



**End NATO's  
proxy war in  
Ukraine**

page 7

**RBC off the Yintah!  
End attacks on  
Wet'suwet'en**

page 3



# Socialist Worker

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# KICK THEM ALL OUT!



**they spend billions on WAR,  
BIG OIL, and ENVIRONMENTAL  
DESTRUCTION while **workers**  
**suffer** and the **world burns****



**LEFT JAB**  
by John Bell

# Telecom oligarchs sink plan for affordable internet

**T**oronto Mayor John Tory launched his re-election bid by pulling the plug on “Connect TO”, a plan to provide affordable internet services to low-income people.

High speed internet access is no longer optional; the pandemic has proven that. It is becoming impossible to manage children’s education, financial matters or communication without it. On top of the crisis of affordable housing and skyrocketing food prices, internet access for more and more people is threatened.

player Shaw Communications only managed to post a meagre profit of \$1 billion, but don’t weep for them – their profit is up 43% over last year.

It is hardly surprising that Tory and the conservative councilors who make up his executive board danced to big telecom’s tune. Tory is a lifelong friend of oligarch Ted Rogers, and his very first job was with Rogers Communication. His entire “working” life has seen him bounce between Conservative Party backrooms and Rogers executive suites. The Toronto Sun (of all



Factor in the defunding of public libraries, and a large part of the working poor will be left behind.

According to a report in the Toronto Star the mayor and his staff were swayed by a full court press of telecom corporate lobbyists.

Canada’s telecom rates are currently 2nd highest among developed countries. In 2021 Rogers Communication took in over \$12.5 billion in revenue, more than \$500 million more than the previous year. Bell Canada banked \$23.45 billion for the same period. Regional

places) reported in 2021 that Tory had pocketed almost \$700,000 for services rendered to Rogers while mayor. Small wonder that Tory has been granted unprecedented access to Rogers-owned media outlets like CP24 news platforms.

Sadly, the sorry state of the left on council means that, barring a disaster, Tory is a shoo-in for re-election. Toronto will be in Rogers’ pocket for the foreseeable future. And if the city’s working people are angry, we may never know, because they’ll lack the internet access to tell us.

# CUPE Ontario confronts bill 124

by: Peter Votsch

CUPE Ontario just concluded its 2022 convention, which took place via zoom April 27-29. Hundreds of delegates debated a variety of progressive motions from combating discrimination, to climate justice, to the low rates of social assistance. In addition to hearing from leaders from CUPE National and the NDP, delegates heard from Professor Akua Benjamin, a founder of the Black Action Defence Committee, who spoke eloquently on the issue of anti-Black racism and intersectionality.

But the most important issue facing CUPE members and public sector workers took center stage in terms of debates: Bill 124 – public sector wage restraint in Ontario, brought in by the Ford Tories in 2019. For the last 3 years, workers in the public sector have faced wage and benefit increases limited at 1%. All this while inflation has been rising, and is now 6% - leading to an ongoing wage reduction. While it is set to expire shortly, there is no indication that a Tory government would not renew it, or impose similar bill to replace it.

As we approach the June 2 provincial election, the Tories have adopted the approach of carving out certain groups from the legislation, among them police and nurses, while keeping it in place. With the distinct possibility of a renewed minority or majority Tory government facing the province’s public sector workers, the debate in CUPE took on added importance.

In CUPE, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) has led the way, by proposing joint bargaining and building pickets around Ontario with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), another of the important unions in the healthcare field. At the convention, an OCHU motion proposed common front bargaining for nursing, support, service and clerical staff in the hospital sector, and mobilizing CUPE members in support.

Absent from CUPE Ontario’s “Action Plan”, was a strategy, other

than a legal challenge, to defeating Bill 124 – this despite the reality of a 5% reduction in real wages faced by CUPE members this year and beyond across the board. This is demoralizing for current members, and makes it all the more difficult to organize the unorganized, when all that is on offer is an ongoing reduction in compensation.

An activist (from the International Socialists) raised this issue directly by proposing a ‘working class strategy’, opposed to reliance on the courts and the politicians, to fight the legislation. This proposal also called for mass direct action, including strike action. In an important, but symbolic victory, this was added to the Action Plan. A number of delegates followed on with

legislation, setting up a confrontation with the Ford Tories. The groundwork must be laid for this – in common fronts wherever possible, as suggested by OCHU.

While the groundwork will have to take place at the Local level, there will need to be a corresponding lead from the top. Not one that simply says that ‘the execs and members do not support a mass strike’. This will not do the trick, and will ensure more defeats in an already shrinking public sector, which faces constant pressures of privately delivered services on all sides. Instead of blaming the ranks and the locals, a lead is more necessary than ever from CUPE, to liaise with our public sector partners such as OPSEU, SEIU and teachers unions



Ontario Nurses march against bill 124 (ONA)

calls for a “general strike”.

Socialists certainly support mass strike action – but it has to be more than rhetorical, or nice words in an ‘Action Plan’ that subsequently collects dust in a union office. CUPE Ontario’s leader, Fred Hahn, while being generally supportive of calls for mass action, has in the past pointed to reticent union presidents as a reason for not making such a call. He pointed this out at the convention – but the debate cannot end there. An escalating strategy needs to be developed, and taken to the locals. This may include ‘hard’ pickets of Tory MPP offices, or occupations. In the end, one of CUPE’s sectors will have to demand increases in bargaining that falls outside the confines of the

and others, (to include ‘private sector’ unions that increasingly represent workers in the public sphere). If local execs and activists feel there is a real, not a paper strategy, one that the leadership is willing to act on, they will be empowered to organize on the ground to build the action needed.

CUPE Ontario has a long and well-deserved reputation as a progressive provincial division of Canada’s largest union. Its activist tradition has led to almost continual growth over the years. But a ‘day of reckoning’ may be in the offing, brought on by four more years of Tory rule, and continued losses as a result. Our weakness will not go unnoticed by our corporate enemies – we best prepare for battle.

# Mourn the dead, fight like hell for the living!

by: Peter Votsch, CUPE retiree

**O**n April 28 each year, workers in Canada and internationally commemorate a day in remembrance of their Sisters and Brothers injured or killed on the job.

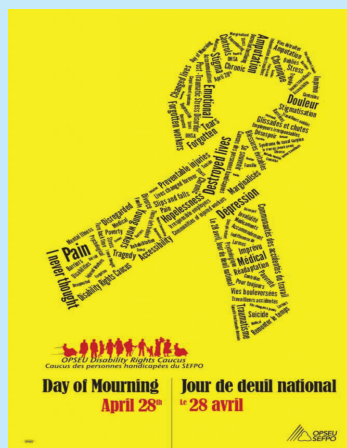
In Canada, April 28 is called the Day of Mourning. The tradition began in 1983 when two Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) health and safety reps came upon a funeral of a firefighter killed on the job. They resolved to take this to CUPE’s convention, and to pass a motion that a day be devoted to those who suffered a workplace injury, or those who died while working for their employer. Such a motion was passed by CUPE, and the Canadian Labour Congress quickly followed suit at its next convention. April 28th was selected as this was the day Canada’s first Compensation

Act passed its 3rd reading in 1914.

While many will light candles in ceremony on that day, another symbol is also used to denote the importance of health and safety on the job – the Canary in the Mine. The Canary in the Mine dates back to the UK in 1911, when miners began to take canaries in a cage down with them into the mines. The canaries were used to indicate the presence of carbon monoxide – they would collapse and die when it was present. Due to their small size and rapid breathing rate, the carbon monoxide would affect them immediately, giving the miners time to escape.

The symbol of the canary, in the cage of the workplace, is a haunting image. It is a reality of front line workers everywhere. If you look at those killed on the job, or those that die subsequently of their injuries, we are looking at a rate of almost 3 a day (995). Reported injuries are

over 30,000 a year – likely the tip of the iceberg, as many workers are not covered the provincial Workers Safety and Insurance Boards, but by private insurance that may have different reporting methods, not to mention lower levels of compensation, if any.





# Pride Toronto made secret deal, bowed to cops

LGBTQ+ activists have used Freedom of Information laws to dig up documents showing that members of the Pride Toronto executive made a secret deal with city hall to re-introduce police participation in the festival. In return they received Trillium Grant specifically aimed at a campaign to win the community over to the idea.

In 2016 queer members of Black Lives Matter disrupted the Pride parade to protest the inclusion of uniformed police in the festival. Since then official TPS presence has been excluded from the festival, although un-uniformed individual officers were always welcomed. The change was welcomed by most of the LGBTQ+ community.

The documents show that the deal was brokered in 2018 by individuals on the Pride executive board, Mayor John Tory, and TD bank. The plan included strategies for deflecting direct questions about TPS participation. It should be recalled that even

as the secret meetings were going on a serial killer was preying on the gay community, and it was revealed that police efforts were either inept at best.

While restriction imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have made the debate moot for several years, it is far from over. Different levels of government, led by Mayor Tory,

have demonstrated that returning cops to Pride is their priority, and they will use their financial resources to make it happen.

At issue is the soul of Pride. Is it a grass-roots expression of a still-oppressed and threatened community, or a corporate-driven fun fair?

The struggle continues.



BLM leads the Toronto Pride march - No Cops in Pride!

# Ottawa says no to the far-right on May Day

by: **Chantal Sundaram**

Hundreds of bikers (and many SUVs and a few trucks) rolled into Ottawa on April 29, for an event that claimed to be about veterans rights but featured every far-right and conspiratorial theory associated with the recent truckers' convoy that occupied Ottawa in February.

Rolling Thunder Ottawa was an attempt to keep the momentum of the far-right-led convoy movement going. And now that vaccine and masking mandates are being lifted, this time they came with a new pretext to spread their message of hate.

They claimed to want to reconsecrate the national War Memorial, which they themselves had desecrated and as a consequence were barred from the monument in February.

Indigenous veterans had already reconsecrated the space with a smudging ceremony after the convoy supporters had urinated and danced disrespectfully on it. And during Rolling Thunder's reappearance at the monument a group of veterans gathered to counter protest and testify that this event did not speak for them.

Still, the convoy claimed they were coming back to reclaim the space, and made speeches about the abuse they suffered there at the hands of police. In fact, police had been tolerant and even complicit with them in February, and this continued with the police escorts for Rolling Thunder this time.

But this was all beside the point. Their "veterans" message didn't even penetrate as a legitimate cover into the Ottawa population who mostly wondered what they're still protesting about now that COVID restrictions are being lifted.

There was infighting amongst themselves about how to present the whole event. It was a convergence of the far right just seizing on another attempt to build their base and their profile without being too openly complicit with open fascists. The Rolling Thunder organizer was exposed on a local radio show for not being able to explain why well-known Holocaust denier Chris Sky was a featured speaker on their website.

So the critical thing the many groups in Ottawa organizing against Rolling Thunder had to do was to expose their real agenda.

Whether they claim to stand for job creation in the oil and gas in-

a way to turn the story around, because unions across Ontario had decided to celebrate the historic day for workers rights with rallies in cities including Ottawa.

Those rallies were calling for all the things the far-right has no answer for, but which tap into the anger that motivates many convoy supporters: the terrible handling of the pandemic by all levels of government, the need for paid sick days, and for ongoing economic supports for all those who lost income from the pandemic.

On May Day, Ottawa District Labour Council organized a rally in the space that had been occupied by rolling Thunder the previous day. Community Solidarity Ottawa, which formed in response to the original convoy occupation in February, held a Hate-free zone Block Party afterwards. That day demonstrated that community, the labour movement, and the working-class history of May Day is what speaks for workers and the poor, not the lies of the "convoy."

Community Solidarity Ottawa also organized an "unwelcoming party" on the evening Rolling Thunder rolled in. It will continue to be important to try to challenge them directly every time they try to claim the streets.

Ultimately we need to defeat their message and all they stand for. We need a long-term movement that can stand up to the rise of the far right no matter what form it takes, both on the streets and by challenging their ideas.

Inspired by this start in Ottawa, "Community Solidarity" groups have sprung up all over the country. A "Community Solidarity Project" is now supporting the connection between these groups. See [www.communitysolidarityottawa.ca/](http://www.communitysolidarityottawa.ca/)



Ottawa workers march on MayDay

dustrial over a just transition to good green jobs, whether they claim to support truckers' rights against vaccine mandates and turn that into anti-vax and anti-mask conspiracy, and whether they try to co-opt veterans rights, it is an attempt to redirect the real anger of poor and working class people towards the far right.

But it is also to disguise what they cannot say openly: they want to divide the poor and working class by legitimizing all the politics of hate on the lines of racial hatred, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny.

But the weekend that Rolling Thunder rolled into Ottawa was also May Day weekend. This was

# Tell RBC: defund CGL



Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs marched to RBC in Toronto

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

As TC Energy prepares to drill under the Wedzin Kwa (otherwise known as the Morice River) in northwestern BC, momentum is building across Turtle Island to demand that the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) stop funding this disastrous fracked gas pipeline.

The Coastal Gaslink (CGL) pipeline is the largest fracked gas project in Canadian history. It runs through unceded Wet'suwet'en territory, and has never been approved by Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. RBC is the largest lender to this pipeline, effectively bankrolling the violation of Indigenous sovereignty and the violence that has come with it.

## RCMP attacks

The RCMP has relentlessly harassed Wet'suwet'en people opposed to this project, which threatens their water, land and sovereignty. Since November 2021, 32 people have been arrested for their opposition to the pipeline. As The Tyee reports, "The B.C. RCMP's industry response squad spent almost \$1 million protecting the Coastal GasLink pipeline in less than two months as construction on Wet'suwet'en territory entered final phases last winter."

As well as destroying unceded Indigenous land and waters, once it is operational the CGL pipeline is expected to carry up to five billion cubic feet of natural gas every day. This natural gas, when burned, is equivalent to 585.5 million pounds of CO2 being emitted every day.

RBC is the fifth biggest bank lender to fossil fuel infrastructure in the world, and the biggest in Canada. It owns 8% of TC Energy shares, and without its investment, the project can not go forward.

In March, a group of celebrities launched a campaign to build pressure on RBC to divest from CGL.

In their statement, they explain:

"With RBC as its financial leader, the controversial Coastal Gas Link project has shown a blatant disregard for Wet'suwet'en People, the will of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and the Canadian Supreme Court-recognized sovereignty of the unceded Wet'suwet'en territory."

## Decolonize

In April, Decolonial Solidarity launched an Adopt-a-Branch campaign to support the struggle against the CGL pipeline by maintaining a regular presence at RBC branches across so-called Canada until RBC divests. Hundreds of people attended the launch and have signed up to build local campaign groups.

A campaign launch later this month will involve a range of activities at bank branches. These include leafleting and poster-ing, protests and other outreach activities to broaden opposition to RBC's policies which are furthering violence against Indigenous people and the climate crisis.

These campaigns will need to be bolstered by mass solidarity actions as have been organized in the past, when RCMP launched raids on Wet'suwet'en land defenders. With drilling under Wedzin Kwa imminent, there is urgent need for renewed solidarity efforts far and wide to stop the CGL pipeline, as we saw during Shut Down Canada in 2020.





# Workers fight

*Workers in the US are winning the right to organise in the factories and stores of massive multinational corporations. Sophie Squire speaks to activists that are fighting for union recognition*

## ‘We can win union fight,’ says US Starbucks worker

**A**cross the United States workers are taking on massive corporations to win the right to organise in a union. Inspired by the victories at Amazon and Starbucks, millions are thinking about how they might unionise their workplace, and asking what a union can do.

Workers at Starbucks coffee shops are among them. By Thursday of last week the number of stores getting organised totalled over 200.

Through the Starbucks Workers United campaign, workers vote on whether to join Workers United Labour Union. This is affiliated with the second-biggest union in the US, the Service Employees International Union.

While it cannot be denied that a big union is involved, workers say this campaign is being driven from the ground up. Many activists look to Buffalo, in the state of New York, where Starbucks workers first petitioned the National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) for a union election last August.

Morgan, who works in a Starbucks in Austin, Texas, told Socialist Worker that she didn’t believe unionising was possible at first. But workers’ experiences in Buffalo got her thinking differently.

“I noticed what happened in Buffalo, but I’ll admit it didn’t occur to me that we should do it here,” she said. “I thought that maybe Buffalo was just a particularly bad store to work in.

“Then our hours got cut. Some people had their hours cut by half. Some went from being scheduled

for 20 hours to eight.

“Corporate said it was a reasonable adjustment correlating with how much profit the store earned. But it’s going to harm people’s livelihoods. People are scared they’ll lose benefits. You get health insurance if you work 20 hours a week. If your hours get cut to 15, you’ll lose out.”

“The cut in our hours was the fuel

“We had a Zoom call for the Starbucks Workers United group, and within six days, we had organised the store. We managed to get 79 percent of workers to sign union cards in three days. After that, we made our intentions public and then filed to have a union election.”

After going public, Morgan said managers employed tactics to make workers feel uncomfortable. “Dress

“I think we can win this fight,” she added. “I really do, with the way that it’s spreading. We can unionise Starbucks workers.”

But Morgan stressed that unionising is only the beginning. “We must fight so that we are paid enough to live on. We should be allowed to keep tips that we receive on credit cards. Another important thing that we fight for is for workers to be able to decide what is needed in their store and take the action that they deem appropriate.

“We want to elect our own leaders and fight for a real say in how our stores are run.”

### Coffee giant sacks seven to stop organising

Seven Starbucks workers were called into work by managers while a snowstorm raged in Memphis, Tennessee in February of this year. At fifteen-minute intervals they were all fired for trying to unionise their store. This move was later deemed illegal by the NLRB.

Beto, one of the seven who was fired, told Socialist Worker that he and others were inspired by Starbucks workers’ move to unionise in Buffalo. “We knew what we wanted after that,” he said, “That was to unionise.”

Nikki, who was also sacked, said workers were central to making

this a reality. All we did was talk to each other. We tried to make sure everyone was on board. “We knew the bosses would attack us, and Starbucks would try and say we were coercing people into voting. So to fight this, we had to make sure everyone was on the same page.”

The seven workers were only sacked after declaring that their store would file for a union election. Nikki said that bosses couldn’t legally fire them for organising. So they came up with trumped-up charges instead. “One of the reasons they gave for firing me was that I’d ask a colleague if they wanted me to clock in early when I first entered the store every morning,” she said.

Beto added that one of the reasons for firing him was that he “didn’t wear a mask in non-working hours.” Nikki pointed out that they suspended those known as the Montgomery Seven because they worked so well together. “We’ve bonded through trauma working at this store,” she said. “These guys are my family, which made our union campaign so strong.”

And Beto added that Starbucks’ attack on them had “backfired”. “Starbucks head office tried to make us an example of what happens when you unionise. But really it’s had the opposite effect of what they wanted. It’s inspired many more stores to unionise and fight back.”

He added, “The bosses will do absolutely everything to strip us of our dignity. But we will keep fighting back, for Starbucks workers and everyone.”



Starbucks union activist Morgan (pictured left), has been building a fightback in Austin, Texas.

that lit our fire, and we moved fast. Two other colleagues and I set up an unofficial committee. Then we started posting memes and articles into our barista group chat about how awful Starbucks CEO Harold Schultz is.

code is now being enforced more severely, especially for those that are very pro-union. We’ve also been told that we’ll be disciplined if we’re even a minute late,” she said.

But Morgan added that these attacks are “fuel” to keep fighting.



# back

*Amazon workers in Staten Island recently won a union vote. The corporation is going to great lengths and using dirty tricks to stop any further victories*



## Lessons from the battle to unionise Amazon warehouses

Thousands cheered when Chris Smalls, the founder of the Amazon Labour Union (ALU), announced that 8,300 workers at the JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island, New York, had won their unionisation ballot last month.

Small proclaimed, “A revolution is here. We’re going to organise buildings all over the nation. In the last 72 hours we’ve been contacted by workers all over the world. They want to unionise and we’re going to absolutely help them.”

The news was a beacon of hope that workers everywhere could stand up to this corporate giant. It inspired the nearly 1,500 workers in the nearby LDJ5 Amazon sorting centre to vote on whether to join the ALU. The result of the ballot will be out soon.

Amazon bosses are terrified that workers dare to unionise. They are employing dirty and intimidating tactics to undermine the organisation.

Pascuale Cioffi, a process assistant at the JFK8 fulfilment factory, described how managers would be “grabbing people and taking them to the office.” He added that they would sit them in a room with lawyers and human resources reps to ask whether they were coerced into union support.

And workers at another warehouse have received threatening letters from Amazon that asked workers to vote no and attacked the union for asking its members to pay dues. The workers at JFK8 have triumphed, but the battle to organise Amazon workers won’t be easy.

An attempt by the Retail, Wholesale

and Department Store Union (Rwdsu) to unionise a warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, failed just last year. The No vote led by 993 to 875, but the NLRB ordered a re-vote due to public pressure on Amazon. With some votes still contested, the official result of this round of voting is unclear. But the union is likely to lose again by around 118 votes, according to the Rwdsu.

So why have workers in New York triumphed, while workers in Alabama still can’t get over the threshold? The successful drive to unionise at the JFK8 centre was driven from the bottom up by workers. It relied on worker activists inside the building, and some of them were also political activists.

In contrast, the Rwdsu took a different, more traditional trade union approach that relied on union full timers to build a yes vote from outside. All the decisions made during the campaign were driven by full time union officials, who did not experience the same hardship that workers did inside. This ended in defeat.

What’s clear is that worker-led campaigns to unionise Amazon are a must, but organising within this industry giant won’t be simple. Bullying bosses, lousy pay and awful conditions mean that Amazon has a high staff turnover. US data company, Payscale found that the average tenure of an Amazon worker is only a year.

Amazon bosses hope this will lead to a constant turnover of staff that won’t stay long enough to build union links. This means that building union membership at Amazon isn’t enough.

Workers must push for strikes and action to win better pay, conditions and dignity.

The union has to be an instrument for struggle and improvements in workers’ lives. The Amazon bosses are playing dirty but they can still be beaten. One sign of how Amazon will try to hit back is that it has formally objected to the vote to unionise at Staten Island. Ludicrously it complained to the National Labor Relations Board because the vote had been conducted in a way that favoured the union.

Amazon argued, in one instance, that when the union offered workers marijuana, it amounted to an “impermissible grant of support” for workers’ votes. The company said the way union supporters had interrupted mandatory anti-union meetings “intentionally created hostile confrontations” that limited Amazon’s right to communicate with staff.

The company also said the union had improperly “polled” workers during a key period before the election. The Amazon Labor Union responded, “Amazon is attempting to overturn the democratic voice of its own workers.”

“The entire world knows that the workers won our election and we look forward to sitting down with Amazon in May to negotiate a fair contract for the workers at JFK8.”

The company has refused to recognise the union. But it can be beaten. Nearly 20 years ago, the workers at a Walmart store in Quebec voted to unionise, and within six months the company shut the store down. But Amazon simply cannot shut its large warehouses.

## We will not go back! Full access to free abortion for all



by: Carolyn Egan

Outrage spread across the United States as leaked information became public that the conservative majority on the Supreme Court was about to overturn Roe v Wade. This would have a devastating effect on thousands, denying access to abortion in almost half the states in the US by leaving it up to state legislatures to determine local regulations.

The news was not unexpected as we saw anti-abortion justices appointed to the highest court, state assemblies pass restrictive legislation, and politicians denouncing those who sought to have control over their own bodies. In Texas a young woman, Lizelle Herrera from Rio Grande City, was arrested for murder for inducing an abortion. Only after a huge outcry were the charges dropped and she was freed. It is the most vulnerable who will be most affected from Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and poor communities. It is they who are standing up and fighting in groups such as Sister Song.

The majority of Americans do not want to see Roe v Wade overturned in recent polls. This does not seem to bother the ideologically driven supreme court justices. Samuel Alito said in the document obtained by Politico, “We can’t allow our decisions to be affected by any extraneous influences, such as concern about the public’s reaction to our work.” He showed total contempt for the rights of those seeking an abortion as well as the will of the majority. There is a slogan that we used to chant, “Campaign Life your name’s a lie! You don’t care if people die”! They don’t care, and there is no doubt that if this comes to pass we will see the return of back street, illegal abortions.

I had a call from a woman in Detroit, Michigan this morning asking if Roe was overturned could people come to Canada to seek abortions. It brought me back to the days before the Morgentaler decision in January 1988, when the Canadian Supreme Court overturned the federal abortion law here. In those days we helped many travel to Buffalo. Sometimes we went down with them, but most often they traveled alone because there were so many who

were being denied in Canada. The same was happening in the Atlantic provinces, in British Columbia, in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

American reproductive rights organizations, physicians and others reached out to Canadians, and networks were established to make accessing the procedure as easy as possible. This was absolutely necessary to give those seeking abortions the dignity and respect that they deserved.

## Building the movement in Canada

But the key was building a mass movement that fought for reproductive justice and access to abortion for all. We set out to organize that movement in communities across the country, involving trade unions, racialized communities, Indigenous activists, students, faith communities, and all who were willing to fight for the change we needed.

Organization such as the Black Action Defense Committee, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress, Women Working with Immigrant Women. The Ontario Organization of Visible Minority Women, the Canadian Federation of Students, and so many more became actively involved in the fight for reproductive justice.

We fought for universal child-care, birth control in our own communities and our own languages, an end to forced sterilization that particularly affected Indigenous women, for decent jobs, for an end to racial and sexual harassment, and employment equity, as well as full access to free abortion. We went into the streets with mass demonstrations and were able to organize the pro-choice sentiment in this country into a strong movement that won the overturning of the federal abortion law. Much more still had to be done but it was an important victory.

Hopefully there will be a similar uprising across the United States that will mobilize millions to stop this vicious right wing attack on abortion rights. We will fight along side all those Americans who in the streets in Houston, New York, Boston, San Francisco and so many other cities.

We will not go back!



# The conflict in Ukraine is an imperialist proxy war

What's happening in Ukraine isn't just a national struggle against Russia. It's a proxy war between imperialist powers

by: **Alex Callinicos**

Strangely enough, supporters of Nato's proxy war with Russia tend to deny that it is a proxy war. There are exceptions. Leon Panetta, director of the CIA under Barack Obama, admitted in March, "It's a proxy war with Russia whether we say so or not." But Western governments and their apologists still deny this.

The main reason they give is that Russia is actually being fought by the forces of the Ukrainian government, with substantial popular support. Sometimes they say things like, "calling this a proxy war denies the Ukrainians agency" and reduces them to the US's puppets.

The problem perhaps is partly the very word "proxy", which means a person acting on behalf of another. During the Cold War, the US often accused this or that Communist movement in the Third World of being Russia's "proxies".

The implication was that they were just puppets of the Soviet Union. What actually happened showed that different nationalist movements with their own goals and interests used the same Stalinist ideology.

For example, in the second half of the 1970s the Communist regime in Vietnam fought wars against two other Communist regimes, in Cambodia and China. A genuine example of a proxy in the US Cold War sense would be the right-wing exiles organised and armed by the CIA in the attempted invasion of Cuba in 1961.

In its own way, the Ukrainian resistance

to the Russian invasion shows the continued vitality of nationalism as a mobilising force. But national struggles still unfold in the context of an imperialist system dominated by rival capitalist powers that use smaller states for their own purposes.

The Cold War shows how this leads to proxy wars. In July 1950 the Korean War began when the Communist-led North invaded the Western-dominated South.

Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader, was eager to reunify the Korean peninsula. But he needed the support of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, who had put him in power in the first place.

According to Shen Zhihua's fascinating study—Mao, Stalin, and the Korean War—

Stalin eventually agreed to the invasion. He hoped to gain access to the southern ports of Pusan and Inchon.

He also thought the US would probably not intervene, but that if it did the new Communist regime in China would bear the brunt of the war. Stalin distrusted the Chinese leader Mao Zedong and believed a confrontation with the US in Korea would make him easier to control.

In the event, the US did intervene, as did China. They fought each other to a standstill, confirming the partition of Korea that continues today.

## Nato drives imperialism

The Soviet Union had waged a proxy war

with the US, avoiding a Third World War by letting North Korean and Chinese armies do the fighting. Stalin used Kim and Mao, though both were also independent actors with their own ideological motivations and economic and geopolitical interests. Something similar is happening today.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky and his regime represent a particular nationalist project and they are fighting for Ukraine's independence. The US and its allies, however, are backing them up, according to the Financial Times, with "every day, eight to 10 cargo flights, most of them operated by the US, carrying hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of increasingly heavy weaponry", for their own interests.

US defence secretary Lloyd Austin last week spelled out the US's objective—"Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine". So this isn't just a national struggle between Ukraine and Russia. It's also a conflict between imperialist powers. Failing to see this leads to an underestimation of the dangers.

William Burns, the current CIA director, warned recently, "Given the potential desperation of President Putin and the Russian leadership, given the setback they've faced so far militarily, none of us can take lightly the threat posed by a potential resort to tactical nuclear weapons or low-yield nuclear weapons." Proxy wars are bad, but an all-out inter-imperialist war would be infinitely worse.

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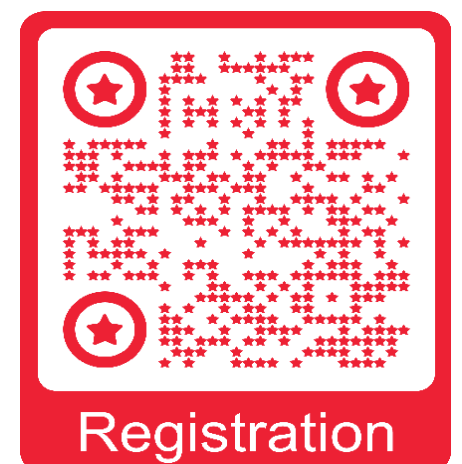
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# War, militarism and the environment

by: **Brian Champ**

**T**he brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, after decades of tension around NATO expansion eastwards, has put the world on a knife edge of potentially escalating conflict. At odds are imperialist blocs that each have nuclear arsenals with the potential to leave large areas of the planet uninhabitable for many generations.

And in Ukraine, where there are many nuclear reactors, the potential for the breach of radiation containment structures adds another wrinkle to the question.

The environmental impact of war is not only related to the nuclear arsenal, however. So-called conventional weapons pack an environmentally destructive punch: napalm, defoliants like Agent Orange, depleted uranium used for armour piercing shells. The immediate destruction is compounded by ongoing environmental degradation in the areas where these weapons have been used. The danger in Ukraine for an escalation to a direct war between rival imperialist blocs could magnify the destruction with the prospect of whole economies directed to produce for the war effort, escalating the conflict to a potential world war. The scale of environmental destruction would be that much higher.

But with the climate crisis, the environmental impact of war is not just the effects of weaponry in the field of battle, but the carbon emissions associated with the operation of war machinery. The US military in their “peacetime” operations emits more carbon than whole countries like Denmark or Portugal. For military equipment, power trumps fuel efficiency and the intensity of emissions is very high. We have no way of knowing for sure how much carbon militaries around the world release into the atmosphere, because they are exempted from reporting.

If these numbers are high during non battle operations, the carbon intensity increases dramatically during a hot war. War is not compatible with the goal of keeping global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees, which the world’s leaders have committed to, once again at last November’s COP meetings in Glasgow. There was a lot of disappointment that leaders could not even agree to stop producing and burning coal, much less phase out fossil fuels. Fighting wars is not compatible with meeting these commitments. It is quite clear that wars fought for control of fossil fuels put the world on a trajectory towards far worse climate outcomes. The fact that Russian LNG supplies to Europe play a role in this conflict further demonstrates the difficulty that capitalism has of transitioning away from fossil fuels.

## Just Transition and War

During the pandemic, campaigns targeting divestment of financial institutions and insurance companies from fossil fuel projects had made inroads in part because lower oil prices and increased costs of production due to blockades and other resistance had made investors wonder if they’d see a return on investment. But after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there was a story in the Financial Post about how the European energy crunch and the conflict had breathed new life into an LNG project on the east coast of Canada over the prospect of supplying energy to Europe. The impact of the war on oil prices had also changed the economics of pipeline construction and tar sands development, with higher prices suddenly making these projects more profitable.

And there is a massive contradiction between

the Canadian government’s increasing war spending and their climate plans.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has called for member countries to spend at least 2% of GDP on their military. In March, Canada’s Defence Minister Anita Anand announced the exploration of options to increase military spending “exceeding the 2% level, hitting the 2% level and below the 2% level”. The truth is that the Department

problems in Indigenous communities, following decades of inaction. This is just 3% of the increase in military spending.

\$17 billion could be used to build 600 km of surface rail light rapid transit in our cities; install solar panels on 450,000 homes that could completely power those homes; build 20 new hospitals every year; increase education and healthcare spending.

In Canada, if the 2% military spending



of National Defence (DND) is the largest department, spending \$24.3 billion and consuming 7.1% of federal spending. Raising the DND budget to 2% of GDP would raise this amount to \$41.4 billion (12% of federal spending). In early April the Liberals announced that they would “only” increase military spending to reach 1.5% of GDP - an increase of around \$8 billion.

The new Liberal climate plan is a terrible plan because it funnels billions to false solutions like CCUS and pretends that market mechanisms can lead the transition. This plan will not stop the climate crisis, but it’s instructive to know that if the DND budget is raised to be 2% of GDP, the \$17.1 billion increase is almost twice the money budgeted for the whole climate plan (\$9 billion). The announced \$8 billion DND budget increase is almost as much as the whole climate plan.

## What else could this money be spent on?

The federal government has promised \$6 billion over ten years to fix drinking water

increase goal is reached, it would be roughly the same as the Canada Health Transfer (from federal to provincial health programs) of \$43 billion per year. If the military budget were eliminated, the health transfer could be doubled to dramatically improve underfunded hospitals. The numbers are similar for education budgets.

## Climate activism and environmentalism and building the anti-war movement.

The fact is if we hope to be able to achieve the just transition to a zero carbon economy for the sake of the planet and future generations, the war drive of our rulers must be stopped. We simply can’t afford to waste the opportunity and money on programs that will further the crisis, when we need those resources to be targeted towards halting the runaway train of the capitalist economy that is undermining the life supporting capacity of the earth.

The fantastic anti-war movement in Russia, where tens of thousands have been arrested and potentially face years in jail, is a beacon of

hope. We need to continue to build opposition to our own rulers’ drive to war, following the example of those risking so much in Russia. This means calling for an end to NATO as an imperialist force, and calling for Canada to get out of NATO. It means calling for an end to supplying arms and soldiers to eastern Europe, while supporting humanitarian efforts in the region. Ukrainians have the right to self-determination and self defence, but if it means supporting and amplifying mass involvement of Ukrainians in standing up to the Russian occupation. Building the links between the anti-war forces on the ground in Russia, Ukraine and in NATO member countries can create pressure on rulers to back away from pursuing these aims.

But it also means the end of arms shipments from the West to their allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. Israel uses their military might to project power in the region, but also to wage war on the Palestinian population. Saudi Arabia has led the assault on the people of South Yemen using weapons supplied by Canada and other western powers, a war that gets scant mention in the western media. There are many other conflicts around the world, and the main inter-Imperialist rivalry is really between the US led bloc and China, although contradictions abound because of the interpenetration of their economies.

Sabre rattling in one region can increase tensions elsewhere and proxy wars or more direct wars between the main powers can flare up in the context of the overlapping crises of late capitalism.

Climate and environmental movements worldwide are fertile ground for building the forces opposing war because there is already a clamouring for change of course from the system, but the transition is not happening, or it is not happening quickly enough, and activists are already calling for more money for a real transition away from fossil fuels.

When governments dither and obfuscate on climate solutions, but then eagerly spend money on war, this has the potential to provoke anger in the climate movement and a readiness to take action to oppose the war drive, connecting it to the need to fund the transition to a zero carbon economy.

This is part of a climate justice framework that seeks climate solutions that lead to an actual transition from fossil fuel capitalism towards the zero emissions economy where no community or worker is left behind.

Mobilizing to oppose our ruler’s drive to war, whether for fossil fuels or some other reason, is a key part of mobilizing masses of Indigenous people, workers, people from racialized and other marginalized communities, environmentalist, and climate activists to create a force for change from below that can transform the world for a sustainable future.

Climate Voice, a new network including Indigenous, labour, climate, environmental and student groups, came together in the process of organizing the November 6 Rally on the Global Day for Climate Justice during the COP26 talks in Glasgow.

Our headline climate justice demands were: Respect Indigenous sovereignty; Phase out Fossil Fuels; Just Transition for communities and workers; Global Justice.

As our rulers pursue the drive to war, we must assert that “No War” is also a climate justice demand, seeking justice for the victims of the conflict, but also for future generations who will bear the brunt of war spending priorities that doom them to a bleak future.





# Tenants fight and win

by: **Sid Lacombe**

**R**esidents at 12 Lansdowne avenue in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood have forced their landlord to remove all eviction notices and have even been able to get some needed repairs done to their building.

The victory came after a months-long fight where the landlord used every tactic they could to undermine and intimidate the tenants - including trying to evict them for damage to property after they hung banners from their balconies during a rally.

This is just one of a recent string of victories in the area that came about because of tenant organizing and with support from the community and local agencies.

One consistency in all of the eviction fights is that the victories come because of community and building mobilization. It is the extra judicial fight that is winning the day.

Tenant law in Canada is written by landlords for their own benefit. Legal fights are important in that they often buy time for residents to organize but they are heavily tilted towards the landlords and are not designed to protect the interest of renters.

The number of community solidarity groups has grown during the pandemic and are now a bulwark against the worst ravages of the capitalist system. They deserve our support. We cannot rely on governments to do anything to



Parkdale Organize led a series of rallies in support of local tenants

end the hardship for poor and working people seeking housing.

## Housing and capitalism

The capitalist politicians have been making grand statements about their resolve to stop the housing crisis. The federal Liberals made the issue a centrepiece of their recent budget announcing billions to help create housing. It is all smoke and mirrors. The budget will likely

result in increased housing costs.

For example, the budget calls for tax breaks and incentives for people to buy their first house. The scheme sounds good but will only mean more cash being pushed into the housing market - further inflating prices. It will also only be useful for people who have the money for a down-payment. That's not who needs the help.

The Liberals also announced more money to build affordable housing. They did much the

same when they were first elected in 2015. They have yet to actually come through with any new units.

In the last 30 years the feds have largely abandoned renters. They announce 5 year plans to build housing with great fanfare but there has been almost no new affordable housing built in those decades.

The reality is that the 'housing crisis' is not a crisis for the ruling class. They have no interest in reducing housing costs. Banks, developers and landlords are making billions as prices skyrocket. The politicians who represent the interests of the rich will only tinker around the edges of the issue and will not end the hardship for working people and the poor.

This has been the case ever since capitalism arrived on the scene and imposed new private property rules. It will remain an issue as long as the system persists.

As Frederick Engels wrote in *The Housing Question*, "it is not that the solution of the housing question simultaneously solves the social question, but that only by the solution of the social question, that is, by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, is the solution of the housing question made possible."

The recent tenant fights are a great example of how neighbours and communities can come together to push back on the landlords and they must be strengthened. But we will only be rid of the housing crisis when we are rid of the greedy bosses who run this rotten system.

# Stop privatization of hospitals

## Join the Ontario Health Coalition campaign

by: **Pam Johnson**

**T**he Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), a long-time healthcare advocate organization, has launched a bold province wide campaign to expose the Ontario PC government's plan to privatize healthcare under the cover of the COVID crisis. OHC has hosted summits in cities across the province to inform the public of the sheer scale of the healthcare devastation that has taken place and to call for a mass public outcry.

## Ford's appalling healthcare record

Doug Ford's handling of the pandemic has been a series of disasters that continue to be repeated through wave after wave of COVID. Speakers at the summit in the Toronto, North York and Scarborough area outlined some of the devastating facts. Natalie Mehra, leader of the Ontario Health Coalition and Michael Hurley, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions president, spoke about the nightmare conditions in Ontario's long-term care (LTC) homes. Ontario has the highest rate of deaths in LTC homes of any jurisdiction in the industrialized world - 4,500 LTC residents have died since the beginning of the pandemic. As well as COVID, many died from dehydration, starvation and neglect due to chronic understaffing.

Three quarters of those deaths happened in for-profit LTCs, while executives, like former Premier Mike Harris, and shareholders raked in profits. Not a single fine was laid or licence

revoked as this information came to light. In fact, the Ford government recently passed legislation to allow for more for-profit homes, and created a law that shields these pandemic profiteers from lawsuits related to their criminal neglect of residents.

Speaker Michelle Jones, who lost her grandmother in an LTC, reported that there was only one overnight nurse and three Personal Support Workers treating dozens of sick and frail residents needing constant care. Jones found out too late that her grandmother had

a necrotic wound caused by neglect which contributed to her death.

Dr. Dick Zoutman, former Scarborough hospital administrator, outlined the reality of healthcare funding. Ontario's funding for healthcare is the lowest per capita in Canada. Stunningly, Ontario also has the lowest ratio of beds per capita of any jurisdiction in the industrialized world.

But the Ford government response to the health care deaths and worker burnout has been to blame individuals for getting sick and

to use the crisis to hand lucrative contracts to the private sector. A video was played of the press conference at the summit where Christine Elliott, Ontario Minister of Health, called for private hospitals to pick up the slack. Ford's agenda was also exposed when it came to light that private schools were offered more rapid tests than the public systems and public hospitals. COVID vaccines are available at Shopper's Drug Mart, but not your doctor's office. Ontario no longer provides the more accurate PCR tests for COVID for free, but you can pay for them.

## Say No to healthcare privatization

The Ontario Health Coalition is sounding the alarm and organizing a mass campaign including street protests, door-to-door canvassing, lawn signs, windows signs and stickers to raise the pressure on the Ford government and all politicians to say no to healthcare privatization.

In poll after poll, respondents support a public healthcare system by an overwhelming majority. The Ford government is vulnerable on this issue and the opposition parties need to be pressured to step up. The Ontario Health Coalition is calling for everyone to get involved to build the momentum.

There are dozens of locations where campaign material can be picked up and local contacts can plug you into activity across the province. The OHC campaign website has a wealth of information and materials. Pick up your sign today!

For more info see: [ontariohealthcoalition.ca](http://ontariohealthcoalition.ca)

