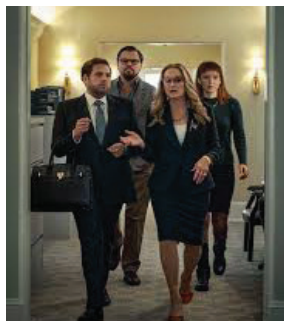


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COVID, COLONIALISM, CLIMATE CHAOS
WE NEED A
REVOLUTION



Omicron is out to get me

This time its personal. When it comes to the ultra-transmissible new COVID variant – omicron – I have a big target on my back. Omicron is out to get me.

When it comes to vulnerability I'm the tiptop of the pyramid. I'm an organ transplant recipient. I'm elderly. The medication I must take daily to stop my body from rejecting my lungs has the side effect of destroying my kidneys. So I have to go to Toronto's biggest hospital 3 times per week for life sustaining dialysis treatment to cleanse my blood and remove excess liquid from my body.

The dialysis clinic at said hospital is the site of a COVID omicron outbreak. Which means that 3 times a week I get to play Russian roulette. My last visit there were, to my count, 5 dialysis patients (the clinic holds about 30) with COVID. Isolation curtains are drawn around them in what is likely a vain attempt to give them the life-sustaining treatment they need while protecting the rest of us from exposure.

Now comes news that labour shortages caused by exposure to COVID omicron, and obeying instructions to isolate for 10 days, threaten collapse of our health system. The Quebec government has announced that it will allow health workers who test positive for COVID but are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms to go back to work. Sick doctors and nurses caring for vulnerable patients? What could go wrong.

Other measures are on the table: reducing the period of isolation to seven days, or maybe 5 days. To be clear, these are not discussions restricted to health services. Airlines, forced to cancel flights because attendants and pilots are in isolation, are pushing for a 5 day quarantine limit. The determining factor is not public health, but the labour needs of industry.

If Ontario chooses any of these

options for our beleaguered health system, the risks I face in dialysis increase sharply.

Normalizing death and destruction

Through all these adventures I am intimately familiar with our healthcare system, its strengths and weaknesses. A lot of my experience is pre-pandemic, so I've witnessed the changes COVID crisis has wrought. It isn't pretty.

Once, I had cause to spend almost a month in the ICU. The patient to nurse ratio in ICU is supposed to be 2 to 1. When I was there (pre-COVID) the reality was 3 to 1, or sometimes more on night shift. I occasionally witnessed scenes where supervisors pleaded with nurses to work extra hours or give up days off.

Today, my nurse confidants tell me, the shortage of ICU nurses means the workload for those remaining has doubled. You can't replace ICU nurses with the snap of a finger. These are highly trained specialists bearing immense responsibility. Burnout is enough of a problem without a culture of overwork and austerity. Add the pressures of COVID, and the flight of trained nurses is understandable.

The occasional scenes of supervisors begging, cajoling and threatening nurses are now almost daily occurrences. Good-bye gatherings for nurses retiring or quitting are regular. Frustration, fatigue and, truth be told, inexperienced staff being saddled with responsibility above their ability or training creates a literally toxic workplace.

Nurses everywhere have become experts in spotting hypocrisy, none more so than Ontario nurses. For two years or more they have endured a government boss that heaps praise on them at every opportunity, and then uses emergency powers to pass a law (Bill 124) ripping the guts out of their contracts, and damning them to annual raises of 1%. With today's



Alberta nurses protest unfair treatment by Jason Kenney's conservatives.

inflation rate that is real pay cut of 3% to 4%.

I happened to be in the midst of dialysis treatment the day Doug Ford announced that he hoped health workers would volunteer to staff inoculation clinics in the lead-up to Christmas. There was a group of nurses conferring nearby, so I had the pleasure of conveying the Premier's request for free labour to them.

Their initial reaction: a literal roar of laughter.

Then came the rage, as they complained about their overwork and bad pay. One told me her home life was a shambles because she went home too tired to take care of domestic chores.

I have utmost respect for nurses. I literally trust them with my life. But now I have to wonder if this person assigned to care for me will be the one to infect me, and given my condition pose a mortal danger.

Obviously I don't blame frontline health workers. I do blame governments, like Ford's Tory regime, because they decided months ago that they would do the absolute

minimum to contain the disease, and prioritize keeping business going as near to normal as possible. Although they don't come right out and say so, all of their efforts have been to normalize the death and destruction COVID brings.

Another path could have blunted the wildfire spread of omicron. It would have meant serious lockdowns. It would have meant total cancelation of big events like pro sports matches. It would have meant the cancelation of all modes of travel for all but essential purposes. But that would have jeopardized the retail frenzy of Christmas on which our economy seems to depend.

Sometime the mask slips. In August, in the lead-up to reopening schools, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer said the time has come to "normalize" COVID in schools. Normalizing the disease is a lot cheaper than making schools – yes, and all other workplaces – safe for students, teachers and other workers.

Normalization means that every twist and turn of public health measures is met with a wave of interviews by pizzeria owners, or

gym personal trainers, complaining that their livelihoods are threatened. Absent are stories about "long COVID", the long-term health problems many recovering COVID patients face: cognitive issues, inflamed joints and chronic fatigue. Invisible are stories about the people who die each day – we never learn their names.

All of this tells me that my government is willing to sacrifice my health and possibly my life – and the health and lives of tens of thousands of people with compromised immune systems and other issues – to maintain business as usual. This is not exaggeration.

I head to hospital this afternoon for 4 hours of essential dialysis treatment. I will be exposed to fellow patients who have COVID. I may be treated by health workers who are COVID positive. It is not a question of if I get omicron; it is a question of when. And when I do get it, will my immune-compromised body be able to fight it off.

One thing is certain, if COVID kills me, you'll never learn my name. That is not acceptable to me.

Canadian Forces training Ukraine's rising fascist movement

by: John Bell

In Kiev, Ukraine's capital, thousands of fascists rang in the New Year with a torch-bearing march to the offices of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The parade commemorated Stepan Bandera, head of Hitler's Ukrainian Nazi allies in WWII.

Ukraine is a key piece in NATO's imperialist rivalry with Russia, and a big part of Canada's contribution to NATO has been training and supplying the Ukraine military.

Ukraine's neo-Nazi organizations encourage supporters to join the military, and openly boast about receiving training from NATO forces in general, and Canada in particular.

A report from the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington

University details a powerful fascist movement with tentacles in government and the military. It is "a large far-right organization with thousands of members that stretches from a highly capable and politicized Azov Regiment of Ukraine's National Guard to a far-right political party National Corp."

The report's author, investigative journalist Oleksiy Kuzmenko notes that these forces are still a minority in Ukraine, but are growing, in part because the Ukraine government and its NATO allies turn blind eye to Fascist recruiting at the military training academy.

Training and recruiting

Nazi and white-supremacist groups here in Canada have long done the same, albeit on a much smaller scale. The most recent example



Ukrainian fascists bragged about getting training from Canada.

is Patrik Mathews, the Canadian Forces vet who was arrested in the US in 2020. A military engineer and explosives expert, he was

teaching bomb-making and military techniques to a neo-Nazi group called The Base. Patrik was part of a conspiracy to bomb a gun rights

rally in Virginia and shift the blame to BLM. The goal was to instigate a race war.

Groups like the Proud Boys are active in Canada's forces.

The military acknowledges the problem. In 2020, in response to the Patrik case, it unveiled its new Anti-Hate Policy.

No doubt it will be as effective as its anti-sexism policies have been for protecting women from sexual assault.

It is worth noting that Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland's grandfather, Michael Chomiak was a member of Stepan Bandera's war time Nazi organization in Ukraine. A newspaper publisher, he led the call for pogroms against Ukraine's Jews and Roma populations. Freeland continues to portray this history as "Russian disinformation".

Solidarité contre l'islamophobie

by: **Chantal Sundaram**

On December 12, dozens of supporters of all ages gathered to hang green ribbons on the fence of Chelsea Elementary School in solidarity with grade 3 teacher Fatemeh Anvari, who was removed from the classroom for wearing a hijab under Quebec's Islamophobic Law 21. Adopted in 2019, the law bans religious symbols in public jobs, including teaching positions, and explicitly targets Muslim women.

Two days later dozens more gathered at a rally outside the office of CAQ MNA Robert Bussière, who represents the riding of Gatineau, in which the school is located. The school is part of the Western Quebec School Board, which openly opposes Law 21 - as a number of Quebec school boards do. A few boards tried to refuse to comply or at least delay compliance at the time of its adoption, particularly in Montréal, trying to involve direct consultation

with parents and students about its impact. But in the end they came under huge governmental pressure to comply.

In this first casualty of the law, the school board said it was obliged to respect it. The solution they found was to get the teacher to accept



reassignment to duties related to literacy and inclusion. According to the Board, these duties don't run afoul of the law.

This is only the first test of a law which the Quebec Superior Court ruled as essentially discriminatory,

but whose ruling was bound by the notwithstanding clause. The court battle will continue on appeal and perhaps all the way to the Supreme Court.

But one thing is certain: court decisions won't put to rest what fostered this law to begin with. The CAQ and other mainstream parties in Quebec have fuelled Islamophobia deliberately under the false argument of « secularism ».

The only way to defeat this in the hearts and minds of the québécois is more of the same response that immediately surrounded Fatemeh Anvari with green ribbons of solidarity.

And that will take not only school boards but the unions that represent teachers and other workers opposed to this racist law, and the ongoing support of students, parents, and those in the community who want to see an end to Islamophobia being used to create a false sense of québécois identity and false scapegoats for the real crises we face.

Kenney stokes anti-Asian racism

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney decided to end 2021 with a racist slur. In a year-end interview with the Calgary Sun, Kenney pondered: "Who knows what the next variant that gets thrown up is? I don't know. And what's the next bat soup thing out of Wuhan? I don't know."

Such racist dog whistle comments have caused a serious increase in racist attacks – both verbal and physical – on Asian-Canadian communities. In 2020, a poll found that half of Alberta's Chinese-Canadians had suffered racist incidents, and over 60% had changed their routine to avoid public settings as a result.

Kenney's statement throws gaso-

line on that fire.

But Alberta's Asian community is fighting back. On New Years Day a protest in front of Calgary's provincial government offices, demanding an apology from Kenney. A second rally happened in front of the legislature in Edmonton.

"We gather here to voice concern on Jason Kenney's irresponsible and toxic comments," said Jiannong Wu, on behalf of Calgary's Chinese population. "(This type of language) has provoked a significant increase in hate crimes against Asian people in general and Chinese in particular."

Protesters carried signs that read "Zero Tolerance for Anti-Asian

Hate", and "Racism is a Disgrace to Alberta".

The first response from Kenney's office was that it was obviously ridiculous" to call the statement racist.

Later Kenney walked back his comments – sort of. In a typical politician's non-apology, he said: "I do want say that by the way, if anybody did take offence, that I apologize to them, if they took offence, certainly none was intended."

Wu, a medical technician on the front lines in the fight against COVID, was not impressed. "I think it's intentional, because (Kenney) is trying to cover up his failure to handle the pandemic."

New far-right threat for Ontario

Maxime Bernier is using the COVID emergency to try and forge a new, right-wing political force in Ontario politics.

To date, 3 splinter parties have moved to the right of the Doug Ford Conservatives. The New Blue Party, predates the pandemic and opposes Ford because, with his helter skelter populist politics, he is not a pure conservative.

The Ontario Party began in 2018, formed by a handful of individuals like former MP Derek Sloan and disgraced Ottawa councillor Rick Chiarelli – these are people that federal and provincial Conservative parties have expelled or tried to isolate.

Then there is the newest spawn of the far-right anti-vaxx movement, the Ontario First Party, formed around former MPP Randy Hillier. OFP now has the endorsement and material support of the People's Party of Canada. Maxime Bernier, who has had modest success using a combination of COVID skepticism, anti-immigrant politics, and dog-whistle white supremacy to build a nation presence, is calling on these 3 groups to unite behind Hillier.

"I'm supporting the (Ontario First Party) and (I'm) supporting Randy Hillier," Bernier told a press conference. "I hope that all these



other little parties will come under Randy — and that would be more efficient to fight the tyrannical Government of Ontario."

Who is Randy Hillier? He has been a Conservative MPP from the Kingston area since 2007. In 2019 Doug Ford kicked him out of the Conservative Party because he was an embarrassment and too far to the right. He sits as an independent. As well as positioning himself at the head of the anti-vaxx movement, Hillier consistently denies climate change, is a vocal opponent of "woke" politics, ridicules the idea of systemic racism, and opposes public services – especially public health services.

He promotes the conspiracy theory that COVID does not exist. He has tweeted "there is no (COVID-19) pandemic & never was, we were duped". He went further, egging his followers to engage in violence against people

taking precaution – "we must start shaming those who wear a mask, as they shame others, the masks are coercing us to live their lie."

Those on the left who limit politics to electoralism will be tempted to cheer on the drive for far-right unity.

Although the People's Party failed to elect any candidates in the federal election, it is estimated that they were responsible for the Erin O'Toole Conservatives losing a number of close races.

But these new right-wing formations will not limit themselves to electoral politics. Their role in organizing demonstrations to attack vaccine clinics, hospitals and health care workers shows that. They are a pole of attraction for white supremacist and Nazis.

In fact, just last night - December 21 - the anti-vaxx far right attacked and vandalized the homes of Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara Region's acting Medical Officer of Health and St. Catharines Ward 4 Councillor Karrie Porter.

Hopefully the monstrous egos, opportunism and delusional conspiracy politics rife in all these splinters will keep them from coming together. If they do, we will be facing a new breeding ground for fascism.

Housing crisis and police brutality in Hamilton

by: **Kim McAuley**

Hamilton's response to the housing crisis in Southern Ontario is criminal.

The housing situation was dire prior to Covid with wages stagnating, the loss of huge sections of industry creating a declining tax base, mental health plummeting, the opioid crisis and the cost of rent and house prices skyrocketing. Now - with Covid rampant, endless lockdowns and joblessness and our health care system in tatters - many people simply can't afford the cost of the most basic necessities of life - food, clean water, clothing and housing. Homeless people are in crisis and the lack of affordable housing and the lack of response to provide affordable housing is tantamount to criminal negligence.

One response to this is that people in Hamilton created tent cities to live in, where they felt safer together and could live in community, watching out for one another, sharing tools and cooking equipment. Tent cities are a result of decades and decades of governments underfunding housing, with the Federal government downloading the cost to the province and the province passing it to the Municipal level.



Hamilton encampment support network fighting the evictions.

The City's response has been barbaric.

In the midst of these crises, at the beginning of Covid, in October, 2020 the right-wing city politicians in Hamilton determined that encampments were an eye-sore and had to be torn down. Their response wasn't 'we will create affordable housing', it was 'how embarrassing, we can't have people living in tents anywhere in our city, call the police.'

Various social organizations, such as the Hamilton Encampment Support Network, and already exhausted health care professionals intervened. They won an injunction of two weeks, before the people living in the encampments were forced to move by the police, under order from the City. This cost the City hundreds of thousands of dollars in police wages and overtime. Money that could have been spent on re-opening a yet to be torn down City Housing project near the popular Bay Front area, that the City instead sold to developers. Money that could have been spent to create jobs and houses.

Housing solidarity action groups began to mobilize to try to stop the

forced evictions, to build solidarity with healthcare workers and people living in the encampments.

The City and its police responded with force, moving people out of accessible areas where they could at least find food and water and where they could be reached easily by social services and health care workers. These tear-downs forced people to move to wilderness areas where survival is even more precarious.

The police force mobilized to smash up one of the encampments, and arrested and brutalized four people of colour who were bearing witness to their actions. Nothing resembling respect for human rights in sight, only blunt, brutal authority and inhuman force.

This is clearly social cleansing. There is a pattern of brutality in this City, against those who speak out or don't behave according to the will of City Council. Palestinian demonstrators have experienced police brutality directly. LGBTQ activists who sit on committees have been silenced in City Council. The City hired a neo-nazi to work in the I.T. department, with access to private records. Right wingers have been allowed to attack Pride events, and when people intervened, the interveners were attacked by

the police. Yellow-vesters were free for months on end, to harass people of Muslim faith, outside City Hall, who were entering to attend organized meetings.

At least one of the police officers was wearing a thin blue line patch, front and centre on his uniform, at a November demonstration for affordable housing, at an encampment. He was photographed. The police force said "he will be held accountable". They'll probably throw him a party. That none of his fellow officers called him out on it and told him to remove it, that he was allowed to wear it ever to begin with, is strong evidence of the culture of white supremacy and allowing hate crimes to proceed unhindered both within the police force and on our streets.

Rallies outside the police station ensued after the encampment tear downs; unions and various other supporters responded by sending food to the activists and people affected; Six Nations has stood up to say "No encampment bans on stolen land". Solidarity is growing here and there will be more reporting on this issue in the coming months.

Race, empire and settler colonialism

In the classical Marxist tradition, anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles are of central importance for the revolutionary working-class movement. But key texts in this tradition also contain racist ideas about supposedly “primitive” Indigenous peoples.

Marx and Engels’ analysis of race and empire developed in profound ways from the 1850s through to Marx’s death in 1883.

This development came in response to resistance movements of colonised people around the world. Below are excerpts from a recent presentation on this question by Padraic Gibson of Solidarity (Australia).

For socialist organizations operating on stolen Indigenous lands in settler-colonial contexts, it’s important to theorize the system of settler-colonialism, how it works to oppress Indigenous peoples, working people and the oppressed, and the basis on which we can build solidarity between the revolutionary workers’ movement and continuing Indigenous struggles for justice and sovereignty.

Settler-colonialism

Marx and Engels’ ideas need to be understood in the context of struggles they were part of. Their best insights come about at the high points of struggle, where they are generalizing from the best insights of working-class activists on the ground.

Some of their work related to settler-colonial situations, particularly Anglo-settler colonies in the US and Australia, requires a critical analysis. Even though the revolutionary movement they led developed a profound critique of racism and colonialism in general, when it came to the question of settler-colonialism, it was not recognized that this too was an imperialist process that was being resisted by Indigenous peoples who deserved and needed solidarity.

The weakness of the workers’ movement they were part of, and the structural position of the workers’ movement in settler colonies (particularly the United States, where campaigns for land in the US territories to be opened up for working class people to take up as settlements) distorted the view of imperialism as it related to the North American continent and Australia, and masked the reality of that imperialist violence and the need for solidarity.

Marx and Engels started working, theorizing and writing together in 1843, and were close collaborators until Marx’ death in 1883. They developed brilliant insights into the destructive and exploitative nature of capitalism, and the creation of the working class as a revolutionary subject. Right from the start, capitalism was theorized as a world system interested in expanding across the world, dominating it and dragging all the world’s people into one global market subordinate to the needs of

capital accumulation. *The Communist Manifesto*, with its searing insights into the reality of the emerging capitalist system and its injustices, had an internationalist catchcry: Workers of the world unite!

Even though it is prescient and brilliant in the way it theorizes capitalism as a global system, at this point in time there is not a developed critique of imperialism in the Manifesto, or in the work of Marx and Engels. While on the one hand they celebrate the productive power of capitalism, how it is able to throw off the fetters of the old feudal society in Europe, at the same time as it’s juxtaposed to the degradation, alienation and exploitation experienced by the proletariat. There’s no critique of colonial violence or colonial racism.

The same year the Manifesto is written, Engels writes an article welcoming a French army victory in Algeria against the Algerian people: “...the conquest of Algeria is an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilization... the modern bourgeois, with civilization, industry, order, and at least relative enlightenment following him, is preferable to ... the barbarian state of society to which they belong.” At this point, capitalism is critiqued but presented as historically progressive, and in fact historically necessary, that there was something progressive about the bourgeois invasion of Algeria.

One thing that never changes in the work of Marx and Engels is that what capitalism accomplished in Europe by overthrowing the feudal system and creating a system of production with incredible productive powers at its disposal, was necessary in creating the basis that made socialism possible. Suddenly, there was a working class that could take in its hands a productive potential through a revolu-

tionary process which could do away with want and poverty worldwide. Right from that period in 1848, they believed socialist revolution was possible in Western Europe, to take the reins of this amazing new productive capacity.

Anti-colonial rebellion

However, what did change was a belief that bourgeois domination, the expansion of bourgeois imperialism around the world, was something that needed to be supported, and that was in itself a progressive thing. They shift quite decisively in the 1850s with the

which they play a crucial role in. It was a profoundly internationalist organization which sought to unite working people across the world. In reality, its members were in Europe and North America, but was open to all people regardless of nationality, race or gender.

The IWMA formed in response to growing international cooperation between different socialist, anarchist and labour movement organizations. Workers from the European continent were being brought to Britain to break strikes. In response to these international scabbing operations, the IWMA tried to build a sense of international solidarity to stop the undermining of union power.

But it also formed in response to profound internationalist campaigns. Big meetings were held in London in solidarity with the Polish independence movement, the Irish independence movement, and the movement to stop the entry of the British into the American Civil War on the side of the Confederacy.

Slavery and abolition

You’ve got the slaveholding south vs the free labour north, and the northern armies were blockading cotton from being exported from the South to Britain. This was causing enormous hardship in Britain, where people are employed in big cotton factories. The British government planned to break the naval blockade and intervene on the side of the South. What stopped them was a movement among working people in solidarity with the North against the slaveholding South, on an anti-racist, anti-slavery basis. This ferment played an important role in the formation of the IWMA.

In many ways, even the language of self emancipation – the liberation of the working class must be the act of the working class – came from the

Civil War period and the mass uprising of slaves themselves who absconded from plantations in their hundreds of thousands. W.E.B. Du Bois called it a general strike of slaves which ended the US Civil War. This amazing radical movement spilled over into a radical labour struggle demanding the 8-hour day.

In *Capital*, Marx sees that the militant anti-racism and anti-slavery position that emerged in the British and broader European working class movement, in turn led to the emergence of the 8-hour day struggle at the end of the Civil War. He writes, “But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight-hours’ agitation that ran with the seven-league boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California.”

Ireland and Imperialism

The most profound insights of Marx and Engels into the questions of solidarity with anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle come in relation to the Irish question. Even though we have articles in solidarity with China, with India, with Algeria, with Indonesia and a whole range of places where people are resisting European colonisation, it was in Ireland where the question was posed incredibly sharply for the workers’ movement in Britain. There are hundreds of thousands of Irish workers in Britain, inside the metropolitan centre, and the division between Irish and British workers is a crucial tool for the ruling class in England to keep the working-class movement divided and retain the power of the capitalist class.

In 1869, the question is posed sharply when Fenians – Irish independence fighters – set off a load of bombs. People are killed, there’s a wave of arrests of Fenian leaders and massive demonstrations of 200,000 in Dublin, 100,000 in London, led by Irish workers demanding the release of the prisoners.

The question is posed to the IWMA, what is your position on these demonstrations? Marx fought very hard for the IWMA to be shoulder to shoulder with the Irish independence struggle at this moment – to call for the release of the Fenian prisoners and independence for Ireland.



Diego Rivera shows the brutality of the Spanish conquest of Mexico.

experience of major rebellions in Algeria, in China, and particularly the most influential, major anti-colonial rebellions in India, the Sipoy uprising of 1857.

Marx and Engels are excited about these new revolutionary actors fighting the same British imperialism that the workers’ movement is fighting in Britain. They start to recognize, as Marx says to Engels in 1857, that “India is now our greatest ally”. This is a proto-emergence of a theory of revolutionary workers’ solidarity with anti-imperialist struggle that becomes more developed in the 1860s, and becomes absolutely crucial for the emergence of the anti-imperialist position of the Communist International after the First World War.

This anti-imperialist position takes a big leap forward with the formation of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864-1865 in London,



1805 cartoon - 'Plum pudding in danger' depicts British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger and the Napoleon, Emperor of France carving spheres of influence throughout the world.

He waged an argument against anarchists within the IWMA who said, "We don't get involved in nationalism, the working men have no country. Isn't that what you said in the Communist Manifesto? What are we doing mucking around with a nationalist struggle?"

Marx is clear that it's not enough for English workers to say, "We all have no country." Actually, there's an oppression of Ireland as a nationality, and if you're going to build solidarity with Irish workers, it's crucial that British workers are clear we're against the racism that's directed against them and that means supporting their right to self-determination. It is a dialectical insight about how, in order to unite, we have to recognize your right to separate.

Unless British workers could be won to a position of support for Irish independence, they would forever be kept in tether to their own rulers – buying into this idea of racial superiority, that they somehow have something in common with their own rulers. A position of support for self-determination was about breaking those racist ideas and allowing the unity that was needed to emerge.

Colonialism in the US

Marx develops his position further, writing to the National Labour Union in the wake of the Civil War in the US, warning against letting the United States consolidate a standing army that they're going to keep as an imperialist force.

But this ignores that the US republic was in fact already an imperialist settler-colonial entity, not in danger of turning into one. In 1865, an intense anti-insurgency war was being fought by the American army right across the West. The US army was already forging chains for the free labourer. This outlook had real implications and came directly out of the weaknesses and the particular situation of the US workers movement at that time.

The US army that was fighting across the American West became a very important tool for putting down the radical workers' movement. In 1877, US army regiments were redeployed from fighting against Sioux people to Chicago, to put down militant workers' demonstrations

during great insurgent strikes taking place at that time. This was just one of numerous mobilizations of the US army against mass strikes, including the suppression of the nationwide Pullman strike by army divisions that had recently massacred Lakota men, women and children at Wounded Knee in 1890. By not recognizing the dangers of what the US army was doing in the West, they actually are forging their own chains, allowing the creation of a force which is then deployed against the US workers movement.

Marx and Engels wrote an enormous amount about the conflicts over land that were taking place between the small holders of lands that had just been taken up by new settlers, and the big commercial interests, the big banks, the big industrial companies. Even though in the European context the worker is the central figure of socialist strategy, in the North American context in the first couple of decades when Marx and Engels are writing, it's the independent small farmer that looms large as the main actor in the revolutionary or communist movement in the US.

The main organization that Marx and Engels say communists in America need to get involved with is the National Reform Movement that starts in the 1840s. This campaign demanded the release of 160 acre lots across the continent for settlement by independent farmers.

What's significant about this is that on all of these territories, Indigenous sovereignty is actually recognized by the US government at that time. Allocating those lands to settler farmers would mean breaking treaties with sovereign Indigenous people that the US is actually in relationships with. The workers' movement was essentially saying 'break the treaties and give us the land'.

Although in the 1850s Marx and Engels break with these ideas as they relate to the rest of the colonized world, in America the labour movement that they're corresponding with – is very much part of this whole 'free soil' movement. Socialists and communists are on the side of the free soilers against slavery, but there's no recognition that Indigenous people are suffering a horrific genocide to

establish settler colonial occupation in places like Kansas. There is no recognition that there is still Indigenous struggle for these lands. It's seen as public lands, and the debate is about the terms on which it's going to be colonized.

In chapter 33 of *Capital* there's quite a lengthy discussion of struggles around property in the settler colonies. Marx makes a case that socialists in America who think that they're going to be able to escape capitalism by setting up some sort of small utopian project somewhere are wrong – capitalism is not going to allow it to happen. They're going to attack the small holdings and force them into the labour market. And of course, that is what happened. Lincoln sets up the Homestead Act in 1862, grants huge amounts of Indigenous land to settlers, and within a decade most of it is in the hands of wealthy industrialists and is super concentrated in the hands of the capitalist class.

Indigenous resistance

Marx was right that you can't get socialism by going and setting up some little utopian project on the frontier. What Marx missed in his writings was that in fact Indigenous people were resisting this reality, that there was another actor in politics in a settler-colonial context and that is the Indigenous people resisting and fighting for their land at the time.

The writings of Marx are crucial for being able to actually articulate and understand why working people need to stand in solidarity with colonized people in their resistance. But it is important to reflect upon the weaknesses of the workers' movement in that time that kept blinkers on and didn't allow socialists to see the full implications of what a struggle for liberation looks like in a settler-colonial context.

Revolutionary workers need to understand their place in the world and their responsibilities in terms of supporting anticolonial resistance that has been crucial in the past and will be crucial in fighting for all of our liberation today.

To watch the whole presentation please check out the video on youtube at: bit.ly/3eMODC9

Trade Unions must mobilize to support abortion rights in the US



Chicago protest against the Texas anti-choice law.

by: Carolyn Egan

Access to abortion in the United States is deteriorating as right wing forces opposed to the equality of women win legislative victories in a number of states. They have a long term goal of banning all abortions, and have been working for years to overturn the 1973 landmark Roe versus Wade Supreme Court decision which gave constitutional protection to those seeking an abortion.

The growing strength of the far right in the US has given confidence to those who oppose abortion rights, and ex president Trump appointed Supreme Court justices Kavanaugh and Barrett both strongly opposed to abortion rights. This was viewed as a huge step forward by anti-choice organizations which redoubled their efforts to deny the American people their basic right to a critical medical procedure.

Anger and protest

This has provoked outrage both within the United States and beyond. Organizing in states such as Texas was immediate after the state legislature passed very restrictive legislation. Advocacy groups have been working to arrange for abortions in other states, providing resources, support, and transportation. This is an important interim measure but cannot be a long term solution. The director of the one abortion clinic in Mississippi, which is also facing a court battle at the Supreme Court restricting term limits to fifteen weeks, spoke about the number of Texans coming to that clinic since the restrictions were passed in their home state. She stated how unsustainable this is.

In Mexico women's organizations have spoken out and have committed to helping those seeking abortions in Texas. They are willing to provide mifegymiso, which is medication that can induce an abortion, by mail to anyone who requests it. They have been providing this, along with support through the process, in Mexico and are willing to take the legal risk of

doing the same in the United States.

We know that to have real choices in our lives we must also have accessible childcare, easily available birth control, decent jobs, an end to coerced sterilization, freedom to express our sexuality as we choose, and so much more to live our lives with the dignity and respect we deserve. These must all be part of the campaign for full access to free abortion.

Union solidarity

The trade union movement historically has played an important role in winning abortion rights and other needed reforms. In the US there has been an upsurge of support for unions in recent years. Rates of unionization are up with victories in unorganized workplaces such as Starbucks. Strikes have been taking place across the country, John Deere, Kelloggs, nurses unions and others. Workers are standing up for their rights moving ahead of their leadership in fighting the boss.

The labour movement in the United States must take a strong stand in support of reproductive justice and abortion rights. This is a massive and well financed attack on fundamental democratic rights. It will significantly impact the most marginalized, Black, Brown, Indigenous communities and the poor, who do not have the ability to cross state lines for an abortion. What is happening in the US right now is outrageous, and unions must show concretely that they are on the side of those who are under attack. They have the collective power to take work place actions to support the growing movement of resistance.

There is anger at the base of society which is being shown by the labour battles that have been taking place, Black Lives Matter, climate justice mobilizations and other movements for change over the past years. People are willing to struggle.

The fight for abortion access is a life and death matter as we have seen when abortion is restricted. Dying from back street abortions is a reality for those who are denied. Organized labour must be in the front lines defending reproductive justice for all!

The free market right is wrong on inflation

by: Alex Callinicos

The alarm bells about inflation are ringing ever more shrilly across the world economy. Huw Pill, the new chief economist of the Bank of England, predicts that the official British inflation rate will hit five percent early next year.

In the United States the annual rate of core inflation reached four percent in September, the highest it's been in almost 25 years. Why is inflation rising?

The orthodox explanation is based on the famous statement by one of the two ideological godfathers of neoliberalism, Milton Friedman, that "inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon." He argued that if the money supply rises faster than production, demand will increase more than the supply of goods and services, pulling up prices.

Boosted

Faced with the pandemic, states followed Maynard Keynes, who advocated intervention in the economy, rather than Friedman. Central banks hugely boosted the money supply.

They bought up financial assets as a way of pumping money into markets that froze in March 2020. Meanwhile, governments in advanced economies massively increased their spending to fill the gap left by the collapse of private demand.

To a large extent, they financed this by extra borrowing. In the US and Britain, the Treasury bonds governments sold to borrow were bought mainly by the central banks. This modern equivalent of printing money was used to keep economies afloat. As economic historian Adam Tooze put it, "budget constraints don't seem to

exist—money is a mere technicality."

But this is heresy from the point of view of what has been the reigning economic orthodoxy since the 1970s. Its adherents argue that the extra spending and borrowing has boosted the money supply, causing the rise in inflation.

There are two problems with this analysis. The first is that its exponents have been crying wolf for over a decade.

The policies they denounce began in a more moderate form in 2007-8, when central banks responded to the global financial crisis by creating money and pumping it into the financial system. Free marketeers denounced this as an

abomination that would lead to hyper-inflation. In fact inflation stayed very low or was even negative until very recently.

Secondly, there is a better explanation for the inflationary surge, which focuses on supply rather than demand.

The economic shutdown provoked by the pandemic disrupted the transnational supply chains that radiate from Asian factories to Europe and North America. According to the Financial Times (FT), manufacturing delivery times have lengthened in recent months at the fastest rate since records began in 1998.

"It is advanced economies that wait for parts

and goods largely produced by China and other Asian countries that are most affected. Call it the bullwhip effect—where changes in demand have a bigger impact the further along the supply chain you go—in action," said the FT.

"Delivery times have worsened the most in the tech and auto sectors, where they are short of microchips, but manufacturers of food and beverages and personal items are experiencing near-record disruptions." However caused, inflation is cutting into living standards. The bosses and their economists are most afraid of a "wage-price spiral"—in other words, workers reacting by demanding higher wages and capitalists defending their profits by raising prices further.

This isn't happening yet. According to a survey by XpertHR, over four fifths of British private employers plan to raise wages, taking the median pay award to 2.5 percent, well below inflation. But the labour shortages that are another effect of the pandemic may give many groups of workers the power to defend their real wages.

The free market right is preparing to strike back. Pill is a protege of Otmar Issing, the first chief economist of the European Central Bank and a disciple of the other neoliberal godfather, Friedrich von Hayek. Ignoring how central banks have been actively intervening to maintain demand, Pill told the FT the Bank of England is "an institution that's in the price stability business".

Meanwhile, chancellor Rishi Sunak, when asked by a journalist to choose between Keynes and Friedman, opted for Friedman. We've been warned. Winter—higher interest rates and Thatcherite austerity—is coming.

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<https://socialistworker.co.uk/>



...Public sector continued from page 8

The two other unions that represent the rest of the daycare workers also threatened to join the strike. This pressure forced the Legault government back to the table and they agreed to give support staff a better increase to bring the strike to an end.

Legault's attempt to divide workers failed. A union leader summed it up by saying "it wouldn't have been possible without the daycare workers mobilizing, and their solidarity, and the exceptional support from parents".

University of Manitoba faculty strike

University of Manitoba faculty went on strike November 2 in the face of a government-imposed wage freeze. The union called on the province to abandon its wage cap mandate, because it has impeded the bargaining process.

"We just feel like the government is in their back pocket or in that room with them,

and that's not appropriate. The university is to be independent from the government," University of Manitoba Faculty Association president Orvie Dingwall said.

Students showed their support for the faculty strike by blockading all entrances to the administration building. "There's a fear students have that the administration just isn't listening," one student supporter said. "We're going to keep showing up whether or not they're listening and we're going to try our best to make it so that they have to listen."

Omicron and pandemic austerity

Throughout the pandemic, provincial governments continued to push austerity agendas, even in the face of the pandemic.

In 2020, early in the pandemic, Alberta premier Jason Kenney announced he would cut 11,000 non front-line healthcare jobs and \$600 million from the healthcare budget. In August 2021, Kenney threatened to cut nurses pay by 3%, until nurses pushed back.

Ontario premier Doug Ford cut \$500

million from education in November and has capped public sector salary increases at 1%, an effective wage cut. Ford also killed legislation for paid sick days.

The lightning speed of the spread of the omicron variant will only make current conditions worse. The inadequate responses by all provincial governments will have deadly consequences. This awful reality exposes where the interests of governments of all political stripes lie—with their corporate friends. The 'economy' that they are protecting is the profits of a few, not the welfare of the many.

Fight back from below

The other awful reality is the abdication of leadership by trade union leaders. A new low point was the appearance of Unifor leader, Jerry Dias, and OPSEU leader Smokey Thomas at a press conference side-by-side with Ontario premier Doug Ford in November. In a supreme show of gaslit pre-election campaigning, Ford announced that he would raise the minimum wage to

\$15, after scrapping it three years ago when he took office.

The public sector workers who went on strike in November and December are showing the way. Their example of solidarity and the solidarity of community supporters made some real gains and show that it is possible to push back even in this time of crisis.

Territorial Acknowledgement

As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.

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WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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

concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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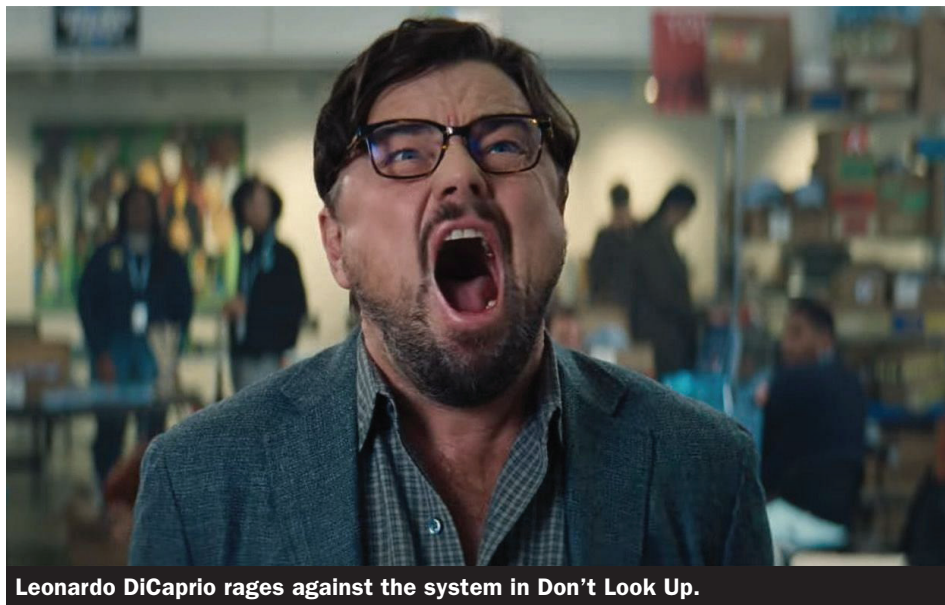
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What to watch during a pandemic, Omicron edition

by: **Faline Bobier**

Here in Ontario movie theatres are again being shut down, along with gyms, restaurants, etc. As Ontario and the world suffer through a series of lockdowns or not-lockdowns, as capitalist governments prove yet again that they have no real solutions to the problems of the pandemic - here are some suggestions for diversions, as we all figure out how to remain politically active in as safe a way as possible. The problems besetting our world in 2022 can't be ignored and ordinary people can't abandon the fight for climate justice, for Indigenous sovereignty and land rights, for workers' rights, in spite of the pandemic we are living through.



Leonardo DiCaprio rages against the system in *Don't Look Up*.

Don't Look Up

Don't Look Up is a 2021 American satirical science fiction film written, produced, and directed by Adam McKay. The movie is available for streaming on Netflix. It stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence as two astronomers attempting to warn humanity about an approaching comet that will destroy human civilization. The comet is an analogy for climate change and the film is a satire of government and media indifference to the climate crisis.

The film has provoked a lot of debate about its merits (or not) and its politics. Some critics have lamented what they deem the movie's too-obvious satire of media and politicians' responses to/dismissal of the approaching comet, read the reality of catastrophic climate change.

But in the words of an actual climate scientist, Peter Kalmus, author of *Being the Change: Live Well and Spark a Climate Revolution*:

"But this isn't a film about how humanity would respond to a planet-killing comet; it's a film about how humanity is responding to planet-killing climate breakdown. We live in a society in which, despite extraordinarily clear, present, and worsening climate danger, more than half of Republican members of Congress still say climate change is a hoax and many more wish to block action, and in which the official Democratic party platform still enshrines massive subsidies to the fossil fuel industry; in which the current president ran on a promise that 'nothing will fundamentally change', and the speaker of the House dismissed even a modest climate plan as 'the green dream or whatever'; in which the largest delegation to Cop26 was the fossil fuel industry, and the White House sold drilling rights to a huge tract

of the Gulf of Mexico after the summit; in which world leaders say that climate is an 'existential threat to humanity' while simultaneously expanding fossil fuel production; in which major newspapers still run fossil fuel ads, and climate news is routinely overshadowed by sports; in which entrepreneurs push incredibly risky tech solutions and billionaires sell the absurdist fantasy that humanity can just move to Mars."

Mackay's movie is clever in terms of the targets he lampoons: Meryl Streep in a Trump-like turn as US President Janie Orlean who tries to force the two scientists who identified the comet and its existential threat to the planet to revise their percentage of certainty from 99% to a more acceptable 70%. Or the character

of Peter Isherwell (creepily incarnated by Mark Rylance), the billionaire CEO of tech company BASH, who has great influence over the President, to the point of thwarting an attempt to nuke the comet and thereby destroy its potential planet-killing power. Instead, because he discovers the comet is full of precious minerals that can be turned into trillions of dollars of profit, he wants to try an untested technology that will supposedly break up the comet and thereby reduce its destructive potential, at the same time providing immense profits for Isherwell. And, in any case, if it doesn't work out, there's always an escape route for the rich and powerful. They will simply find another planet to inhabit and pillage. (NOTE: Make sure to watch the movie to the very end to see how well that strategy works out.)

Isherwell is obviously a nod to really existing psychopathic capitalists such as Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos, who spend billions of dollars for their personal jaunts to space, rather than using the money to actually help solve real problems here on Earth, such as the lack of Covid vaccinations for countries in the global south, which allows the disease to mutate and continue to wreak havoc.

Targeting of the media in *Don't Look Up* is also spot on and brings to mind any number of Fox News hosts who put their focus on bogus 'news' stories, like the fake 'stealing' of the election from Trump, rather than on the real issues facing ordinary Americans.

Don't Look Up really does create for the viewer a visceral sense of how much we stand to lose, a bit the same way Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove*, pointed to the senselessness of potential nuclear war.

However, it's also true that there is little in *Don't Look Up* that points to the potential

of actually existing resistance on the ground. At one point Dr. Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), the two scientists who discovered the comet, tell the truth to people in a bar they're in, after they've been effectively silenced by President Orlean and her administration. A riot ensues and Mindy asks Kate dismissively if she thinks people waving placards around is going to help the situation.

But if we look at the real world it's pretty clear those in power, like the rich and powerful in this film, will never do what it takes to save the planet. Their wealth and power is intricately tied to the fossil fuel industry that is at the heart of the climate crisis. That's why the people who really mattered at COP26 in Glasgow were not the politicians and fossil fuel capitalists inside the meetings, but the climate justice activists outside.

The title of the film, *Don't Look Up*, refers to an exhortation by President Orlean and others around her for people to ignore reality by refusing to look up and see the comet which is speeding towards them. But in another sense *Don't Look Up* is a good reminder to those of us who care about our future and the future of the planet not to look up for solutions to the climate crisis. Those solutions will come from below, from the Indigenous activists and others who repeatedly put themselves on the line, to defend the earth and to put the brakes on a system that is only leading to environmental destruction.

The Power of the Dog

The Power of the Dog is another 2021 film available on Netflix, written and directed by Jane Campion, and based on the 1967 novel of the same name by Thomas Savage. Campion is a New Zealand director, the second of only seven women nominated for Best Director for her breathtaking film *The Piano* (1993).

The Power of the Dog is a kind of Western psychological drama, entirely shot in New Zealand. It's set in 1925 Montana and tells the story of two wealthy ranch-owning brothers Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch) and George Burbank (Jesse Plemons). They meet widow and inn owner Rose Gordon (played brilliantly by Kirsten Dunst) during a cattle drive. The kind-hearted George is quickly taken with

and inclination. The film is beautifully shot, and the landscapes are starkly stunning. *The Power of the Dog* is an exploration of a kind of toxic masculinity mixed with a tenderness that Phil must hide from others in order to survive. It's also a tale where everything is not what it seems, which is only revealed to us at the end of the movie.

The Lost Daughter

The Lost Daughter, another 2021 film, written and directed by Maggie Gyllenhaal in her directorial debut, based on the novel of the same name by Elena Ferrante is also available on Netflix.

The Lost Daughter features British actress Olivia Colman who is brilliant in this drama about an academic, living and working in the US, who is taking a summer holiday on a Greek island. Her first day there seems idyllic as she lounges in blessed solitude on the beach. However, the next day a loud and overbearing family from Queens arrives and intrudes on her holiday, asking if she minds moving her beach chair so the family can sit together.

We start to get a sense that Leda Caruso (Olivia Colman) is no pushover when she politely refuses to move, saying she's fine where she is. Leda meets Nina (Dakota Johnson), a young mother, who's part of the extended family, when Nina's three-year-old daughter Elena goes momentarily missing on the beach. Leda finds Elena and returns her to Nina, who expresses her growing exhaustion and unhappiness with the experience of motherhood. Elena is upset after she loses her favorite doll, which Leda has secretly taken. In flashbacks, it is revealed that young Leda (actor Jessie Buckley) also struggled with being a young mother to her two daughters, Bianca and Martha, often losing her patience and becoming withdrawn.

This is a movie that deals realistically with the experience of motherhood and the push and pull of a woman who wants to build a career and experience all aspects of life but must deal with raising two daughters with a husband who puts his own needs first. *The Lost Daughter* is a movie where a lot is hidden and only revealed slowly in flashbacks that take us back to Leda's life when her daughters were young.

It's also a movie where a sense of the sinister



The Power of the Dog. Benedict Cumberbatch as a rich rancher.

Rose, while the volatile Phil, much influenced by his late mentor "Bronco" Henry, mocks Rose's son Peter for his lisp and 'effeminate' manner.

George and Rose marry and once she and her son move to the brothers' ranch a kind of psychological warfare begins between both Phil and Rose and between Phil and her son Peter (Australian actor Kodi Smit-McPhee).

Cumberbatch is entirely convincing as the American rancher, a man so repressed that he punishes those around him for his own yearnings

is lurking in the relationship between Leda and Nina and especially Nina's other family members, who do their best to make Leda's stay uncomfortable. Watch this movie for the subtle and complex depiction of the competing desires and ambitions that exist within one woman.

Just a few ideas for some watchable films for the New Year with a reminder that we all have to turn off our screens at some point soon and get back on the streets to make sure 2022 is an improvement on 2021!

RCMP OFF THE YINTAH!

by: **Brian Champ**

A post on the @yintah_access instagram account on the morning of Sunday Dec 19 announced “Early Sunday, Gidimt’en land defenders evicted Coastal Gaslink (CGL) workers and re-established control of Coyote Camp, the site where CGL plans to drill beneath the Wet’suwet’en headwaters. This courageous action took place one month after a wave of militarized raids on Gidimt’en land, where police with assault weapons, dogs, and sniper rifles arrested 30 people, including land defenders, journalists, and legal observers. Wet’suwet’en people have never surrendered this land, and we never will. Our lands are not for sale, and the safety of our waters is non-negotiable. In early 2020, Hereditary Chiefs from all five clans of our nation stood together and issued an eviction to CGL. That eviction remains in force today. We are calling for supporters to join us on the ground, or take action where you stand.”

Solidarity

A week of action in solidarity with Wet’suwet’en took place starting the next day, with actions throughout so-called Canada calling on RBC and other investors to stop funding CGL. In Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and many other places hundreds demanded banks respect Indigenous sovereignty and stop funding climate chaos. The land defenders at Coyote Camp have held on over the holidays, but another @yintah_access IG post from early in the new year warns of a new buildup of RCMP preparing for a fourth invasion: “RCMP have booked up local hotels for the next month. We have also received word from the Union

of BC Indian Chiefs that the C-IRG unit of the RCMP - the paramilitary unit that protects private industries who are seeking to destroy Indigenous lands - are being deployed onto our lands. We need boots on the ground and all eyes on Wet’suwet’en territory as we continue to stand up for our lands, our waters, and our future generations! If you can’t be here, take action where you stand - at investor’s offices, RBC branches, or your local police detachment”

This assertion of Wet’suwet’en sovereignty in opposition to the CGL pipeline being built on their land stands in a long line of resistance of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island to settler colonialism that never stopped. The legal foundation of Canada is the Doctrine of Discovery, based on 15th C Papal Bulls,

that ruled that European nations could claim “empty land” of the “New World” for their own. But this basis was contradicted by the 1763 Royal Proclamation that declared that the territories of Indigenous peoples that had not yet been impacted by settler colonialism could only be transferred through treaties with the Crown. Not only does this expose the idea that these lands were not populated as a lie, but because there are no historic treaties in much of BC, the supreme court of Canada ruled in 1997 that sovereignty over the 22,000 square kilometres of Wet’suwet’en territory remained vested in the traditional governance system of the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs and called for nation-to-nation negotiations and diplomacy.

Rather than seeking a diplomatic solution, the BC and federal governments, BC courts, RCMP, CGL and their investors are forcing through the pipeline without the consent of the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs, pretending that they have met the requirement by consulting the Wet’suwet’en Reserve Band Councils. But these reserves occupy a very small amount of Wet’suwet’en territory, nowhere near the path of the pipeline. While these councils are elected, their mandate comes from the colonial Indian Act which restricts their authority and budget.

Wet’suwet’en land defenders and their supporters have exposed this hole in the constitutional framework of Canada. But even where treaties were negotiated between the Crown and Indigenous nations, the ability of the Crown to negotiate was based on the threat of naked violence that had been demonstrated in earlier waves of colonization. The BC courts have avoided this constitutional question by awarding interlocutory injunctions to CGL to clear the path for development. The BC government has repeatedly ordered the RCMP to uphold this injunction, while pretending they have no control over them. This is a game that is also played by the federal government as well.

The RCMP army that invaded Wet’suwet’en land for the third time in three years on November 18th and 19th is asserting the settler colonial rights of Canada to these lands. The pipeline, if built, will be a disaster for Wet’suwet’en and for the planet. Stand with Wet’suwet’en land defenders who have re-occupied the CGL rig poised to drill under the river Wedzin Kwa - Stand for justice and for the future of the planet.

Look for actions in your area soon. Follow @yintah_access for info



Public sector workers' pandemic strike back

by: **Pam Johnson**

While the #Striketober wave of strikes was building in the US working class, a similar wave in labour militancy is happening in Canada and Quebec in the last months of 2021, this time with public sector workers leading the way. This follows a mini-strike wave mainly in the manufacturing sector that started early 2021 reported in this publication (link ritch’s article).

Workers are voting for strike mandates by huge majorities, cutting against the attempt by the employers and governments to divide them. Public sector workers who have been on the frontlines since the beginning of the pandemic have been praised for their sacrifice but, then refused wage increases, proper PPE and paid sick days. They have worked past exhaustion to maintain services as governments refuse to provide the resources to deal with the crisis. This is on top of the pre-existing conditions of years of governments starving the public sector: understaffing, cutting programs, casualization and contracting out that have exacerbated the current situation.

New Brunswick public sector workers strike

Thousands of New Brunswick public sector workers, members of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) went on strike October 29 for 16 days, following a huge 94% strike mandate vote.

The 28,000 workers are from multiple sectors: health care, education, municipalities, universities, social services, transportation and nursing homes. All 11 locals across the province struck together.

The attempt by conservative premier Blaine Higgs to shame workers back to work at a strike rally was met with jeers. His government then proceeded lock out non-CUPE education workers and ordered some

healthcare workers back to work. These divisive maneuvers failed to stop the strike. After 16 days a deal was struck at the negotiation table, and all but one local ratified an agreement with no concessions and some improvements.

Two weeks after, 9,000 nurses in the New Brunswick Nurses Union voted 92% for strike action. Their leader described the mood

as ‘very jubilant’ when the results came in. The high strike vote and recent strike forced the government back to the table after refusing to negotiate since September.

Quebec Daycare workers strike

11,000 Quebec daycare workers started an unlimited strike on December 1, shutting down about 400 public daycares across the province of

Quebec. Strikers are part of Quebec’s largest daycare workers union – the Confederation of National Trade Unions, or Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN). The union says that without significant raises and improvement in working conditions, more people in the sector will quit.

But negotiations stalled over the issue of a smaller increase for support staff. Quebec Premier François Legault’s government is refusing to offer the same 20% increase to support staff, who work in maintenance, administration and the kitchens, as they are offering to the daycare educators.

One striker said that while her pay was settled everyone who works in the daycare should be getting the same increase. A union leader calling it ‘a historic fight’ said that the strikers will not move on until their colleagues, who work in other jobs, receive a fairer increase.

Parents showed their solidarity with the striking workers by organizing to picket the office of the minister in charge of the daycare sector.

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