

**STRIKE!**  
**Workers are**  
**fighting back**

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**Afghanistan,**  
**imperialism**  
**and Canada**

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## BALLOT BOX TO THE STREETS

# Use the election to build the resistance



Justin Trudeau - not a climate leader! Uproot the System: Build the climate strike September 24. See [fridaysforfuture.org](https://fridaysforfuture.org) for info

(photo by 350.org CC by 2.0)

**T**he federal election is scheduled for the 20th of September in Canada. It is an election that nobody particularly wants but Justin Trudeau had made the calculation that it is the best time for him to secure a majority - while still riding high on his pandemic record.

That may backfire, as it did in Nova Scotia where the Conservatives were able to pick apart the Liberal response to the pandemic and won a majority. Indeed, the polling is showing that Trudeau may have miscalculated as his numbers are dropping in the early stages of the

campaign.

For most working people, the elections are seen as a waste of time and money and there is very little excitement.

But elections can be used strategically to build movements even when the platforms of the main parties are bereft of any real new ideas and few expect the world to change for the better after the votes are counted.

### Platforms

The Liberals are running on their record during the pandemic, when Trudeau was poll-

ing as high as 80 percent. They are calculating that people would vote for continuity and would be fearful of other parties that represent a shift from the moderate Liberal positions. But in the early going we are seeing that this is not true. Voters have seen wages stagnate and cost of living increase significantly during the pandemic and they want change. They have also watched the climate crisis become a daily reality and the Libs have painted themselves into a corner with the insistence on more pipeline development.

The Liberal policy of subsidizing wages

(CEWS) has led to huge profits in the corporate world and more hardship for the working class. They have rewarmed some of their previous campaign promises such as expanding affordable child care and programs to make housing more affordable. But their plans will not help working people. Their policy, for example of credits for new home buyers will result in higher housing costs. They will need to do better if they are to gain any seats and secure their majority.

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Election diaries: Left Jab columnist John Bell looks at the two main parties in this election

# Episode 1– Tories: “We heard wonk and we thought Wonka”

Dear Diary, I’ve decided to keep track of the high and low points of this dumbass, unnecessary election. I predict we’ll see few of the former and plenty of the latter.

Let’s begin by kicking around everybody’s favourite hacky-sack – the Conservative Party of Canada. They jumped out of the gate before the writ was even dropped, with that commercial. You know, the thoroughly sexist “parody” of Willy Wonka. With the technical expertise of 3 adolescents, and wit to match, the ad landed like a turd at a buffet. It probably violated campaign spending rules (parties are not supposed to buy ads before the writ drops) but this ad backfired so spectacularly that I doubt other parties will complain. Even Tory candidates lined up to denounce and distance themselves from CPC HQ. Proof positive that the Tory boys in short pants are merely Oompa Loompas.

O’Toole and his O’Tooligans followed up by releasing their “platform”. Unlike other parties’ policy papers, they decided to glam theirs up: the cover is a note-perfect rip off of Cosmo. There is Erin O’Toole (or is it Bruce Willis), biceps bulging, the product of months of working out. You can almost hear him whisper, “I have a particular set of skills and I WILL get my daughter back.” Or

maybe just give everybody a tax cut, one or the other. One thing is sure, he’s going to “Secure the Future”.

Expect to hear the word “secure” a lot, dear diary.

I won’t go into detail of the platform contents today. The crackpot scheme for individual “Personal Low Carbon Savings Accounts” alone is worthy of its own evisceration. But here are a few noteworthy Tory promises:

The O’Tooligans will scrap the one positive thing the Liberals achieved—affordable daycare—and replace it with yet another tax cut that will favour the wealthy. Like so many things that hurt working people, it is done in the name of “choice”.

Tories like stunts to make them appear like us regular folks. Enter their Christmas present—a promise to suspend the GST on retail purchases for

the month of December. They crow that it will reduce our “cost of living”. Either they don’t understand what cost of living is, or they’re straight up

bad there,” he says in his best lead-erly voice. The B.C. wildfires have been raging since June. The town of Lytton was destroyed at the start of

lying; there is no GST on food or housing. Remember, diary, I’m a senior on fixed income who buys few presents. This tax cut would put about \$10 bucks in my pocket.

But for the wealthy, it is a golden opportunity to buy that new monster truck or Tesla, replace that furniture suite, take that big trip. The richer you are the more you benefit. It’s the Tory ethos in a nutshell.

We’re going to be treated to lots of flattering images of O’Toole, framing him as fearless leader. On August 17 he issued a breathless tweet: “#UPDATE: I’ve just had an emergency briefing on the situation in B.C. The federal government must offer B.C. all the help it needs.” “Things are

July. But sure, have you “emergency” briefing 2 months late. What more can we expect from the party whose majority of members refuse to admit that climate change is real.

Diary, I’m sure that various Tory candidates will distinguish themselves for bigotry and backwardness as we grind along, but I must give props to “star” candidate Pierre Poilievre. Sensing that his party is headed for disaster, Poilievre dropped several early (again illegal) ads promoting his own “brand”, with no mention of his party its leader. The final ad featured him in a Fonzy style leather jacket and aviator shades, promising to save the economy by making “stuff”. At the end he asks fans to share it around before it gets taken down, as if he expects to be victim of some cancel-culture conspiracy. Soon after it was taken down, by PP himself because…illegal (see above).

This campaign is only a day old, diary, and already I tire of the thoroughly scripted photo-ops and motherhood statements. I’ll leave off with this: up to now the Tories have been controlling their own message, and they have unrolled a veritable clusterfuck of PR fails and self-inflicted wounds. Could any party top them for ineptitude?

Maybe next time we’ll look at the Greens.



# Episode 2: Lacklustre Liberals have themselves to blame

Why exactly are we having this election now, you ask Dear Diary? The question is dogging Justin Trudeau and his Liberals wherever they go. They had another 2 years in their mandate and the opposition parties showed no zeal to bring down the minority government. We’ll be going to the polls just as the COVID-19 4th wave is breaking.

Even Liberal supporters admit that the timing reeks of opportunism. So why, Diary, why? “We did a bunch of polling and people think we did an okay job and now is our best chance to convert that into a majority government” is only a partial answer. The other side of the coin is this: “We’ve looked 2 years down the road and this nasty shit is only going to get worse.”

The planet is literally burning. Droughts will drive the cost of food higher and higher. The economy will circle the drain. COVID-19 will be sort of contained but all the talk will be of the new “normal” where we “learn to live with” pandemics. Crisis upon crisis.

Trudeau isn’t admitting this, of course. So they have unveiled their

slogan: ‘We had your back; now give us your support.’ Hardly inspiring.

## Vote buying

The election timing is not the only millstone around the Liberal neck. Their big problem is that they have a hard time running on their record from the last 6 years of governing. What is memorable from their first, majority, mandate is their broken promises: the promise to introduce pharmacare; the promise to end boil water warnings in Indigenous communities by 2021; the promise to introduce \$15 minimum wage for federal workers; the promise to close tax loopholes for the ultra-rich; and above all the solemn promise to end first-past-the-post elections.

Oh yeah, and they showed their environmental sincerity by buying a pipeline.

Sure they legalized pot. Was there anything else? It is true they handled

the initial pandemic crisis as well as most governments, and far better the USA. How’s that for a low bar. And how much is due to the NDP nudging them left? But the fact is that most of the COVID support spending went to corporations, like



the extra \$1.2 billion, on top of other tax breaks and subsidies, that went to oil and gas business. Diary, that’s almost like buying a second pipeline.

But the longer the pandemic lingers – and the 4th wave will just be picking up steam when we head to the polls – the more the Liberals fob off responsibility on the provinces,

and the more their COVID goodwill dissipates.

If they had implemented \$10/day daycare at the start of their mandate, they would have had something to crow about. If they had taken the NDP’s motion on pharmacare, they could have stolen the credit for that. That’s what a crafty old-time Liberal would have done.

But no, Diary. Now they are in the embarrassing position of having to promise the same things a second (or third) time around.

So instead of “We’re the party that gave you affordable daycare” it is “We’re the party

that might give you daycare if you re-elect us, and then only in 5 years, and yes that means yet another election 4 years from now”. Not quite the same ring.

No wonder support is melting away, left and right. The young voters who swept Trudeau to his first mandate, and then grudgingly

let him have a second, minority government, aren’t buying it this time around.

Again, no wonder Elections Canada has announced they won’t be opening polls on college and university campuses this time around. This, they admit is in part due to “the minority government situation”, whatever that means. What it certainly means is the ruling party, not certain they can count on the youth vote, is actively suppressing it.

So they are down to trying to buy the seniors vote with a straight-up \$500 one-time bribe. Yes, Dear Diary, daddy does need a new TV. And yes, if I last another 10 years I might qualify for a little top up on my OAS. Mañana, Diary, mañana.

If the Liberals prevail, it likely will be with another minority government. To win that they depend on a bumbling Tory party. And O’Toole, calling explicitly for 2-tiered, privatized healthcare, may have just given Trudeau the gift he needs to cling to power.

But the future of the Liberal party looks bleak. This is inescapable. The future itself looks bleak and trying to prop up the status quo in the face of coming crises will be a losing game.

# Big banks: the Ugly Canadians

The Bank of Nova Scotia has posted a profit of \$2.5 billion for just 3 months. That is almost double their profit from the same period last year.

They’re not alone. Bank of Montreal “earned” \$2.2 billion, an 85% increase over last year’s second quarter results.

Expect the results from the other big banks to be in the same ballpark.

Bankers say that it isn’t that this year’s profiteering is obscenely high, but that they suffered last year because they all set aside to cover our “bad debts” – when we defaulted on credit cards and were unable to keep up mortgage payments.

But it smooth sailing for the banks now. BMO CEO Darryl White gushes: “With the economic recovery continu-

ing to take hold, and as communities adapt to the most recent pandemic developments, we are committed to helping our clients make real financial progress and supporting their growth ambitions.”

Bullshit. Domestically, the source of their profits is largely the housing

elsewhere, to keep the crisis out of the public eye.

Internationally, all the banks are heavily invested in resource extraction industries that are gouging massive profits from operations in Africa and Latin America. A recent report says that 75% of the mining projects globally are conducted by Canadian-based corporations. These ugly Canadians have gouged \$31.6 billion out of Africa alone.

In their wake they leave devastated communities and environmental disaster. A recent report in The Breach details how Canadian mining corporations fuel civil war in Eritrea to further their interests.

Our media portrays bank profiteering as good news. But behind it is a trail of poverty and human suffering.



bubble that has resulted in unaffordable housing prices and rents, and a growing army of the unhoused. The money bags have passed the baton to their friends at city hall and the police, to smash encampments of the unhoused in Toronto, Halifax and

...continued from page 1

The Conservatives have come out of the gate quickly and have been gaining in the polls. This reflects a growing anger at the Trudeau government and the generalized sense coming out of the pandemic that we live in a world of horrible inequality. The Cons are trying to tap into this with a series of vaguely pro-worker positions calling for increased healthcare money and support for precarious workers. Erin O’Toole’s announcement of support for gig workers is being touted as a solution to that inequality but it will only further entrench the second class position of gig workers by doing an end run around the demand coming from these workers for full employment status and all the protections that entails.

Whoever wins, the rich will continue to hoard massive amounts of wealth, the climate will continue to deteriorate and Indigenous people will still have their land rights trampled. All of the major parties - even the NDP - have agreed to parameters set by the capitalist system and the election discussion is limited to those tight ideological confines.

But elections are also a moment when millions of people are discussing and are engaged in politics - even in this limited form. For socialists that opening should not be thrown aside but should be seen as an opportunity to engage with people throughout the campaigns.

The Cons are also hampered by the records of premiers Doug Ford and Jason Kenney who have shown themselves to be enemies of working people as they cut social services and gut environmental policies.

The NDP has put forward more positive and potentially attractive campaigns like the call for increasing taxes on the rich to pay for much needed environmental and social programs. These are being well received and Jagmeet Singh has become the most popular leader so far in the campaign but they will, as always be hampered by their record when in office on a provincial level. The NDP is still the best bet for working people but even they are not pushing the more radical policies that would be able to build real momentum in the campaign.

## Socialists and elections

Elections are the lowest form of politics under capitalism but are treated by the mainstream as the most important mechanism to change the future. The election won’t result in the kind of changes that we need

to respond to the scale of crises we face. The pandemic, climate change, cost of living, indigenous reconciliation and a host of other issues will be discussed by the parties but the actual outcomes will be largely indiscernible to the majority of voters.

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As we have seen in recent provincial elections some left NDP candidates can provide valuable support for movements on the ground such as MPP support for the campaigns against racism and encampment evictions. That matters to the political terrain we operate in and can have an impact on people in power. It is not, however, the main force that will shape politics. That still comes from the movements of working people at the base of society, who in their masses can radically change public consciousness.

We saw a dramatic recent example of that with the Cancel Canada Day events in the wake of the discovery of hundreds of Indigenous child graves at residential schools earlier this year. Those Indigenous led events shook the Canadian ruling class and radically changed ideas for millions of people.

And so the goal with an election under these circumstances is to use the fact that people are paying attention to politics to build the resistance from below and to build the audience

for more radical ideas.

Take climate change as an example. The Conservatives have an atrocious record on the climate and voted against a motion stating that climate change was caused by humans. They are for more pipeline construction and expansion of the tar sands. The Liberals say they are concerned about the climate and yet their solution is to build more pipelines to pay for a transition - even though that would result in huge increases in emissions. The NDP is constrained by the fact that NDP governments in power, particularly John Horgan in BC are ramming new pipelines through Indigenous territory and violently forcing the destruction of old growth forest. The Greens are in a state of self destruction and have no chance of influencing policy on this question.

For a voter concerned about the climate the track record and platforms of these parties offer very little hope. That reality can lead to demoralization for the millions who want action but it can also lead people to the conclusion that we need to overthrow the system that is destroying the planet. It will only move that way however if there are other sets of ideas on offer. Building the climate events, such as the recent picket at Christia Freeland’s office calling for the cancellation of the TMX pipeline or the post election climate strike on September 24 will be key in shaping the politics both during and after the election campaign.

And there are many fronts to the resistance from below. The working class is moving, with a large uptick in strike activity in Canada (see page 4-5) and there are campaigns in support of encampment residents and for proper housing as well as ongoing Indigenous led pipeline blockades which will have an even bigger impact on the future of the country and the world than the election.

# Ford fundraising f\*\*kup

by: John Bell

Did you ever wish your government would protect you from scam phone calls, emails or letters? It isn’t likely to happen in Ontario.

Here the government, or more specifically the fundraising arm of the majority ruling party, is the author of such a scam.

The Ontario PC Fund, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, sent out hundreds of fundraising requests in the form of an invoice demanding payment of up to \$300. The fake invoices were targeted at previous Tory donors, many of them seniors.

Obviously this sort of mail scam has happened before because Canada Post has regulations strictly prohibiting it: “Where a letter or other mailable matter that is not a bill, invoice or statement of account due, is in such a form that it has the general appearance of a bill, invoice or statement of account due, it shall have endorsed on its face the following notice: ‘This is a solicitation for the order of (goods, services or goods and services, as the case may be) and not a bill, invoice or statement of account due. You are under no obligation to make any payment on account of this offer unless you accept this offer.’”

In other words, the fake invoices were not just creepy and unethical, they were illegal.

Ontario’s increasingly unpopular Tory premier, Doug Ford, is supposed to be “vacationing” (i.e. hunkering in his bunker until after the federal election). But there are howls for him to come out of hiding and face the music for his partisan fundraising fraud.

Unlike Wiarton Willie, DoFo is unwilling to come out of his hole, although he has sent word through intermediaries that he is “ticked” by the whole thing. He is leaving it his henchmen to take the hits. Global TV’s consumer affairs reporter Sean O’Shea camped outside a locked down Tory party HQ for hours before Tony Miele, Chair of the OPC Fund, showed up for this brief exchange:

O’Shea: How is it possible that the PC Party of Ontario would send out fake invoices giving people the impression they were obligated to pay when patently they were not?

Miele: First off I want to apologize to our donors. It is unfortunate this went out. There is a misunderstanding, obviously...

O’Shea: Hold on a second, where is the misunderstanding? Miele: In terms of how people read into this mail so...

O’Shea: You said invoice, you said payable, you made it clear in the marketing that this was money

that had to be paid.

Miele: I’m going to apologize. There was a mistake made and I’m going to review this with my staff and the 3rd party service provider who drafted it. So...

O’Shea: This is the Responsive Marketing Group that drafted it...

Miele: Correct. O’Shea: And who in the party approved it?

Miele: These are all party internal matters and I don’t discuss it. So I’m going to deal with it. It’s not going to happen again. I apologize to all my donors.

O’Shea: This wasn’t your job with the contractor then? (Voice off camera) Thank you, that’s all.

Miele: These are all internal matters. I’ll talk to you later.

(Miele and handler walk away ignoring further questions.)

O’Shea: What kind of apology is “it won’t happen again”? Is that supposed to wash, a simple apology? Do you give money back to people who give money, what about that? (Door slams.)

DoFo & Co are going to hide behind their unelected, unaccountable party bagmen. The bagmen are going to hide behind the 3rd party

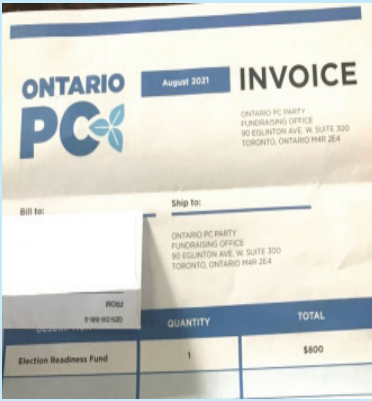
contractor. And the scammed seniors will never see their money back.

While we’re at it, who is Tony Miele? He is a true blue Tory supporter and prominent investment fund and real estate speculator from the Niagara region. Naturally he is a major

booster of DoFo’s proposed Hwy 413, an environmental disaster that will destroy fragile parts of our Greenbelt. As such he stands to profit handsomely from DoFo’s plans.

And who are Responsive Marketing Group? Maybe they are also iMarketing Solutions Group, a separate corporate entity with an identical website and virtually identical personnel (google it). For sure they are a bunch of mercenary fixers and tricksters who specialize in data mining and fundraising for Tory parties and candidates. Readers with long memories will recall that RMG was the “contractor” that engineered the Robocalls scandal of the 2011 election, where they called supporters of opposing parties and tried to send them to the wrong polling sites on election day. They specialize in dirty tricks on behalf of Tories.

It isn’t hard to imagine the meeting with RMG and OPC hacks sitting around the boardroom table, laughing at how this clever plan will squeeze more money out of the rubes. This is how they approach democracy: as a scam. In the past Doug Ford has declared: “The buck stops here.” We just didn’t know he meant all the bucks.





# STRIKING BACK

*Workers in Canada have been hitting the picket lines in large numbers this year. Employers are using the COVID crisis to push for concessions but workers are fighting back. Ritch Whyman analyses the strikes and what can be done to build solidarity.*

by: **Ritch Whyman**

As the COVID pandemic grinds on, it is worth looking at the state of the union movement, and how the working class is responding after a year and half of COVID restrictions.

Since the start of the COVID outbreak in early 2020 politicians, bankers, bosses and, sadly, some union leaders have been bleating on that “we’re all in this together”. Businesses praised workers in ads and on social media for “keeping things going”.

Despite the kind words, said from the comfort and safety of the boss’s home, cottage or vacation resort, employers across the country have been gearing up to utilize the crisis caused by COVID to roll back workers’ rights and gains. Now, employers are keen to test workers and unions willingness to fight back after an exhausting 18 months of the hardships of COVID.

Until recently, few groups of workers had the confidence to fight, and union leaders were unwilling at best, or outright hostile at worst, to fighting back in this moment of “national unity”. Strikes dipped to near historic lows. But such quiet is often just a sign of a storm slowly brewing.

During the pandemic profits for bosses grew, hazard pay was cut, and the burden on workers grew.

The equilibrium faces its first series of organized workers resistance

Dockworkers in Montreal walked out after a nearly unanimous strike vote for 10 days in August 2020. CUPE 375 had been without a collective agreement for several years when they went on strike over shift schedules and hours that created hardships for them and their families – some workers had to work 19 days straight before getting a day off.

The strike was called off after the Maritime Employers Association, who oversee the \$100 billion worth of goods going through the Port of Montreal, agreed to return to the table. Both Doug Ford, Tory premier of Ontario and François Legault, Coalition Avenir Québec

Premier of Quebec called for the Trudeau Liberals to intervene and legislate the dockers back to work. In words she would forget within a year, the Trudeau government’s Minister of Labour, Filomena Tassi said “Our government has faith in the collective bargaining process, as we know the best deals are made at the table.” But huge pressure was put on the Union to accept a return to the table. In May 2021, the Liberals supported the employer’s refusal to bargain and legislated the dockworkers back to work.

In October 2020, thousands of healthcare workers in Alberta walked off the job, in one of the largest wildcat strikes in recent memory. Members of the Alberta Union of Public Employees who work at hospitals doing custodial, food service, laundry, and other work, stormed off the job after the Kenney government privatized and moved to contract out their jobs. The fight is far from over, and while the workers did not push Kenny back fully, partly because other healthcare unions did not join the wildcat, the fight continues as Alberta Nurses are now talking about taking strike action.

In November 2020 Owens Corning locked out its workers at its plant in Guelph. Fresh off taking hundreds of thousands in wage subsidies Owens Corning used the pretext of a lunchtime bargaining rally to lock the gates and try and scab the plant. The members of Workers United Local 1305 had rejected the concessions placed on the table (by an employer who bragged in its quarterly reports about its high profits) and sought to reverse givebacks done in previous rounds of bargaining.

In essence the employer was

using Trudeau’s “wage subsidy” to bankroll its attempt to break the union through scabs.

In Toronto workers at Tropicana Social Services, an agency geared to serving the black community in Toronto, forced workers, who recently had organized with SEIU Local 2, out on strike by refusing to bargain a first contract. The employer clearly hoped COVID would limit the ability to build solidarity. The workers pushed back and made important gains.

Across Vancouver and Victoria, Janitors had to continue to battle for union rights and hotel workers had to fight their employer to extend their right to be recalled to

pay and will use the pandemic to discipline workers into accepting less for their sacrifices in fighting COVID.

## 2021 – Manufacturing mini-strike wave:

The first quarter of 2021 saw a small but significant wave of strikes and lockouts in large and medium sized manufacturing workplaces.

The constant theme through these fights was employers demanding concessions or offering settlements that were below inflation and pushing for cuts to benefits and sick time. On the flip side workers were determined to get the respect for having carried the brunt of

sacrifices during COVID. In work places across the country employees took the pandemic seriously and accepted the mantra that we were all in it together. Workplace issues and problems were set to the side as workers shouldered the weight of keeping things moving. The employers’ laudatory words turned out to be empty. And words won’t

pay the rent or the hydro bill.

Workers at Fenner-Dunlop in Bracebridge struck in February, Manitoba Hydro workers went on strike in March followed by a strike at Molson Coors in Toronto. All managed to win against concessions demanded by their employers.

In May a flurry of strikes broke out, primarily at workplaces in the Steelworkers Union. Workers at Rexplax in north Toronto went out in late May and immediately mobilized support and drew connections between the mainly South Asian work force and the mass farmer strike in India. They beat back the concessions and made modest gains after a two month strike.

Heading into 2021 it was clear to anyone who wanted to look that there would be more confrontations. Workers are getting sick of putting themselves on the line while their bosses safely sat at home. Employers want to make workers’

Around the same time in early May 2,500 Steelworkers at Arcelor Mittal, went on strike at five locations in Quebec. Followed by Workers at 14 Reliance Home Heating locations who were locked out after rejecting the employers’ offer that maintained wage and benefit gaps between new hires and older workers. Active picket lines created havoc with Reliance’s customer service and forced the employer to make concessions.

In Quebec, 550 UFCW members at Exceldor chicken slaughterhouse in Saint-Anselme went on strike for over a month in May against poor working conditions and wages. After forcing a crisis in the chicken farming industry, workers won a wage increase of 19.75% over 5 years along with other gains. As a sign of growing confidence, a third of the workers rejected that offer.

2,500 members of USWA 6500 went out on Strike against Vale (Inco) in Sudbury. Workers were demanding that retirement and new hire benefits be maintained. After two months of picketing, workers beat back many of the concessions and made some modest gains. Gaining more than what many other union leaders have cajoled their members to accept.

In June workers at Wine Rack stores (owned by the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan) went on strike at over 20 retail locations against the employer’s refusal to bargain a fair contract.

Two weeks of picketing knocked some of the employers’ worst concessions off the table. The employer was clearly aiming to break the union by using managers and scabs to run stores. Shamefully the teachers’ unions’ leaders refused to actively intervene against a case of union busting.

Going into the summer the upswing in strikes continued.

50 workers at National Rubber Technologies in west Toronto were locked out in early July after rejecting the employer’s demand for massive concessions. Steelworkers in Toronto and Hamilton have mobilized solidarity pickets for the workers.



Importantly steelworkers picketed a secondary location owned by the same company in Ancaster, just outside Hamilton.

While it seems only sensible to picket other sources for revenue of the employer, for decades now union leaders have cow-towed to the court injunctions preventing “secondary pickets”. That workers and the Steelworkers Union did not follow that path is another small example of the effect that COVID has had in changing the terrain of class struggle.

900 workers at the Rio Tinto aluminum smelting plant in Kitimat voted overwhelmingly to go on strike at the end of July. As of writing UNIFOR local 2301 and Rio Tinto have returned to negotiations, but workers continue to maintain picket lines.

They were followed quickly by nearly 2,300 UNIFOR local 673 and 112 members at the Bombardier and de Havilland aerospace complex in Downsview Toronto walking off the job. Workers are fighting to defend pensions, end contracting out and demand job security. Their employers have received billions in bailouts by the Federal and Provincial governments.

Bombardier workers have unfortunately accepted an offer by their employer that removed concessions and ended their strike, leaving employees at De Havilland to fight on their own.

There has been a series of strike votes by workers at other locations. This by itself has had the effect in many locations of thwarting employers trying to sow divisions between new and older workers and pushed back demands for concessions.

There can be no doubt that there is an anger inside the working class about employers demanding workers pay for COVID. Anger at pandemic profiteers is growing.

## The missing link

The mood to resist a growing employers’ offensive against workers’ rights and wages is clear in the manufacturing sector.

But all is not up and onward. The largest layers of unionized

workers with the most leverage are not moving into action. Public sector workers are being told by their leadership to sit tight and rely on lawyers or PR campaigns.

In Ontario just prior to COVID there was a mass struggle by teachers against the Ford governments attacks on public education. Since then, teachers’ unions have spurned mobilizing members, students, and families in favour of periodic press conferences. This is despite the disaster facing teachers and students with the unplanned re-opening of schools.

Nurses’ union leaders, outside of Alberta, have been loath to organize any actions against pay freezes, horrible hours, and lack of PPE.

In Ontario the provincial employees union, OPSEU, has initiated campaigns not to put pressure on Premier Ford, but to cajole members into accepting the 1% compensation cap while waiting to see if a court challenge works.

OPSEU leaders have already succeeded in convincing Liquor Store workers to accept the 1% wage increase.

The picture is sadly not very different across the country. But that could change if nurses strike in Alberta, it may give a boost to rank and file members in other provinces to ask why their leaders are refusing to fight.

In Ontario SEIU and CUPE members are holding rallies outside healthcare and nursing home facilities, but it will take an active layer of workers to push the leadership to fight to break the rotten 1% cap on the streets rather than depending on the courts.

In New Brunswick 22,000 CUPE public sector employees are gearing up for a fight with the Tory government over cuts and concessions. If they strike, every Union in the province and country needs to back them. A victory by a large public sector group can spark other fights.

If broader layers of public sector workers join the fight being waged by those in the private sector, that would spur confidence in other layers to fight and bolster those that

already are fighting. Consciously or not workers gain confidence from seeing others fight back and win or at least not get totally defeated.

Over the next several months thousands of UFCW members in retail grocery workers in Ontario and BC will go into negotiations. The moment couldn’t be better to begin to recoup the concessions forced on grocery workers over the past 30 years. How can Galen Weston defend his billions in pandemic profits and not grant significant improvements in wages and conditions? A fight against the likes of Galen would give confidence to other sectors.

As COVID continues, it is becoming clearer to more and more workers that we aren’t in it together. Our bosses are looking to profit from the pandemic and make us pay. Whether it is through cuts to healthcare or demands to gut sick days and introduce lower wages for new hires, employers are testing the waters to drive down workers’ conditions.

The growing anger at rising house prices, the rental crisis, crisis in senior care, public transit seems lost on union leaders and their allies in the NDP. The calls from business and the rich to roll back CERB, attack the homeless, curtail workers wages etc. makes it clear that Bay street and their parties, the Liberals and the Tories are looking to make workers pay for COVID.

Right now union leaders are pushing the notion that the Federal election is the most important thing. The election is important, but the best way to shape the outcome or debates of that election is by flexing the muscle that has the most impact for the working class, that is the muscle of workplace and mass action. But that will take organizing and fighting wherever one is to build solidarity and demand out leaders utilize this moment to push against the employer’s offensive.

It is a moment when workers are moving, it is up to everyone on the left to join in to support and to demand that our leaders ditch their cap in hand pleading and put their efforts into mobilizing and striking against the profiteers.



## Labour stands in solidarity

by: **Carolyn Egan**

I recently drove with fellow Steelworkers to Land Back Lane in Caledonia. We were supporting Haudenosaunee Land Defenders fighting for their hereditary territory, and a song by Daniel Lanois written about 12 years ago came to mind. Its titled ‘Still Waters’ and speaks of Caledonia, the waters of the Grand River and the generations of Haudenosaunee who were members of Iron Workers union. They traveled from their lands to build the high bridges and tall buildings across Turtle Island. “I’m going to build the bridges high for working money, for working money I’m going to climb the bridges high Caledonia brother far away.”

An Algonquin Steelworker in the van spoke of this history and why we have to continue to build strong links between Indigenous struggles and the trade union movement. When we were last at the site a spokesperson for the land defenders, an Iron Worker told us, “Indigenous peoples and trade unionists have a lot in common. We both hate injunctions!” They’ve certainly proved it by courageously fighting for their rights, not being deterred by court rulings or police. Confidence really grew among the members as they took matters into their own hands, rejected tentative agreements and set up picket lines.

I was actively involved in the last two, Rexplax and NRT. The first was a small manufacturing plant in my local of the United Steelworkers, the majority of workers were racialized women. They shocked their bosses by taking a strong stand, rejecting a number of offers, and linking their fight with the Indian farmers’ strike in which many had relatives. They stood strong and made real gains. NRT faced a lock out when Steelworkers, though worried the plant might close, courageously rejected sixty three concessions. The workplace was entirely shut down and solid secondary pickets at connected corporations put real pressure on the owners, forced them back to the table, and got a decent settlement.

There is a fighting mood right now in many sectors and solidarity is critical as people take action. Whether it be in defense of Indigenous rights, workers on the line, women fighting for reproductive justice, or standing up against anti Black racism or Islamophobia, this is the time to join together and fight back. No group should stand alone.

There has been growing actions among rank and file trade unionists defending Indigenous

rights as we saw in the statement made by a large number of miners supporting the Nunavut hunters against Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation, the shutting down of Deltaport in Vancouver by the International Union of Longshore and Warehouse Workers in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en struggle, Indigenous blockades supported by labour activists etc.

We have also been seeing growing fight backs by workers over the past period. The dockers at the port of Montreal, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, went out in April in a strong show of strength, 2,500 USW miners at Valle Inco in Sudbury struck for months another 2,600 went out against ArcelorMittal in northern Quebec. In Toronto there have been a spate of smaller strikes at Tropicana Community Services, the Black Creek Community Health Centre, Wine Rack, Rexplax and NRT. They didn’t win everything they were after, but were way ahead of where they would have been without strong workplace actions. Confidence really grew among the members as they took matters into their own hands, rejected tentative agreements and set up picket lines.

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# Capitalism, crisis and the revolutionary alternative

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- ★ Socialism: Building a better world



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...Safe September continued from page 8

But, a majority of the teachers I speak to want the school to be open, they just want them to be open safely.

At the August 17 Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) 2021 Annual Meeting, delegates voted in favour of a policy statement calling on the Ford government to ensure appropriate measures are in place for a safe return to school, including the mandatory vaccination of school staff, with provisions for exceptions. Transparent processes must be established, in consultation with unions, to determine how the vaccination requirement could be implemented fairly within the education sector.

### Where does the union leadership stand on the reopening plan?

Statements by Sam Hammond, president of ETFO, and joint statements by the four largest public school unions have been, and continue to be, critical of the plan. They are calling for an advisor table with the ministry to address pandemic issues.

### Could more be done?

I am a member of the Toronto local, the largest public sector local in the province, and largest education local in North America. We have had lots of difficulty getting a cogent response to the pandemic. Our members were looking for a more agile and responsive leadership; I don't think we have been providing that.

There are members who want more to be done and are willing to do more and they are surprised and disappointed that it hasn't

happened. It is obvious that the Ontario Government is not listening to union leaders, parents, or front-line education workers. And while petitions are important and calling your local MPP are critical, I think the unions need to take a much bolder approach than what we have seen over the past 18 months.

### What is the state of grassroots, rank and file leadership?

I continue to organize with Ontario Education Workers United, building a grassroots movement across the province to fill in gaps that the union is not ready to look at, to put pressure on the government. Parents group like Ontario Parents Action Network are crucial and critical and a leading force in putting pressure on the government. We have to continue to do more.

My biggest concern is the class consciousness of education workers. Many of us like to think of ourselves as enjoying a middle-class lifestyle, and we do. We do have benefits that many working class folks don't have. It is a good thing what we have, but how do we make sure that we raise everybody's bar, so we should be working hard to make sure that all of our parents have paid sick days so they can stay home with a sick child, because these are the families that we teach.

We need to be working with union members on these issues. Ford and the federal Liberals are relying on the fact that teachers are 'comfortable'. We need to do more work to connect teachers to broader working class struggles on these issues. Ford and the federal Liberals are relying on the fact that teachers are 'comfortable'. We need to do more work to connect teachers to broader working class struggles.

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### WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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

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

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

**Oppression**  
Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and 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**

# Encampment evictions and the housing crisis

The vicious attacks by Toronto police on the encampments in city parks - with the support of a city council majority - is part of a long history of demonization and violence against people experiencing homelessness. It is not an aberration but a pattern. What has changed is the context. The people living in encampments are doing so because they have no other options and the pandemic means more and more people have been pushed onto the streets. All of this is happening after decades of skyrocketing rents and housing prices which give working people even fewer options.

The city justifies the attacks by saying that the encampments are not safe and that they are trying to get people into housing. They could solve those problems by putting some effort into increasing safety and building proper affordable housing but they are not doing either. If, for example, the issue is fire safety - governments in cities around the world have solved this problem by having firefighters provide fire safety tips and fire extinguishers on site. That would solve the problem and would save a considerable amount of money. Having police and private security attack the camps is expensive and wasteful.

The city will also say that they are working to find housing for those in the camps. But what kind of housing are they proposing? Given the massive wait times for affordable housing, what they are really doing is pushing people into an already overcrowded and dangerous shelter system. During the pandemic there have been numerous outbreaks of covid in the shelters. The new hotel shelters are not much better and leave many people feeling that they are still in a state of institutional supervision.

And many of the housing options being offered are far away from the centre of the city in locations that have few services. This just means people will end up back in an encampment soon after being sent to housing. There is also another equity issue at play. Many in the encampments are people who have experienced trauma - often at the hands of the system - and they are unwilling to be brought into a daily interaction with that very same system. Almost 40% of those in encampments are Indigenous people who have already suffered from the genocide meted out by the Canadian state. The fact that Toronto police are evicting them from their own land just adds insult to injury.

City arguments about needing the parks for children's programs are bogus. Several days after Alexandria Park was violently cleared, the park was ringed with fences and security guards reserving the area for a film shoot. Money from the movie industry is higher priority than either homelessness or children. It is absurd that this is the response from the city but it is logical when put into the framework of capitalism. The capitalist system has no interest in solving the housing crisis. In fact, any long term solution that would provide adequate affordable housing puts the profits of the banks, developers and landlords in danger. Far from being a problem that politicians cannot solve - they are deliberately ensuring it will not be solved.

Doug Ford and John Tory and Justin Trudeau are in league with the capitalists who make money off of the housing crisis. They listen to them and not to us. That's what is behind the opening of the Greenbelt to housing development or the removal of strong rent controls in most cities in Canada

But that doesn't mean we cannot have change. Campaigns to defund police and have some of the money allocated to them used for affordable housing are growing around the world. The city of Toronto spends \$1.2 billion on police each year. Half of that would be enough to provide housing - thus making the police who attack the encampments redundant.

But ultimately, if we want to permanently solve the housing crisis we need to overthrow the capitalist system that makes housing a commodity rather than a right. **Housing is a human right!**

**Take action**  
Contact Mayor John Tory and Toronto city councillors. Demand an end to encampment attacks.  
John Tory: 416-397-CITY (2489)  
Email: mayor\_tory@toronto.ca  
Find your councillor at: toronto.ca/city-government/council/members-of-council/  
Contact the Encampment Support Network for more information: encampmentsupportnetwork.com/instagram.com/esn.to.4real/twitter.com/esn\_to

**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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# Afghanistan, Canada and Imperialism

by: Sid Lacombe

The chaos in Afghanistan is a direct result of 4 decades of imperial intervention and the Afghan people will once again pay the price.

The Taliban resurgence is the result of that history of violence. Their takeover is being greeted with fear and trepidation by many in the country. Although the Taliban of today is very different in makeup to the Taliban in 2001, the organization has a history of brutality and rights abuses, particularly against women.

The global community is expressing shock and anger that the Taliban has retaken all of the country so quickly after the departure of US forces. The scenes of Afghans scrambling to gain access to international flights out of Kabul while Chinook helicopters usher US embassy staff to safety have brought back images of the evacuation from Saigon in 1975.

Politicians and the media are using these developments to make the argument that the NATO forces should not have pulled out and left the Afghan people to such a fate.

However, the Afghan state is not - just now - descending into chaos. There has been chaos and violence in the country for the last 40 years. Over the last 20 years the main purveyor of that violence was the US-led occupation forces. Imperial meddling caused this situation to exist. More Imperial meddling will not solve it.

### A brief history

As a central location of the "great game" to control central Asia, Afghanistan has been a plaything of US presidents since the Carter administration.

It was under Carter that the US armed the Mujahideen to attack Russian interests in the country and to goad them into an invasion. The goal for the US was to weaken the USSR - it's main cold war rival. They had little concern for the Afghan people then and used them for their own geopolitical aims at the cost of thousands of lives.

The subsequent civil war, where various armed factions - flush with new US weaponry - fought to control the country was followed by the Taliban takeover in 1996. The rule of various warlords during the civil war was so bad that when the Taliban emerged onto the scene they were able to take over much of the country with little resistance.

It did not take long after their ascendancy however, before it became apparent that they would rule with an iron fist motivated by a fundamentalist philosophy.

However, the US didn't care about what type of government the Taliban would run. They were only concerned with their own interests and particularly control of pipeline routes from the Caspian region to seaports.

The US even hosted the Taliban during the George W. Bush administration to secure both pipeline routes and mining rights. The Taliban was not however under the thumb of the US and granted pipeline control to other interests. At that point they became a liability for US imperial policy.

The September 11 attacks in 2001 gave the US all the leverage it needed to overthrow the Taliban. The fact that the Al-Qaeda network maintained bases in Afghanistan justified the initial invasion but competition between the US and rivals Russia and China remained the backdrop and the key reason why Afghanistan was important to the US.

The US led invasion swept the Taliban away with little fighting. The people of Afghanistan were largely glad they were gone. There was even a glimmer of hope that the new NATO led occupation may help to end decades of violence. But that hope was short-lived. The occupation



forces, with little understanding or concern for the Afghan people began a brutal rule themselves.

Crucially, the US decided that they would instal the same warlords that had terrorized the people a decade earlier in the new Afghan government. It did not take long before a resistance movement developed to end US control. As Afghan MP and women's rights activist Malalai Joya stated at the time, the US installed a 'Taliban Lite' government that did nothing to advance women's rights and freedoms.

The Taliban made consistent gains from that point forward. Despite pronouncements of progress against the resistance forces from politicians in NATO countries the resistance would continue to grow.

### The Afghan government under the occupation

The government in Kabul had only marginal control outside of the capitol. Resistance fighters had been able to consolidate their positions in most provinces long before the US troop withdrawal was announced. And even in Kabul, Taliban attacks were commonplace in recent years. Far from being a shocking development, this collapse of the Afghan government was expected.

When the Trump administration was negotiating a peace deal with the Taliban they didn't even invite the Afghan government to participate. That sends a pretty clear signal to any security forces that fighting to preserve this government was useless.

The Afghan military and police were made up of people who only marginally supported the Afghan government in the first place. As the Afghanistan Papers outlined, as many as one third of the people trained to become members of the Afghan police and army deserted and a similar percentage were supporters of the resistance from the beginning.

In a context where unemployment sits above 50 per cent, a job in the security forces was one of the few paycheques available for many. The fact that one could leave with more military training and with newly provided weapons made a quick foray into the Afghan forces something of a right of passage for many who opposed the US led occupation.

And these aren't new phenomena. The first reports detailing the failures of the much lauded NATO led training programs were released in 2005. Soldiers themselves had little loyalty to the army which was corrupt at all levels. Officers frequently decided not to pay soldiers and many became very rich and lived in mansions in the cities while the troops went without.

And it wasn't just in the military that corruption flourished. Corruption was endemic and bribery was the norm. These were not failures specific to the Afghan government, however, but were a result of graft and greed from corporate

interests in the NATO countries themselves. The country was awash in development funds with little or no oversight or plan. Corruption was inevitable.

The report Afghanistan Inc. detailed how billions of dollars in aid to Afghanistan was funnelled - not into development projects but into the coffers of western corporations. Much of the billions in funding for development never left the home countries. Social development by NATO forces in Afghanistan was a myth.

For western corporations lining up at the trough, bribery of Afghan officials was a necessary price of doing business. That corruption filtered down to all levels of the police, and judiciary as well.

### NATO Violence

The lack of support for the Afghan government can be traced to both the conduct of the government leadership but also to the conduct of NATO itself.

As early as 2006 the mainstream Carnegie Endowment for International Peace stated that the biggest single reason for the resurgence of the Taliban was the presence and conduct of the NATO forces. Kill teams, mass bombing campaigns and drone strikes killed more than 100,000 civilians and resulted in widespread opposition to foreign troops.

Stories of massacres by NATO troops became commonplace. US soldiers massacred civilians, including children in Kandahar and kept their fingers as trophies. Wedding parties were bombed with frequency from Wech Baghtu to Haska Meyna - two airstrikes that killed 77 people in total. In the first half of 2019, US forces estimated they killed more than 300 civilians, including 150 children. And the US even used Afghanistan to test new weapons like the MOAB (Massive Ordinance Air Blast) that killed 100 people in one strike. The list is endless.

The NATO forces, despite any goodwill that may have existed among the soldiers themselves, were part of a killing machine that didn't distinguish between civilians and resistance fighters.

According to whistleblower Daniel Hale, a US air force vet who identified targets for the Obama era drone assassination program in Afghanistan, there were few restrictions on who could be targeted. As long as the targets looked to be of "fighting age" then they were fair game. He documented one period of 5 months whether the drone strikes missed their intended targets more than 90 percent of the time.

Each time a civilian target was hit it built more support for the Taliban and brought the country closer to the scenes we see today.

And the use of US "black sites" to torture Afghans suspected of being part of a resistance movement spread and expanded over the 20 years of the occupation. For Canadian politicians this

became a particular problem and led to Stephen Harper proroguing Parliament in 2009 to avoid publication of files linking Canadian forces to the transfer of prisoners to torture sites.

In sum, NATO forces spent 20 years and \$2 trillion to prop up a corrupt government using torture and brutal military tactics. History teaches that no such situation will last forever. People will fight back. While the Taliban don't represent a path to liberation, the removal of imperial forces is a prerequisite to the true liberation for the Afghan people.

### Canada's role

Canada used the war in Afghanistan to develop a much more aggressive posture for it's forces abroad. In the earliest days, Canada confined itself to Kabul but the role expanded over time. The Chretien government sent thousands more troops to Kabul in early 2003 to free up US troops for the attack on Iraq. But it was the announcement in summer 2005 that Canada would be taking on an advanced combat role in Kandahar that made the war front page news and a battle of ideas emerged in this country.

The right wing - both Liberal and Conservative tried to rally Canadians behind the flag and support for "our troops". The decades long propaganda campaign calling Canadian forces "peacekeepers" was tossed away and the role of combatants emerged. When General Rick Hillier told a press conference that Canada was heading to Afghanistan to "Kill detestable murderers and scumbags", that shift was complete.

For Canadian capital Afghanistan was seen as a prime investment opportunity when it was discovered it was sitting on more than \$1 trillion in mineral deposits, Canadian mining companies wanted to line up for their share. As recently as 2014, Canadian mining corporations were bidding on resource contracts in Afghanistan.

However, the new Afghan government was not able to provide the security environment needed for a pillaging of their land. Alan Dowd Senior Fellow at the Fraser Institute

in the article, Afghanistan's Rare Earth Element Bonanza, lamented that the Afghan government had failed "to embrace economic freedom, the foundations of which personal choice, voluntary exchange, freedom to enter and compete in markets, and property rights". Corporate interest in stealing the resources did not wane but it was apparent that the security situation was unable to make their investments profitable.

And the Canadian military used the war to further advance it's interests abroad. The building of a new Canadian base in Kuwait is being followed by new bases in Jamaica and Senegal to protect Canadian corporate investments.

Our politicians would like to use the situation in Afghanistan to argue for the benevolence of military intervention. They spent decades falsely telling Canadians that this war was winnable and that our troops were making advances. They lied. They, like the US has only had their own interests at heart. If they really cared about the Afghan people they wouldn't have spent a decade sending innocent civilians to their graves or to torture at the hands of the occupation government.

And if they really cared now, they would open the borders for any and all Afghans who wish to come to Canada and escape the violence they created.

### Liberation

There is only one way for countries destroyed by imperial forces to achieve liberation and that is through self determination.

As Malalai Joya famously said, "No nation can donate liberation to another nation. These values must be fought for and won by the people themselves. They can only grow and flourish when they are planted by the people in their own soil and watered by their own blood and tears."



## Fighting for a Safe September

### Return to school: "A lot of questions and lots of anxiety"

by: Pam Johnson

**D**espite rising COVID cases, Ontario introduced a plan for a full reopening of public school for September, including full day in-person learning with no caps on class size, and without basic building safety measures such as ventilation in place yet. Socialist Worker spoke to Nigel Barriffe, executive officer of Elementary Teachers of Toronto (ETT), a local of Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO). He is also a member of Ontario Education Workers United, a teacher activist group, and president of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

*What is your response to the Ontario in-person school reopening plan?*

It is disappointing but not surprising. They had so much time to have taken the advice of stakeholders. I reviewed the Sick Kids Hospital report on school safety with Laura McCoy, we were very clear to say if we don't address class size cap of 15, paid sick days – especially for parents – that it would not be a plan. It is a huge gap that this is missing. Knowing that COVID is an airborne disease, masks should have been mandated because they help to reduce the spread, a glaring piece

for me.

The plan talks about the cleaning issue. But many people are calling it 'cleaning theatre'.



We didn't have the resources last year. The science says that the disease is airborne.

The government has been pushing all these resources and telling parents we are doing all this cleaning but, A) it is not going to stop the spread of the virus and B) there were never

enough custodians hired to do the cleaning last year, much less this year.

There is a section on ventilation. The gov-

that don't have a window or schools that don't have proper mechanical ventilation.

*What is the mood among elementary teachers about the reopening plan?*

The main feeling is unnecessary anxiety, because of the unanswered questions out there. A major concern is hybrid learning, where you have students in-person and on-line at the same time. There is no research and there is not an educator that can say that this is good for any child. The school board should just take it off the table. The board says they are going to leave it up to individual schools, which means that the principal and superintendent will make the decision.

In my opinion, that is an abdication of leadership by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), they should just take hybrid learning off the table. They should demand that the Ontario Ministry of Education provide the money so that each student has a dedicated teacher whether on-line or in-person.

Teachers still do not know the situation re: ventilation, they still do not know their class size, they still do not know whether there will be robust testing or contact tracing. So, there are a lot of questions and lots of anxiety.

*continued on page 7*

## Police violence, from Tkaronto to Fairy creek

Letter to the Editor  
by: MacKenzie Harris

**T**he police in so-called Canada are once again turning to violence to maintain the legitimacy of the exploitative, capitalist state, a state that says homelessness is the fault of individuals, and poverty is a normal part of life and a state that says trees can be replanted but ignores Indigenous wisdom that knows the ecosystems old growth trees provide are irreplaceable. The old growth is a critical carbon sink that new trees simply cannot equate to for a significant number of years of growth. We know this old way of operating is not compatible with the world we live in today. Yet, the state continues to utilize the police to maintain this status quo. After all, it's what they were created for; since their inception, the police and the RCMP have been used to protect the state.

In video footage taken at the blockades, police and members of the RCMP are shown pepper spraying, macing, pushing, grabbing, throwing to the ground, dragging and assaulting non-violent Indigenous defenders and allies. There is no evidence of old growth protectors fighting back or resisting, even in self-defence. Most stood in place and were attacked for it. Many officers refused to give their name or badge numbers and had thin blue lines across their badges which have been banned since October 2020. Journalists have been excluded from entering and capturing events since the standoffs at Fairy Creek began. There have been reports police have been stealing and erasing footage when illegally arresting journalists and legal observers. There have been reports of sexual assault by women on the front lines. Arbitrary exclusion zones, declared illegal by the provincial supreme court, have been and are still being used. Officers are shown in a

video posted by @siamhamilton with a chainsaw cutting trees people tied themselves to. The saw is shown coming dangerously close to a person's head, and many people's arms lay directly beneath the saw. These scenes largely mirror the events that took place during the encampment evictions in Toronto. Many of the same violent tactics were utilized.

We do not yet know the severity of, or how many, injuries were obtained from the police violence at river camp. Judging by existing footage circulating on social media, we can likely expect concussions, cuts requiring stitches, potentially broken bones, lots of eyes burned from pepper spray and bruising. There have been reports an Indigenous woman had some of their hair ripped out while they were being dragged by an officer. We can also expect very few, if any, cases where defenders or allies inflicted violence on police.

Recall at the last eviction raid in Toronto at Lamport stadium, a broken wrist and nose were reported, as well as cuts needing stitches, sprained ankles, bruising, concussions and eyes burned from police violence. Only

one officer was injured; he pepper sprayed himself. Regardless of what one deems is an "acceptable" form of protest, it is clear where the violence is coming from. In the videos released by @camplandback, the same non-violent strategy used by encampment defenders in Toronto is used by old growth defenders, a human chain. People link arms and stand their ground. This shouldn't warrant violence. Who does police-instigated violence serve and protect? Why is this acceptable, and who does it benefit?



Destruction of the old growth directly impacts the Pacheedaht Nation gravely. They, along with other Indigenous Nations are practicing ceremonies and are doing everything in their power to protect the sacred old growth trees being stolen from the land. Their ceremonies are non-violent in nature, and they have been met countless times with police violence.

In Toronto, a fire ceremony being held in front of the Trinity Bellwoods encampments was interrupted and stomped on by police. Indigenous Peoples continue to face violence for their Indigeneity and for practicing their inherent rights as Peoples Indigenous to the land.

The Black Gate was the site of the Red Dress ceremony, where a display of red dresses hung from stakes along the side of the mountain near the Fairy Creek blockades. Jaime Black, the artist who initiated the project, explained "The REDress Project calls in the spiritual power and presence of our ancestors, as well as the spirits of those who have gone missing or been murdered. The REDresses stand with us as we reclaim our circles, reclaim our voices and re-imagine what it means to move forward in a good way." The site, which honours MMIWG2S+ across Turtle Island, was torn down by members of the RCMP. The RCMP, of course, are directly linked to the MMIWG2S+ crisis.

From Tkaronto to Fairy Creek, the same patterns of police violence are used to uphold the status quo and favour capitalist, colonial, white-supremacist interests. Arguably, it's getting worse. More frequent, and more prominent. However, the need for greater force tells us the movement for liberation is gaining traction. Tension is escalating. Our power is escalating.

We can build systems of accountability that centre care for both "victims" and "perpetrators." We don't need our society to be built around individual obedience, especially when abiding doesn't serve even our own interests, and disproportionately punishes certain groups. We can imagine and create better. We have to.

### TAKE ACTION

For BC Old Growth Protection Efforts: <https://linktr.ee/TheRainforestFlyingSquad>  
For Toronto Encampment Support: [Linktr.ee/ESN\\_TO](https://linktr.ee/ESN_TO)

Send your letter to the editor of Socialist Worker at [reports@socialist.ca](mailto:reports@socialist.ca)