screw-up, Employment Minister Carla Qualtrough, shares their pain. “Of course I feel bad, we all feel bad.”

But she and the government are not willing to share the expense and forgive the good-faith errors, as

proposed by the NDP and Greens. “Certainly that isn’t-right now—the plan.”

The difference between how the



Liberals treat self-employed gig workers and big corporations reveals a big difference.

The federal government spent at least \$240 billion in 8 months for COVID relief, but the lion’s share of that went to big business in the form

of a wage subsidy program. As the name implies, the money was intended to go to businesses to keep work-

ers on the payroll. But—unlike the CERB clawback—the Liberals have been less than diligent about keeping track of that dough.

Sure enough, a CBC investigation found that billions of that money have been used to buy back corporate stock, and to pay juicy executive bonuses.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland has refused to release the data about which corporations received how much COVID cash. But she did offer a vague finger wag: “I want to emphasize ... for any companies that may be listening, that the wage subsidy must be used to pay workers.”

We certainly hope those corporations are listening....



# “The farmers already know the solutions”

## Solidarity with Indian uprising against Modi

by: **Mathew Edassery**

**A** huge farmers’ agitation – primarily in India’s northern states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan – to repeal three new laws has been under way for many months and has been supported by many other sectors like trade unions, student organizations, university teachers’ associations, a range of political parties and others. A Bharat Bandh, or all-India strike of farmers, was called for December 8 after several rounds of talks between the farmers’ unions and the government failed to yield results.

What the farmers’ strike represents has deeper meaning than just the three farm laws that were introduced by the Modi government in an undemocratic way.

The intent of these laws was clear since they were first introduced as an ordinance before becoming law. The laws are designed to put more power in the hands of corporations at the expense of farmers. The laws have even led to splits within the ruling class and resignations within the ruling coalition of the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) losing its long-time allies solely due to these laws.

### Agricultural sector

Agriculture continues to employ and feed the largest section of India’s working population. As per census data of 2011, nearly 55% of the workforce in India continues to be engaged in agrarian production, either as cultivators or as agricultural labour. It is neither marginal nor insignificant. Agriculture must remain central to all discussions of the Indian economy, the crisis in which it finds itself today, and political thought on the way forward.

There is no part of India where small and marginal farmers exert any power or control over the market in agricultural produce. The state willfully ignores the grossly inequitable structure in place while assuming small and marginal farmers have the possibility of exerting free ‘choice’ in entering a relationship with private traders, let alone agricultural corporations.

The Green Revolution of the 60s was followed by the market liberalization of the 90s, and at that time the Minimum Support Price (MSP) was introduced to protect the value of crops against diminishing value by establishing a minimum bid in the markets. The BJP is now going back on studies that support not only maintaining but increasing the MSP.

Most farmers across India don’t even have access to the MSP, or to the regulated markets (mandis) which are predominantly in the northern states. The regulated markets are few, and small farmers don’t have the ability to transport their crops for sale. The smaller and marginal farmers farm for subsistence, not for production for sale; when they sell its to a trader who takes it to a market, and these middlemen reap the benefits.

As a result, more than half of India’s farmers are in a debt cycle. Many don’t even have a bank account or land title. There is no credit

from banks, only local credit lenders who also sell the fertilizers and sometimes even buy the same crops from the farmers they lend to, and usually belong to the village upper caste. The bargaining power of small farmers is very weak. This results in land-grabs and other abuses.

All governments in India have completely failed to protect small farmers from this onslaught – not just the ruling right-wing BJP, but the supposedly liberal Congress Party that ruled for much of the period that led to this situation.

This has led to a crisis for farmers in India, which according to India’s National Crime Records Bureau, led to 10,281 farmers killing themselves in 2019.

### Three new laws

The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) bill, will force farmers to deal directly with corporations and private buyers, removing regulated

removed from the procurement list, opening the door to the corporate sector for these staples. It also aims to “drive up investment in cold storage” and give farmers the “freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply” their products.

But in practice, small farmers in rural India can’t just sell to “anybody they want.” They wouldn’t have the ability to compete with corporations when it comes to stockpiling and producing on a large scale, giving rich investors an unfair advantage and an opportunity to manipulate market prices.

### Undemocratic and unconstitutional

Agriculture is within the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the States of India, not the central government, and the bills have been challenged in court as unconstitutional. Farmers’ organizations were never consulted, not even those belonging to the farmers’ wing of the ruling BJP. No



Farmers on the road to Delhi

photo: Randeep Maddoke

markets (the mandis) and paving the way for deregulation. The government plans to open up private mandis which will be tax free for the buyers. The farmers allege this will eventually shut down government-regulated mandis which ensure a MSP for goods traded there.

Another major issue is that all disputes that were previously adjudicated by civil courts will now be placed before sub-divisional magistrates (SDM) or collectors. Both are members of the bureaucracy and not the judiciary, and are heavily influenced by the corporate sector. This is a direct violation of fundamental constitutional rights, and removes the right of redress before a court.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services bill, deals with pricing. The bill will push farmers, corporations and private buyers to negotiate contracts. However, several farmers have voiced their concerns over not having the bargaining power to negotiate with corporate giants.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) bill, means “modernization” of India’s food supply chain by reducing stockpiling, removing commodities like “cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes” from the current list of essential commodities. The state used to procure high demand foods such as these, but they have now been

stakeholders except corporate ones have had a say.

When the bills were introduced in Parliament in September, 2020, the demand by many MPs to send them to select parliamentary committees was denied by the Speaker. The bills were railroaded through the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of Parliament) with no debate and a voice vote held amid shouting, tumult and confusion. At the very same time, several regressive labour laws were passed during a walk-out by the Opposition in protest over the three bills.

The undermining of democratic processes and the total disregard for public consultation has been evident in other regressive legislative changes: the repeal of Article 370 governing Kashmir, the Citizenship Amendment Act that targeted Indian Muslims and a lockdown ordered without notice, resulting in untold suffering for millions.

What is noteworthy and common to all these actions was a refusal to consult the people affected beforehand and a determination to not hold a dialogue afterwards. The facile option of labelling all those who disagree with one or other of the actions of the government as “anti-national” is to avoid substantive discussion and debate, and to vilify and criminalize dissent.

Social movements are discredited in various ways by the national me-

dia and even social media. The BJP has its own IT cell which pays people to comment on social media. But the fact that the farmers’ movement started in the Punjab and was outside the BJP’s rulebook, caught them off-guard. The BJP has been playing the Hindu-Muslim divide for a very long time, but the Sikh community couldn’t be as easily discredited as Muslims – although the BJP tries to, by branding the Punjabi farmers, who wear their religion with pride, as “Khalistani” (i.e. Sikh nationalists who call for a Sikh homeland).

In Delhi, the freezing winters are very brutal. The farmers are mostly elderly and are out on the streets. They have made make-shift caravans on the backs of their tractors and they are cooking and sleeping in the streets. Nobody is going to do that unless they are fighting on an issue critical for their livelihood.

The question has been raised pointedly: was this done in the belief that during a pandemic and the restrictions on public gatherings, organized protest would not be possible?

### Government attempts to contain the movement

Following the pressure of the protests there were three rounds of discussions with the farmers and all of them went off track. At the first one, the government repeated all its arguments: “you have been misguided,” “this is all for your own good.” The farmers walked out.

At the second one, the government said “we’re trying to work on things, we hear what you’re trying to say.” At the third one, the government made an attempt to meet some of the demands with some amendments, notably access to the courts for dispute resolution, and a reassurance in writing that the MSP would be maintained. But the farmers never asked for these bills, they were not consulted in the first place, so amending them would not meet their demands.

This is why the nature of the protests has shifted: now the farmers are adamant on two things. First, they don’t want any amendments to the bill, they want all three laws completely withdrawn. Secondly, have realized there is a lot of corporate influence and they want to confront that.

They have called for a boycott of two major Indian conglomerates, the Ambani family and the Adani family projects. These two are the major funders of the BJP, ever since Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat. Their nexus is very well known in India. The BJP is the richest and most well-funded political party thanks to the corporate sector, in particular Adani and Ambani, and this fight has again exposed those connections.

### International solidarity

There have been protests in Toronto, Ottawa and other places in Canada in support of the farmers, and there is a history to this.

There is a huge Sikh population outside of India, and Sikhs from the Punjab are playing a predominant role in this movement, because that’s where the new law will have the greatest impact. Most of the rest of India are in solidarity with the pro-

tests, even though they may not be as directly affected.

That’s why we can see a lot of pressure by the community here, especially in Canada and UK. The Sikh community is very strong, politically, socially, economically. Even Justin Trudeau was forced to put out a statement – which he did not do when there were NRC protests (National Register of Citizens protests against the citizenship reform targeting Muslims) – which was more of a human rights violation than this, to be honest. But there is also a long history of oppression and persecution of Sikhs within India: attacks on places of worship, targeted arrests, calculated pogroms.

### The movement: a victory in itself

The movement has shown people the possibility of phenomenal solidarity in India. This is already a victory against a government that is very high-handed in using violence against any kind of dissent. It has already achieved success in terms of how people perceive it, and by putting the government on the back-foot when it has never backed down before because of its crushing majority in Parliament.

The way they did it was beautifully planned: they built this whole revolution silently for the last 4-5 months. They waited for the crop season to start, they sowed the crops first, they decided only a part of the village would come to the protest, the remaining part would stay back and do everybody’s farming. So fewer farmers came to the protest but they were prepared with six months of produce that they can live on.

More than 50 farmers unions have come together and even more are in solidarity across India including student unions and other trade unions. That the organizers have been able to unify all these elements that usually don’t come together under the same umbrella is another success, in the face of government intimidation, forcing the government to try to quell the movement by offering amendments.

On the last International Humanitarian Day farmers protested holding placards with photos of all the political prisoners in India currently in jail, which shows how they are willing to show solidarity and move beyond the farmers’ protest. It is exciting to see how that leadership is changing, and even being willing to name Ambani and Adani with the boycott.

The movement is independently strong, and has stayed away from the partisan identities that normally have had sway over protest movements. Past movements have not impacted elections; it will be interesting to see how this one translates into the democratic process and changes the power dynamics in the elections.

It is nonsense that farmers are “uneducated”: they are the best to know what they’re doing and they are leading the way. The farmers already know the solutions: we should listen to them, not the corporations that are exploiting the resources and people of India.

*This article is edited for length. To read the original see: <http://socialist.ca/node/4234>*



# Fighting the far-right

*The far-right are in the streets - not just in Washington but around the world. How do we stop them? There are lots of ideas on offer but one thing we do know is that they will only be defeated by a mass movement that confronts racism and the capitalist system that perpetuates it.*



Community members shut down the bigots in St Catharines



Mass rally confronts Steve Bannon in Toronto

## Don't count on Dems to confront threat of far-right

The storming of the US capitol building by Trump inspired right-wing mobs was a predictable outcome of a political polarization that has been developing for decades.

If it was supposed to be a coup it was a rather pathetic one. While there were thousands outside the capitol building, that hardly represents a real threat to the US government. There would need to be masses in the streets of many more US cities to have any effect. This was not a group capable of taking over the reins of government.

And, crucially the US ruling class is not onside with Trump. Many in corporate America broke with him in the summer during the mass mobilizations by Black Lives Matter groups after the killing of George Floyd. That opposition was taken to a new level when the national Association of Manufacturers (NAM) released a statement during the riot calling for the 25th amendment to be invoked and for Trump to be removed from office. The NAM is a massive grouping of most of the US's biggest manufacturers. They do not want Trump's personal vendetta to curtail their ability to make profits. The bosses want a Biden presidency because he is seen as a much more stable set of hands to keep the goals of the US empire intact.

That is also behind many of

the splits that are developing within the Republican party with some who want to lay claim to Trump's base for a possible run for president in 2024 and those that are more concerned about the larger project of preserving capitalism.

But it was a reflection of the growing strength of the far right in the US and around the world. Although the MAGA crowd was eventually pushed out of the building, most far right groups see this as a victory. Chris Hill, a leader of the III%ers, called it the opening salvo in a new civil war. He told the LA Times that "The second revolution begins today".

These groups have found a new audience for their repugnant and dangerous ideas in recent years. War, economic crisis and the dislocations of neoliberalism have fed their base. The history of post-war fascism is one of small, isolated groups that exist on the margins, only to gain a hearing in times of crisis. Capitalism is now limping from one crisis to the next and this provides fertile ground for new recruits.

This didn't start with Trump nor will it end when he vacates the president's office. The anger expressed by many of the pro-Trump crowd is part of a much larger set of issues. Massive economic inequality creates despair and hatred and the right wing has been very active in using

these grievances to build a base. That the inequality and economic misery has become brutally acute during the COVID pandemic is accelerating this process.

And the racism endemic in US society gives the right a leg up when trying to build their power. The racism was on full display at the Capitol riot as police gave free reign - even encouragement - to the people storming the building. Sandy Hudson, founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto told CTV that, "It couldn't be more clear that Black people are subject to intense repression by law enforcement and it's actually unbelievable that armed people were able to get so close to the Capitol with firearms and inside the Capitol with firearms".

Anyone who has been to DC for a protest knows that the cops there are very experienced in shutting down dissent and maintaining "order". The events at the Capitol could not have happened without a conscious decision to cede the space to the MAGA crowd.

### Impacts

The congresspeople and senators of both parties resumed their session to count the electoral college votes soon after the Capitol building was secured. Thus began a lengthy series of speeches from both parties extolling the righteousness of the US government and constitution.

The need for this committee of the bourgeoisie to maintain a sense of permanence and continuity amid the chaos speaks to the fear that many in the neoliberal centre have toward a radicalizing population. The two parties of US capital haven't been this united since they agreed to a \$750 billion Pentagon budget last week.

Both the Democrats and Republicans will use this event as a means of securing their rule. The media and many of the congresspeople used this opportunity to decry what they see as two sides of the same coin - the radicalization to the left and the right. Their insistence on describing the MAGA mob as anarchists indicates that they will use these events to further curtail the freedom of dissent by anyone not supporting the status quo.

### Biden in the drivers seat

Somewhat lost in the middle of the chaos was the fact that the Democrats, on the same day, won both senate run-off races in Georgia. This gives the Dems control of both houses of Congress and the presidency. Expectations will be high that the Democrats can bring about change that will help the millions of Americans facing poverty, evictions and health crises.

Biden has given no indication that he plans on meeting any of those expectations. His cabinet

picks are a who's who of corporate America. As he has throughout his career, he will do the bidding of Wall Street at the expense of working people. This will not stop the polarization in US politics but will instead bring more people to the conclusion that the system is rigged for the right - which it is.

The left needs to provide a clear alternative to the twin corporate parties if we are to stop the rise of the far right. This is true in Canada as well as the US and any other country around the world. As Seattle socialist councilor Kshama Sawant said, "We need to build a mass fightback for Medicare For All, a Green New Deal, and actual democratic control over police. Unions, socialists, workers must fight."

While the MAGA crowd was attacking the Capitol in the US, a car caravan of Trump supporters rolled through the streets of Toronto decrying the "election steal" and waving Q-anon flags out their windows. What happens in US politics has broad implications for the rest of the world and we in Canada will have to prepare for many battles ahead.

The rise of the far right didn't start with Trump and it will not end when he is booted from office. Nor will the impacts of this movement stop at the border. We will only be rid of these people and their disgusting ideas when we get rid of the system that propagates them.



# Community and workers join to fight toxic racism in construction

by: **Brian Champ**

**O**n June 10th, a noose was found attached to the equipment of a worker of African descent on the Michael Garron Hospital construction site operated by EllisDon. Subsequently, over the next several months a further 5 more nooses were found at different construction sites across Toronto and it should be noted with the exception of 1 site, all the other incidents took place on Union construction sites. As has become clear, far from being an anomaly, violent racist threats directed at workers of African descent have been regular features of construction sites for a long while. Most times it has been kept quiet because the toxic culture of racism, sexism and homophobia intimidates those who would step forward.

## Black Lives Matter

But this incident happened a little over 2 weeks after the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the subsequent explosions of rage across the US and the world. Here in Toronto, on May 30, ten thousand people marched in the middle of the pandemic to demand justice for Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a young Afro-Indigenous woman who fell to her death while in police custody. Clearly this movement influenced the workers who were targeted, as they refused to stay silent. This pushed the issue into the light of day, forcing EllisDon and other players in the construction industry to be seen to be taking action.

Unsatisfied by the response of the industry, a local community group that eventually became Community Solidarity Against Racism in Construction (CSARC) started protesting, first by organizing a fantastic “activism” event that saw hundreds of anti-racist signs, posters, banners plastered on the hoarding at the MGH site, and then developing a petition to demand action to address the racism endemic in the construction industry. At the same time as these community actions were happening, within the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union Local 353 (IBEW L353), which represents 11,000 electricians across central Ontario a group of rank and file electricians formed. These men and women reached out to the IBEW L353 leadership and were told that it “was against the law to question members when there is an open police investigation” and adamantly refused to speak with the brothers and sisters on site regarding the issue. Disappointed and disillusioned, the members could not believe that their union had not taken a clear stand against the racist acts perpetrated against a co-worker.

Kimoy Francique, a woman of Afro-Caribbean descent who is a proud IBEW L353 member with over 15 years in the trade had initially believed that her local leadership would take action. But instead, the IBEW L353 representative for the MGH site, John Mightis, issued platitudes like “there’s a lot of things we need to work on, and

we’re working on them”. When a member asked him what a noose represented to him, he answered “it’s just a joke brother, just a joke.”

Kimoy and her brothers and sisters who were appalled and disgusted that no action was taken, met to discuss how to address the problem. Unhappy with the fact that their local union leadership refused to address the issue, workers started a petition that was ultimately presented on September 18 2020 to President Rob White of IBEW L353.



It was circulated in IBEW L353 at worksites across Toronto under the headline “Our Unions Must Fight Racism! An Injury to One is an Injury to All!” to call on the local leadership to conduct its own investigation and gather evidence into these allegations in order to hold members accountable for their racism:

“We are calling on IBEW L353 to strike a tribunal, composed of at least 50% members of varied ethnicities, to hear this testimony and to render judgment on the involvement of its member and the nature of the Union’s response. Leaving this matter in the hands of the TPS and the contractors—who are presently telling us, “ongoing investigation, stop talking and get back to work” makes IBEW L353’s statements against racism empty.”

The petition is also noteworthy because it demonstrates a fierce cross-sectional solidarity with the plumbers, steamfitters and welders in UA L46 and the workers of African descent targeted by the nooses, not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because this “threat of lethal racist violence was also an attack against all the union workers on the site, as racism of any sort divides and weakens unions in their struggle to defend their members’ rights and working conditions.

Over 200 signatures were gathered. IBEW L353 members presented the petition that was delivered to the leadership of the union on September 18th. Signatures were also obtained from many members of other construction unions as many workers intensely feel the

need for solidarity across the trades at construction sites.

After more nooses were found at the MGH construction site in late September, an in-person protest was held at the entrance to the site on the morning of October 9, organized by activists from CSARC and Toronto East Anti-hate Mobilization (TEAM) and mobilizing community members to demand action to end the racist threats. After reading press coverage of this protest, IBEW L353 anti-racists activists made contact with the CSARC campaign.

represent. Each worksite could have a Human Rights committee consisting of the reps from each union on the site. Furthermore, given the fragmentary nature of construction sites, we need more workers in unions across all the trades on construction sites to work together in cross-sectional unity from below to ensure that worksites are safe for women, BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ workers. Ultimately, any guidelines, rules or possible quotas would have to be enforced by activist workers fighting for unity against oppression and for inclusion. Connecting these networks to the community-based movements for racial justice is a path forward towards an anti-racist culture of inclusion.

## Police finally act

On a December 7th press release, Toronto Police Services detailed mischief and criminal harassment charges against a member of IBEW L353, Jasan Lahay, for the placing of nooses on the MGH construction site. The release describes these charges as the result of their “hate-motivated mischief and criminal harassment investigation” which calls for appealing to the Attorney General to apply the hate crime designation “if necessary”.

Despite this downplaying by the police, it seems necessary to consider these hate crimes when considering the meaning of nooses for people of African descent: it is a threat of racist violence bringing to mind the anti-Black racism of the US South.

IBEW L353 member Kimoy Francique was “insulted as a

Canadian of African descent. If it had been a swastika it would have been automatic charge of a hate crime. But when it’s perpetrated on people of African descent it’s just mischief.”

This mirrors the culture on worksites that treats racism “as a joke”.

Kimoy added that there “should have been 2 members held accountable” as a union representative on the site downplayed the seriousness of the act when it was drawn to their attention. The failure of the union local leadership to reacted quickly to bring their own members to account for these nooses, leaves it in the hands of the police.

While some union members understandably are calling for the simple expulsion of the perpetrator from the union, Kimoy disagreed. She sent a letter to the union’s business manager against this measure, arguing that the union local needed to implement policies and mechanisms to ensure that these racist behaviours are addressed actively, that it was not just down to the behaviour of these workers and that individual workers needed to be given the chance to modify their behaviour before expelling them from the union.

Relying on the police for justice in these cases is problematic given the racist nature of these forces and their role in protecting the rights of bosses to employ scab labour - workers need to develop their own mechanisms to counter racism in the industry, whether by bosses or workers.

## Take action!

### COMMUNITY FORUM

# COVID, RACISM & THE FAR RIGHT

SUNDAY, JAN 31, 2021 @ 2.00 PM

### SPEAKERS



CATHERINE BROOKS  
(PEDUHUN MIGIZI KWE)  
Elder



NIGEL BARRIEFFE  
Urban Alliance on Race Relations



MPP RIMA  
BERNS-MCGOWN  
Provincial Parliamentarian



KINGSLEY  
KWOK  
Chinese Workers Network



EVAN  
BALGORD  
Canadian Anti-Hate Network



IMAM IRSHAD  
OSMAN  
TEAM Member



### REGISTRATION

<http://bit.ly/Covid-Racism>

Toronto East Anti-Hate Mobilization (TEAM) invites you to a Zoom workshop that explores how racism and intolerance are being expressed during this challenging time



# Where did COVID come from?

Author Rob Wallace writes about how our broken relationship with the earth caused the COVID pandemic

by: **Brian Champ**

**A**s we find ourselves once again locked down because public health measures taken by our governments were too inadequate and inconsistent to prevent the second wave of the virus from mushrooming, there is a confusing barrage of information that can be hard to weigh through. Not to mention contending with anti-mask rallies and marches that blame Covid-19 on China, as has happened in Toronto with the marchers going through Chinatown. The pandemic has laid bare the racism of the system shown by the higher rates of infection for BIPOC people throughout the world.

Dead Epidemiologists is must have book for socialists who want to understand the material origins of Covid-19, and other emergent pathogens, and way that the practices of global agribusiness multinationals produce novel viruses, bacteria and other pathogens as they produce food products for global markets. Rob Wallace is an evolutionary epidemiologist with the Agroecology and Rural Economics Research Corps (ARERC or "RRC"), a group of independent scientists, educators, and agricultural practitioners who work with local communities and organizations to investigate agri-food system change across the Upper Midwest. He also wrote Big Farms make Big Flu: Dispatches on Influenza, Agribusiness and the Nature of Science in 2016.

This book is a series of articles written by Wallace, many co-authored with other practitioners in such fields a human geography, disease ecology, crop and soil science, agroecological farming, economic geography, wildlife biology and mathematical epidemiology. Some are republished versions of articles that were published online, others are transcripts of interviews for a variety of independent media sources and others were adapted from presentations that were made at various meetings that occurred throughout the year.

Significantly, the book is dedicated to the memory of three UFCW workers at meat processing facilities who died of Covid-19 in 2020:

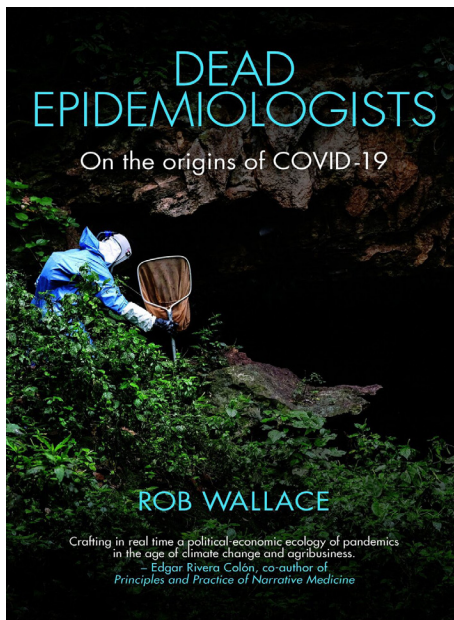
Chief Steward at the JBS Slaughterhouse in Souderton, PA, Enock Benjamin, aged 70, died in April; Rafael Benjamin, aged 64, who was told not to wear a mask at Cargill Beef and Pork processing plant in Hazelton, PA, died in April; UFCW member Celso Mendoza, aged 59, a leader in the plant's union organizing drive at a Chicken processing plant in Forest Mississippi died in May.

## Capitalism and disease

All in all, It is a useful resource for understanding the way capitalism as a whole is implicated in the rise of novel pathogens; not just the way the exotic food markets and

agricultural land expansion encroaches more and more brutally on the little wilderness that exists, and exposes animals and humans to novel pathogens; not just the way the food industry knowingly introduces conditions that give almost unlimited mutation conditions for viruses, bacteria and other pathogens in the relentless pursuit of profit; not just the way large populations of industrial herds and flocks of animals are clustered in areas close to large cities, facilitating inter-species infection; not just access to global supply chains that ship food products, viruses and other pathogens around the world; it is all of the above.

In the preface he makes an embarrassing



confession: that he contracted Covid-19 in early March as he had continued his normal circuit of flights as part of his ongoing work. He relates his difficulty in obtaining a test in the US at the time, having to be diagnosed online by a nurse practitioner based solely on the description of symptoms. This nonchalance of the government to the challenge we face is related to the racist contagion that has infected US society since it's inception:

"No one gets to walk through this in the clear, however, no one. We are all bonded to epochal failures in leadership and institutional cognition. What, for instance, was someone who had worked through COVID's imagination early on doing flying a week into March? I too had been infused with a peculiarly American moment, wherein financial desperation meets Imperial exceptionalism. I too had to travel for work and nothing was going to happen to me. It's a fetish that working man George Floyd, who two months later died by a cop's knee on a street corner in South

Minneapolis I regularly travel, never believed for a moment that he livestreamed himself talking of the daily dangers of being Black. Nor did the series of "mouthy" Black detainees into whom Minneapolis police had paramedics inject ketamine, risking respiratory arrest under the cover of a Hennepin Hospital study. The greatest sources of U.S. wealth are the daily reenactments of the slavery and genocide and environmental decimation on which it was built. From the ritual murders of arrestees to forcing meatpackers back to work during a deadly outbreak, to risk, with COVID attacking our vasculature, blood chokes of their own. As if the country couldn't recognize itself otherwise"

## COVID and racism

"Notes on a Novel Coronavirus" that was written in late January contains a discussion of the anti-Chinese racism that was exemplified by Trump and echoed by layers of epidemiologists when they talk about "China being the source of repeated outbreaks, but it, and a WHO now owned by philanthrocapitalism, conducts exemplary biocontrol". Clearly countering this racism, Wallace responds:

"We can reject Sinophobia, offer material support, and still well remember China covered up the SARS-1 outbreak in 2003. Beijing suppressed media and public health reports, allowing that coronavirus to splatter across its own country. Medical authorities one province over from an outbreak didn't know what their patients were suddenly showing up with in the ER. SARS-1 eventually spread across multiple countries as far as Canada and was barely driven to extirpation.

The new century has meanwhile been marked by China's failure or refusal to unpack its near-perfect storm of rice, duck, and industrial poultry and hog production driving multiple novel strains of influenza. It is treated as a price for prosperity.

This is no Chinese exceptionalism, however. The United States and Europe have served as ground zeros for new influenzas as well, recently H5N2 and H5Nx, and their multinationals and neocolonial proxies drove the emergence of Ebola in West Africa and Zika in Brazil. U.S. public health officials covered for agribusiness during the H1N1 (2009) and H5N2 outbreaks"

Other articles include: "The Kill Floor" explores the dangerousness of the meatpacking plants () and efforts by Trump and Republican states to keep them open as people are dying. "Midwinter-19" delves into whether or not the virus came from the field or was created in a lab that exposes the risks of both eventualities. "Blood Machines" highlights the environmental impacts on horseshoe crabs of vaccine production. "To the Bat Cave" looks at the epidemiology of Covid-19 as bats became

implicated as the source for the transmission to humans. "The Origins of Industrial Agriculture Pathogens" looks in detail at industrial agriculture practices that contribute to pathogen emergence as well as the historical origins of pathogens through the history of livestock farming. One article highlights some of the ongoing participatory projects under the heading "Pandemic Research for the People" (PRoP). "The Bright Bulbs" is a useful round-up of bad takes on Covid-19 to help counter those who downplay, deny, obfuscate or use racism to avoid taking appropriate action.

In "Covid-19 and the circuits of capital", the stakes for public health of taking effective action are laid out: "... a successful intervention keeping any one of the many pathogens queuing up across the agroecological circuit from killing a billion people must walk through the door of a global clash with capital and its local representatives, however much any individual foot soldier of the bourgeoisie ... attempts to mitigate the damage. As our research group describes in some of our latest work, agribusiness is at war with public health. And public health is losing.

## Healing the metabolic rift

Should, however, greater humanity win such a generational conflict, we can replug ourselves back into a planetary metabolism that, however differently expressed place to place, reconnects our ecologies and our economies. Such ideals are more than matters of the utopian. In doing so, we converge on immediate solutions. We protect the forest complexity that keeps deadly pathogens from lining up hosts for a straight shot onto the world's travel network. We reintroduce the livestock and crop diversities, and reintegrate animal and crop farming at scales that keep the pathogens from ramping up in virulence and geographic extent. We allow our food animals to reproduce on-site, restarting the natural selection that allows immune evolution to track pathogens in real time. Big picture, we stop treating nature and community, so full of all we need to survive, as just another competitor to be run off by the market"

## 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](http://socialist.ca/ourstand)

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the

concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

**Workers' power**  
Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its

production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

**Oppression**  
Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real,

social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people.

We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

**Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples**  
Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and

the people of Quebec. We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

**Read the full statement at: [socialist.ca/ourstand](http://socialist.ca/ourstand)**

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Different school boards are handling things differently. There is no consistency across the province. Take York Region, they are doing synchronous teaching, where a teacher is expected to teach in-person and on-line students at the same time. It's awful. There are real privacy issues and teachers and EAs are getting burned out.

The reason I'm more pissed with the Ministry rather than my board, is that the government has never been clear about what we're supposed to be doing. The money is insufficient to provide smaller class sizes, so we have to rely on luck.

And we are seeing cases, like in Toronto, where even if there are a lot of COVID cases they aren't shutting down schools. There should be clear guidelines about what to do if you have COVID cases—I'd say more than two. You should shut that school down. That's what I think.

But the government has never been clear, there are no guideline, and no money.

We've seen teachers in Toronto refuse to work. That's great for them, they're on salary, they have some protection. But I can't, EAs can't afford to do that. My job is so precarious I can't walk out or refuse a shift. I only have two sick days, and that just covers a half-day pay. Two paid sick days in a pandemic.

Another example of the inconsistency is masking. In my school district masks are mandatory beginning with J K. But in the Niagara District, for kindergarten to grade 3 masks are optional. That's the government's fault.

Apart from a few kids with sensory issues and autism, or kids who need help putting on the mask, most of the kids are compliant. They really get it. They're way more compliant than the adults in their lives. But then I have to cover a nutrition break and those masks come off and I have to make sure they don't get up and mingle.

If the Ministry of Education really cared about school safety and kid's wellbeing they would cut class size. There are plenty of teachers, sitting on the sidelines. The government just doesn't want to pay.

When it comes to arguing that schools are unsafe and should be shut down, there were big arguments about "My kid's mental health. Mental health, mental health." I'm a specialist in working with kids with needs. Sure there are some anxiety issues but they come from kids not being able to play together. In September Ontario opened bars and restaurants, but restricted kids on playgrounds. Of course kids were anxious. And when they come to school and the staff and teachers are under stress—it trickles down to the kids and that creates adverse effects.

I think it is more stressful for them to be in school. On top of the pandemic, they are behind academically. Teachers are trying their best to catch them up, but to be honest this year is a write off.

I'm pissed about the arrogance coming from the MoE. And also the Ministry of Labour. We had a worker in Toronto die from COVID—a Child and Youth Workers. Yes she was an older person, and yes she had asthma, but that isn't a dire, deadly thing. You'd think the MoL and agencies like WSIB (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) would be there to keep us safe. Oh no, they're there to throw put excuses to cover the government's decision to keep schools open at any cost.

Instead of looking into the schools as centres of contagion they are saying "No. It is community spread." Kids are being sent to school sick, or not knowing they're carriers. And they are making teachers sick. But the government refuses to admit it. All their messaging is super confusing and inconsistent. Are they making it up as they go along? Not long ago Stephen Lecce announced schools would close for an extra two weeks over Christmas to get things under control. The very next day he contradicted himself, scrapped the whole idea. That's typical of their arrogance.

## REVIEW

# Bruce Springsteen's Letter to you

by: **Faline Bobier**

"I'm in the middle of a 45-year conversation with these men and women I'm surrounded by and with some of you. Now with some of you I suppose we've only recently started speaking. But either way I've tried to make that conversation essential, fun and entertaining. I started playing the guitar because I was looking for someone to speak to and correspond with. I guess that worked out better than my wildest dreams.

All I know, is after all this time, I still feel that burning need to communicate. It's there when I wake every morning. It walks along side of me throughout the day. And it's there when I go to sleep each night.

Over the past 50 years it's never once ceased. Owing to what, I don't really know. Is it loneliness, hunger, ego, ambition, desire, a need to be felt and heard, recognized? All of the above. All I know is it is one of the most consistent impulses in my life. As reliable as the rhythmic beating of my own heart is my need to talk to you."

Bruce Springsteen's most recent album, *Letter to you*, recorded with the E Street Band in his studio, is a fitting coda to 2020 but also looks forward to our collective New Year. It speaks heartbreakingly of all that has been lost in 2020 but also to hope amid the horror.

It's not an overtly political album but there are hints throughout of the current state of affairs in his country: "The criminal clown has stolen the throne/He steals what he can never own". These lines from *House of a Thousand Guitars* refer of course to the Orange Monster who will soon be leaving the White House, but not without leaving behind him the wreckage of four years of his criminal neglect while ordinary Americans are dying and the fires of racism, which are set to continue burning long after he is gone.

In the song *Rainmaker* Springsteen speaks to the appeal of a Trump-like figure to people who see little hope when they look around them:

Parched crops dying 'neath a dead sun  
We've been praying but no good comes  
The dog's howling, home's stripped bare  
We've been worried but now we're scared

People come for comfort or just to come  
Taste the dark sticky potion or hear the drums  
Hands raised to Yahweh to bring the rain  
down  
He comes crawlin' 'cross the dry fields like  
a dark shroud

In addition to the new songs on the album he includes a couple of songs – "If I Was The Priest" and "Song for Orphans" – that were written when he was in his early 20s and so take him back to the beginnings of his journey. They are songs that remind of his earliest album – *Greetings from Asbury Park* – in their wordy poetics. Apparently, Bob Dylan said to one

what it feels like to be the only one remaining after all this time.

Of course, coming at the time it does, with Springsteen the age he is (turning 71 in 2020), *Letter to you* is also a look back and a rumination on mortality. Facing the inevitability of death as one does more clearly at the age of 71 than in youth doesn't mean, however, that this album isn't relevant, or that it is only a downer.

Although Springsteen is speaking of his own specific trajectory in *Letter to you*, I think it feels relevant to right now and to many of us, because this year has been a year of loss and difficulty. When he sings in *I'll See You in My Dreams*:

When all our summers have come to  
an end  
I'll see you in my dreams  
We'll meet and live and love again

It speaks to so many who have lost someone during the pandemic. It is particularly galling when people have left us much before their time or without being able to say goodbye to loved ones and when much of this suffering can be laid at the feet of incompetent governments and the priorities of a system which places much more emphasis on the ability to continue the profit-making machine than

on the safety of ordinary workers who generate these profits for the likes of Jeff Bezos, Galen Weston et al.

It's no surprise that Springsteen and the E Street Band would have chosen *I'll See You in My Dreams* as one of the songs to perform on a recent episode of SNL. It was a message to all those watching that those they have lost will not be forgotten.

This album is also in the end a hopeful one. That hope rests, as almost always in Springsteen's music, with the power of ordinary people. *House of a Thousand Guitars* is a paean to the power of music and to the power of ordinary people to set the house right again:

House of a thousand guitars, house of a  
thousand guitars:

Brother and sister wherever you are  
We'll rise together till we find the spark  
That'll light up the house of a thousand  
guitars



of Springsteen's producers at the time, "He'd better be careful or he's going to use all the words in the English language." Springsteen says he paid attention to this because Dylan was always one of his mentors, 'the brother I never had'.

The song "Ghosts" speaks to the inevitability of death for a band that has been together for 40+years. Clearly the ghosts of Clarence Clemons (the Big Man), saxophonist and showman in the E Street Band for most of its existence and Danny Federici, organ, glockenspiel, and accordion player and a founding member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band are still a living presence.

One of the impetuses behind the new album, as Springsteen speaks about in Thom Zimny's documentary about the making of the studio album, was the death of George Theiss, last member of his first band, The Castiles, that existed between 1965-69. He writes about this in the song "Last Man Standing" – a song about

## Philip Murton 1950-2020

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Philip Murton this morning, at age 70. Philip was one of the original members of the International Socialists, which was founded in 1975. His life-long commitment to the ideal of working-class self-emancipation was nurtured in a period of worldwide revolts, including May 1968 in Paris, the Portuguese revolution of 1974, anti-colonial struggles, and the defeat of the US in Vietnam.

His experience of the upturn in workers' struggles in the 1970s forged a strong sense of the potential power of workers. When that wave of struggles receded, his grounding in Marxism helped him navigate through the difficult downturn. In the wake of the historic 1978 postal workers' strike, which led to Canadian Union of Postal Workers' president Jean-Claude Parrot being jailed for defying an injunction on picketing, Philip wrote a pamphlet, "Postal Workers On Strike", ana-

lyzing the strike and providing socialists with an understanding of the contradictory nature of the trade union bureaucracy. For a newly-formed

class struggle. Philip had been a postal worker, and later went on to play an important role in unionizing administrative staff at the University of Toronto. He was a proud member of United Steelworkers local 1998, where he served as Chief Steward and as a member of the Executive.

He was independent-minded, and stayed true to his principles throughout his many years of political activity. He always had the long view of the necessary struggle for a socialist future, which allowed him to navigate tumultuous political times with understated humour. He was active for decades in the Toronto East branch of the IS, and was a fixture on demonstrations and sales of Socialist Worker.

Sadly, Philip was diagnosed with a rare form of Parkinson's shortly after his retirement. He remained active until he was physically unable. He was a wonderful comrade who will be greatly missed. Our thoughts go out to his partner Deanna, his two children, Del and Daniel and their families.



organization, this perspective was invaluable and provided a useful guide to a small network of socialists largely on the margins of working



## Ontario Tories turn their backs on Long Term Care

by: Carolyn Egan

“What we are seeing is worse than anything I have ever seen in the homes,” said Natalie Mehra of the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC). Relatives of residents, and many others, demonstrated once again on Saturday January 2 in front of the Tender Care facility in Scarborough, ON.

It was an emotional rally with families grieving for those who have died, and others demanding increased staffing and care levels to save their parents and grandparents from a similar fate. Votive candles were placed all over the property. As of January 4, there are 59 active cases of Covid 19 among residents, 21 staff infected and there have been 64 deaths in the current outbreak. It speaks to the horrific conditions that the elderly are facing in the pandemic, which is out of control in the province with 3,128 new cases on January 4, and 51 more deaths.

### Profits versus health

The shocking facts are that three of the largest long term care (LTC) corporations paid out \$171 million in profits to shareholders while they received \$138.5 million in provincial pandemic pay. Past premier of the province, Mike Harris, has been chair of the board of directors of one of them, Chartwell, since 2003. He is responsible for doing away with minimum mandatory staffing levels when he led the Progressive Conservative government, and spearheaded the privatizing of LTC facilities. Profit before care!

The Toronto Star quoted an unnamed son

of a resident who died: “I could not be with him. I could not hold his hand. I could not say goodbye!” This is the result of the devastating cuts that have taken place and the refusal of the Doug Ford government to take the necessary steps to improve the situation. More than one third of LTC homes (216 of 620) are now experiencing outbreaks. On January 3, there were

to create 27,000 full time equivalent jobs but not until 2024-25! The OHC has called for the military to deploy physicians, nurses and other health care personal, as was done in the first phase of the pandemic. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) that has members in many of the homes, has echoed this demand. The Minister of Long-Term Care has been



Workers and supporters protest lack of care at Tender care home in Scarborough

1160 resident cases and 1140 staff according to the same paper, using public health data. Since the start of the pandemic 11,369 residents and 4,434 staff have been infected.

The facilities are terribly understaffed with workers doing their very best to provide the necessary care. But they are overworked, under paid, and do not have enough co-workers to do the job. The province has promised \$1.9 billion

resisting this in spite of the rising deaths and infection rates, perhaps because of a leaked report that showed the military found abuse, neglect and insect infestations when it went into facilities earlier.

Another key call by the three main unions who have staff in these facilities – CUPE, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Unifor – is that private ownership should

cease and that LTC should be “not for profit”. These workers are not allowed the right to strike, but workplace and collective action has been shown to be the most effective way to win. Workers have been joining with resident councils and families to organize for the needed changes. In one facility they have won the removal of the executive director, others have won improved workplace conditions. Many of them have been in the streets attending rallies and demonstrations on their precious time off.

### Fight the Tories

Pressure has to be put on the province to immediately raise the pay of LTC workers, increase staffing levels, end privatized care, and immediately implement a minimum of four hours of direct care daily to residents. This last demand was won, but is not being implemented for a number of years, which is totally unacceptable.

I am a frontline, unionized, health care worker (not in LTC) and an activist in the Ontario Health Coalition whose members have been fighting unceasingly on behalf of LTC residents and workers. Its coordinator, Natalie Mehra stated, “Not one home has been fined, not one license has been revoked; there are no consequences!” This expresses the outrage of the grass roots OHC member groups across the province that are joining with workers, residents and families to fight this outrageous situation. It is unconscionable that this is allowed to continue, and the blame lies clearly on the shoulders of the corporate owners and the provincial government which has willingly made it happen. They must be held accountable and face the consequences before more die.

## From the front lines Ontario Educational Assistant speaks

by: Ontario Education assistant

I’m an Educational Assistant with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, and I’d prefer not to give my name because they are pretty sensitive about anything that is said negatively about them. But I am more upset with the Ministry of Education, more than my school board.

My role as an EA is, basically I work with students who have physical, behavioural or intellectual need. I assist them with day-to-day tasks at school, I help them with their academics if they need assistance. I have students who need help with their alphabet and reading. These are kids up to 7 years old. I also have student who needs help with the bathroom, so toileting, changing diapers, cleaning up. Some EAs feed students as well.

I think the best way to describe our jobs, we’re the Personal Support Workers of the education world, comparable to PSWs in long term care homes. It is personal care on top of academics. And like PSWs most of us are part-time workers, and low paid. That means we pick up shifts in a number of schools to try

to make a living.

So we have a better chance of getting COVID, and spreading it if we do. Our jobs

are very precarious, we don’t have a choice.

Remote learning doesn’t work for my kids. It’s very hands on. A lot of the kids

that are physically returning to schools are there because of their needs, or because their parents need respite. School is a lifeline for those parents. You can’t work on emotional or behavioural issues through e-learning.

Luckily, in my school, we have a lot of students registered for on-line learning, which works to keep class size down. The class I’m in half days has 22 kids. That is still too many for the space, but better than other schools where there isn’t so much e-learning. My school is in a real working class section of Hamilton, low income, high percentage of new Canadians. Often that means extended families living together, and ironically that means there is a better chance adults are home during the day—grandparents or whatever—to help make on-line classes work.

But some of the outlier schools, in suburban places like Ancaster or Dundas, where there is a higher income, more middle-class base, both parents have to work and more kids are in those schools. And we are seeing a lot more COVID cases in those schools, more than in the inner-city schools.

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