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# Socialist Worker

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# Our opposition is in the streets



Thousands of teachers struck against cuts to education in Ontario before the pandemic. Election coverage on page 3

# Stuff the Jubilee

The fact that Queen Elizabeth has been loafing on the throne for more than 70 years is supposed to be cause for celebration, a Jubilee. The British state is spending a fortune to shore up the crumbling House of Windsor, while more and more of Elizabeth's "subjects" suffer declining living standards and rapidly rising costs.

Town and village councils across Britain are split over whether to chip in more local funds for a party.

In the Welsh town of Ruthin, the former mayor argues a local celebration would "pull people together". Councillor Ethan Jones thinks differently. "People are having to make choices between heating and eating. People are out of work. Almost one in three children in Wales are living in poverty. Is it really the best use of public money?"

A group of pubs in Bristol got together and decided a party was just what was needed: they put on a 3-day Fuck the Jubilee Festival.

Polls show that the popularity of the royals is slipping fast, and bound to fall further when 96-year-old Elizabeth finally cashes in her very big stack of chips.

The rest of the royals gang have been scurrying about, at home and abroad, trying to defend the family business. Early in May, king-in-waiting-and-waiting Charles addressed the nation to commiserate with the little people about the hardships they face with declining services and soaring inflation. The effect might have been better if he hadn't delivered it sitting on a golden throne, with a chest full of military medals he never earned.

The visit by Charles and Camilla to Canada was practically kept a state secret. Even those who watch the news were unaware until a few days before the mini-tour, and then only because our local cult of monarchists started to complain about the lack of pomp and public

events. The royals were whisked in and out of several remote northern communities for photo-ops, where Charles made speeches about reconciliation with Indigenous people. Given the well documented record of his family's racism, the phrase "talk is cheap" comes to

isn't a happy one. When 2nd in line to the golden chair William and his wife visited Jamaica, Bahamas and Belize in March they were met everywhere by protests and anger. In Jamaica leaders demanded an apology and reparations for the slave trade that put so much wealth in the

to remove the Queen as head of state. The nation just elected a pro-republican PM, and anti-royals sentiment runs high.

Back in the homeland, the wobbly Windsors are loath to be seen in unscripted public events. When William showed up in Liverpool

should be rotting in jail, or is that gaol.

The United Kingdom is dis-united and may disintegrate before the old girl takes her dirt nap. Scotland is well on its way to declaring independence, with Wales and even Northern Ireland in its wake. The recent election of a record number of pro-republicans could mean that even loyal little Ulster could split.

The bloody history of English rule in Ireland is never forgotten. A recent op-ed piece in the Irish Times summed up the Jubilee: "Having a monarchy next door is a little like having a neighbor who's really into clowns and who has daubed their house with clown murals, display clown dolls in each window and has an insatiable desire to hear about and discuss clown-related news stories. More specifically, for the Irish, it's like having a neighbor who's really into clowns and, also, your grandfather was murdered by a clown."

It is long past time to give these clowns the axe, figuratively if not literally. Confiscate their obscene wealth and nationalize their lands and holdings. It is time they were forced to apologize and make amends for the blood-soaked empire they headed. It looks more and more likely that the whole rotten edifice will not long outlive Betty.

We in what they call Canada should call for an end to the hollow stupidity and waste of ties to royalty. If we can't remove her head, we can at least remove the Queen as head-of-state.

But there is one important caveat – Indigenous people have to be consulted and involved in any movement to expel the monarchy. Especially in eastern Turtle Island, treaties were negotiated directly with the Crown, predating Canada's existence. The voices of those affected need to be heard, front and centre.



mind. Except in this case the talk cost Canadians millions of dollars that could be better spent.

Why no publicized events in urban settings. Perhaps because they would likely be met with indifference and hostility. And the record of recent royal visits to other former colonies

royal's treasury.

Instead of the usual glad-handing, Jamaican PM Andrew Holness made William and Kate stand like bad school kids while he informed them they were breaking all ties with Britain: "We're moving on."

Even Australia is threatening

to snatch a little PR at the FA Cup finals he was driven from the field by a lusty chorus of boos.

And then there is the spectacle of Prince Andrew, whose sex scandals couldn't quite be covered up, and who has been stripped of military trappings and public functions. He

## Ontario healthcare – stealth privatization

by: John Bell

Ontario residents are suddenly discovering that blood testing and other diagnostic work is no longer covered by OHIP.

A cancer survivor who must periodically check their bloodwork will now be charged \$30 or more for each test. Most of this diagnostic work has long been off-loaded from hospitals to private, for-profit clinics like LifeLab.

The Conservative government denies there have been any changes to OHIP, and the provincial website says that you cannot be charged for any "medically necessary" testing. But social media is full of reports from patients saying they are being charged, many including photos of their bills.

This is a riff on the old corporate scam of negative billing. The for-profit clinics are deciding what is "medically necessary". Patients who know their rights,

and have the strength can challenge the fees and probably win. But how many of this vulnerable group will have that knowledge and energy?

The government could put an end to this easily. That it continues means that Ford and his gang are giving tacit approval.

The Toronto Star recently ran an article listing health services slated for privatization – cancer screening, x-rays, colonoscopies and the like – and accusing the Ford Tories of being sneaky. Too bad they hid it behind their pay-wall.

### Diabetics stuck with cuts

In a related story, people managing Type 1 diabetes still receive their life-sustaining insulin, but the disposable needles they need to inject the insulin are no longer covered by OHIP, following January 2021. Without the needle the insulin is useless.

It is like offering a starving person free soup but charging them



for the spoon.

Diabetics may be required to inject themselves as many as 8 or 10 times a day. The price of a box of 100 needles varies – from about \$50 to \$80. That adds up to thousands of dollars per year for an essential product, difficult especially for people like seniors on fixed incomes.

Needles are sterile and supposed to be discarded after each use. Charging for needles will only lead to diabetics trying to reuse needles to afford their treatments. This will certainly lead to more complications.

As a diabetic friend pointed out, complications from the condition already lead to hospitalizations. More complications, more hospitalizations. This proves that privatization of healthcare doesn't save money, it costs taxpayers more in the long run.

But privatization is never about saving money – it is always about making money for corporations.

# Elections and capitalism

**D**oug Ford's election victory in Ontario is entirely predictable. Indeed, it was almost pre-ordained, as the polls barely budged from the beginning of the campaign until election night.

The corporate media did their best to sanitize his image and fawn over the supposed changes in his personality, from a ruthless hard-right Tory to a man of compromise.

Gone from the official discourse were his many decisions during the pandemic which resulted in a healthcare system in crisis and more than 4500 seniors dead from negligence.

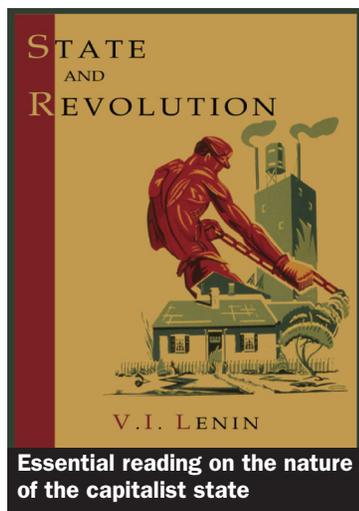
The NDP and the Liberals both suffered significant defeats. For the Liberals they failed to achieve official party status and their leader lost his own seat. The NDP lost seats and their leader Andrea Horwath announced her resignation.

It has never been clearer that real change will not come as a result of the pantomime of an election but in the streets and workplaces.

The Ontario vote shows, once again, that electoral politics is bankrupt and has little appeal to the majority of the population. The numbers are still being calculated but less than half of eligible voters cast a ballot. Why would they? For most working people, they have not seen any substantial change in a lifetime of voting. The corporate parties, PCs and Liberals have pursued the same program of privatization and massing of corporate profits. The NDP - a

party tied to the labour movement - still wants to play by the electoral rules and to make themselves 'electable' and so they shy away from putting forward bold plans.

For most people nothing seems to change after an election. For working people, they are still going to be gouged by the ruling class regardless of the results, housing costs will continue to skyrocket, the natural world will still be destroyed for the



benefit of Bay Street, Indigenous people will still be attacked for trying to protect their land, the bosses will still rack up billions in profits at the expense of workers.

Looking across the country, the record of provincial governments of all stripes is one of representing the needs of the 1% at the expense of people and the planet. It is true

that the Conservatives support the rich much more vociferously when in office but they are hardly alone in their support for the bosses.

## The state

Elections under capitalism are not designed to achieve substantial change - quite the opposite. The rules are set by the ruling class intent on curtailing the aspirations of working people.

The state is an organ of class rule. Its role is to maintain the power of the ruling class. It is an entity, positioned above the people in society and increasingly alienated from it, that plays the specific role of maintaining order in the situation of class struggle.

And so our opposition cannot be confined to electoral politics. The real struggle will be waged in the streets and workplaces. It will be the strikes and blockades and mass demonstrations that will shape the future.

And that struggle will continue to intensify. The global crises of capitalism are becoming more acute by the day. More and more money is being spent to promote war, subsidize environmental destruction and enrich the already wealthy.

No matter who is elected under capitalism, the 1% is in power. We will fight against all of those policies that diminish the prospects of working people and the natural world but we will only win a world that meets the needs of the masses when we are rid of capitalism itself.

*Thousands of building trade workers in Ontario have struck over the past two months in one of the largest strike waves in recent memory. Many have bargained for raises and better conditions and some are still on picket lines. This is an important salvo against the bosses and shows the way to fight against corporate greed. Read more at [socialist.ca](http://socialist.ca)*



# Fight Ford!

## Build strong movements from below



Steelworkers march against Ford in Toronto

by: Carolyn Egan

**T**he Ontario provincial election is over with devastating results for working people and the poor in all our diversity. There was only a forty three percent voter turnout. The Conservative Party increased its majority winning eighty three of the one hundred and twenty four seats. The New Democratic Party (NDP) won thirty one seats, the Liberals eight, one independent and one Green. The majority of voters did not see a reason to engage in the election. People felt disenfranchised and unheard, with no motivation to cast a ballot. This led to the Conservative victory. Gilles Bisson an NDP MPP in Timmins lost to a Tory after three decades in the legislature. Long time NDP seats in working class areas of Windsor were also lost to the Conservatives, as were seats in Brampton.

The NDP won 23.7% of the vote, the Liberals 23.8% and the Tories 40.9%. Most who voted did not choose the Ford government, but as a Steelworker retweeted, "nothing says failure as much as the inability of a social democratic party to get more than 25% of the vote as living and working conditions decline in response to the corporate takeover of public policy."

People were looking for boldness that spoke to the reality of their lives. They felt betrayed and left behind with conditions worsening every day with no end in sight. They were not inspired and stayed home from the polls. Turnout was down from fifty seven percent in the last provincial election in 2018. Both the NDP leader Horwath and the Liberal leader Del Duca resigned on election night because of the outcome.

We are in for a very tough ride which will have devastating effects on the most vulnerable. Racialized and low income workers, many

of whom are women, will feel the brunt of Conservative policies. The party is totally beholden to big business and developers.

We have to continue to build fighting movements from below to take on their policies. The Tories intend to have the proposed Highway 413 go forward which will demolish over 800 hectares of working farmland, 160 hectares of the Greenbelt and disrupt over 80 waterways. Local residents are in an uproar. They have rejected the demand for 10 employer paid sick days and are opening our health care system to further privatization. 4,500 seniors needlessly died in long term care homes (the majority for profit) during the pandemic. The Ford government is now going to reward them by giving large contracts to broaden their facilities and make huge profits on the backs of the elderly. Billions in public dollars are slated to go to the for profit sector. These chains exploit both the staff who work for them and the residents who live there. Not for profits are being given only 30%.

As Natalie Mehra from the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) said in the Toronto Star, "We've just been through the worst mass tragedy in long term care in a generation and those operators who were the worst, who were responsible for the most deaths, they're now getting the most funding. I'm outraged."

The OHC represents hundreds of seniors groups, unions and patient organizations across the province. They have local coalitions in many cities and towns, and will continue their spirited fight against the privatization. It is a model of the type of broad based, grass roots campaigns that are necessary to defeat the heartless policies of governments and corporations driven only by profit. Trade unionists must join with the movements on the ground to fight back against the continuing attacks and inspire others to do the same. That's how we will win.

# 50 years since general strike

*The Quebec general strike of 1972 showed a glimpse of the power of the working class. Hundreds of thousands of workers walked out and defied authorities. On the fiftieth anniversary we look at the details of the strike and the lessons for today.*

by: **Chantal Sundaram**

**F**ifty years ago, Quebec saw a short but massive revolutionary uprising of workers' power: it was the second general strike in Canada after Winnipeg 1919, and the largest in all of North America up to that time.

It went past striking to workers' control: nine towns were taken over by strikers for a short period, including radio stations and newspapers. In fact, in some places, like Saint-Jérôme North of Montreal, the strike committee was invited by unionized workers at the CKJL radio station to take over and start broadcasting revolutionary music and union statements.

The immediate spark for the wildcat general strike of May was the jailing of Quebec's top three union leaders for defiance of injunctions against picketing.

But the lead-up was a Common Front of public and broader public sector unions demanding a minimum wage of \$100 per week for all. At the time, 19% of the 210,000 workers represented by the Common Front earned less than \$70 per week and more than half of this number earned less than \$50. The amount of \$100 for a minimum wage was based on reports from the Senate Committee on Poverty and the Castonguay Commission on Health and Social Services, both of which considered it to be the poverty line for a family with two children.

Michel Chartrand, then leader of the regional Montreal Central Council of the CSN trade union federation said: "The government thinks it can scare workers by throwing their leaders in jail, they think it's going to shut the workers up...well they set a wildfire which is going to spread everywhere, mobilizing thousands of workers in the private sector as well as the public sector."

## **The Common Front**

Public sector negotiations in 1968-1970 with the Quebec government had made it clear that a united strategy was necessary: the government's strategy was to draw out negotiations at the sectoral tables of the strongest groups so that the weakest groups of workers were forced to sign agreements first and set the pattern for all.

It was at the end of January 1970 that CSN president Marcel Pepin was given a mandate to convene the representatives of the federations and unions of the public sector and broader public sector to talk about setting up a Common Front.

Then, the armed occupation of Quebec by the federal Canadian state in October 1970 played a role in pushing the need for unity between unions. Ottawa had invoked the War Measures Act, which suspended civil liberties, supposedly in response to the kidnapping of two political officials by the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). But in fact, thousands of ordinary Quebecois were surveilled and arrested, and union activists and leftists were especially targeted.

Meanwhile, throughout 1970 and 1971, the union rank and file membership was extremely active: not only strikes but street blockades, riots and demonstrations were everywhere in Quebec in 1970-71.

A key moment came on October 29, 1971: there was a violent confrontation at the newspaper *La Presse*, where the employer wanted to modernize and cut the workforce and had locked out their workers. There was huge support for the *La Presse* workers across Quebec and at a demonstration organized by the three main union federations, Michèle Gauthier, a student at the Cégep du Vieux Montréal, suffocated to death when the police fired tear gas into the crowd.

The mass demonstration that resulted in the death of Michèle Gauthier was followed by a huge rally at the Montreal Forum the next month: this showed not only the growing militancy of the rank and file but also the growing support of the broader community for union struggles.

## **The union manifestos**

The union leadership was being pushed by the increasing militancy of its own ranks and began to respond ideologically, and all three union centrals came out with radical, anti-capitalist manifestos in 1971-72. The most famous was the one adopted by the CSN membership, "Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens" ("We can only count on ourselves").

These manifestos all critiqued the dead-end of the market system for Quebec and for all workers: the hope-

lessness of learning English and getting an education and still remaining poor; the uselessness of Keynesian economics and any kind of state intervention practiced by capitalist governments in an era of multinationals – and not only in Quebec, but everywhere in the world.

In one of the CSN manifestos there is also a paragraph that asserts that "if we follow classic capitalist economic laws, with free-trade, international market competition, humanity will die from pollution... any effort that aims at getting businesses to absorb the cost of pollution is doomed to failure in advance, because competition will destroy those who do – but, economists who defend the system

it opened up the possibility for the development of a fighting rank and file under a common inter-union tent that included more than 210,000 workers.

## **The events of March-April**

The stagnation in negotiations with the government led all three main union centrals to call a strike vote on March 9, 1972, for a 24-hour strike to start on March 28.

This 24-hour strike ended up being a test for the combativity of the rank and file and indicated what the government's immediate reactions to increasing militancy would be.

Then on April 11, an unlimited general strike began. The majority of workers in hospitals, against

\$50,000 for all unions that defied it and for individual workers a daily fine of \$50 to \$250 – and for individuals who incited striking it could be \$4000 to \$50,000.

Law 19 also said if there were no negotiated deal by June 1st, the government would set by decree working conditions that would be in place for the next 2 years.

The Coordination Council of the Common Front met the day Law 19 was tabled and decided not to respect it. They organized for a mass consultation of public and broader public sector union members to take place the next day.

But the night before, the Executive of the CSN stabbed the Common Front in the back: they adopted a position saying the CSN could not assure unions that disobeyed the law that it would pay the fines and wage losses incurred, and recommended they respect the law.

On April 21, CSN President Marcel Pepin, held a press conference where he revealed the position of the CSN Executive but also dissociated himself from it and declared his solidarity with the Coordination Council of the Common Front.

The referendum took place, but with low voter-turnout in all sectors: a majority of those who voted did declare themselves against Law 19, but the percentage was weak.

The Common Front Coordination Council met that night, an hour before Law 19 was to come into force: in light of the weak vote, the Board voted almost unanimously to respect the law. Another complication is that the law would have come into effect on a Saturday morning, leaving it up to hospital workers to set up picket lines alone.

The return to work on Monday, April 24 was bitter, with many tearing up their union cards and accusing their leaders of treason.

This could have been the end of the struggle, but then, the government went after the three presidents of the three big union centrals: Marcel Pepin of the CSN, Louis Laberge of the FTQ, and Yvon Charbonneau of the CEQ. Not for defying Law 19, but for the previous defiance of the injunctions against picketing. This sparked the wildcat stage of the Quebec general strike.



will have a final pleasure before we all die in proclaiming that business productivity was protected to the very end of humanity!"

While the Common Front might have been born from salary negotiations, the context was a radicalizing one about society as a whole. These manifestos, and the smaller common fronts happening in a number of workplaces, fed the unity of the big Common Front and its ability to overcome inter-union rivalry and also the old tradition of "business unionism."

And even though the manifestos, and the inter-union Common Front itself, came from the top leadership,

whom a court injunction had been invoked, ignored the injunction and set up picket lines. Support staff in the Montreal school board did as well, and their lines were respected by more than half of teachers.

The enforcement of the anti-picket injunctions by the courts was severe: fines of up to \$50,000 and individual union leaders got fines up to \$1000 and jail terms of up to 6 months.

And then, on April 20, the government and judiciary responded to the April 11 general strike with Special Law 19, which completely suspended the right to strike for the public and broader public sectors as of midnight on April 22, with fines of up to

# the Quebec



## May: la grève sauvage

On May 4, a crowd of union members gathered outside the Quebec City courthouse where the three leaders had to appear to face the charge of contempt of court. On May 8, the judge sentenced the three to a year in jail.

Working class history is full of moments where the ruling class does stupid things, and the jailing of the three leaders was seen by the rank and file as a direct attack against the labour movement as a whole.

May 9, the day when the three presidents had to turn themselves in to police, became the start of the May wildcat general strike, “la grève sauvage.”

First, dock workers went out in Montreal, Quebec City, and Trois Rivieres, demanding the immediate release of the union leaders – and took advantage of the opportunity to also demand that their employer negotiate job security. They had never even been active before in the Common Front.

This first walkout was typical of all the activity that came to characterize the May strike as a whole: it was started by workers themselves, with no official call to strike, but it was the unionized part of the working class that gave the lead to non-union supporters.

The very next day after the jailing, May 10, it was the turn of FTQ construction workers. They shut down construction routes almost everywhere across Quebec and paid a visit to public and private businesses, encouraging union members to join the strike movement. It is thanks to the organizing role played by FTQ Construction Trades that the wildcat was generalized and consolidated.

This initiative by the rank and file in the construction sector gave a kick-start to the strike in many Quebec regions, and then little by little it was the spontaneous aspect that took over and many unions adopted the strike movement that had come from the outside in their own general assemblies.

This was no longer about the public and broader public sectors who had been fighting for an agreement for themselves: this was about workers in the private sector deciding to strike illegally and violate their own hard-won contracts.

Spontaneous gatherings and occupations occurred throughout Quebec in May: after less than a week of strike, the movement had spread all over the province, and the cops were increasingly powerless when faced with the spread. Any repression of one sector would only lead to a reaction from the whole movement and would bring new layers into the strike.

Across Quebec, the strike united sections of workers previously separate: blue collar, white collar, and those previously considered “petit-bourgeois” like teachers. It spread despite being illegal, and occupied towns, terrifying the local ruling class.

The shutdowns were blamed on a

In the towns under workers control, local Common Front committees decided which merchants would be allowed to remain open. Large food stores were ordered closed in favour of coops or small family-owned stores who were ordered not to take advantage of the situation and a strict price-freeze was enforced.

## Workers power in Sept-Iles

It was in Sept-Iles, a remote North Shore community of just 25,000, where it went the farthest. There was a local Common Front in Sept-Iles that had proven its solidarity during the April general strike with daily strike meetings.



“small minority” of revolutionary agitators. But the majority of walkouts took place after mass meetings and votes. In many cases, work stoppages were the result of other strikers visiting work sites and convincing others to join them.

In Chibougamau the general shutdown was provoked by an angry group of women, some of them teachers and hospital workers who marched to one of the mines and pulled their husbands off the job.

There were lots of instances of workers locking out management, like at the Albert Prevost Institute, a mental hospital in Montreal, where workers took over and ran the place themselves, proclaiming “North America’s first liberated hospital.”

On the evening of May 9, a few hundred workers gathered for a protest outside the local court-house. Police tried to break it up, and a battle ensued. It was the spark that started the revolt – a steelworker in Sept-Iles told a reporter: “They put Louis in jail. They can’t do this. If we let them, they can put us all in jail, anyone of us.”

Over the next two days the Sept-Iles workers organized several meetings and voted massively to strike, and within a matter of hours, thousands of unionized workers brought the iron ore port to a standstill. Then the strike committee proceeded to take control of the town and seized the radio station.

In a town of 25,000, up to 4000 gathered in the town arena for discussion and debate. The strikers had won

the allegiance of the majority of the working population. But ideas were wide-ranging: one minute someone would argue that they need to form a City Council of workers in Sept-Iles, then the next speaker would argue they had to negotiate with the existing City Council.

The May 18 editorial of the local paper, *L’Avenir*, declared: “Henceforth, the history of Sept-Iles will be about the events of before May 10, 1972 and the events after May 10, 1972.”

## Repression and conciliation

Across Quebec police were forced to adopt a policy of non-intervention because their power was too thinly spread. But there were responses of reaction beyond police. In Sept-Iles on May 12 a “Committee of Citizens Respectful of Law and Order” of business people and professionals formed take on the unions.

In fact, a secret telex message was intercepted from the president of the Liberal Party to its 108 riding presidents ordering local Liberal associations to set up vigilante committees. It suggested pressuring local authorities to swear in party stalwarts as “special constables.” In Baie Comeau and Haute Rive, over 200 civilians were sworn in.

The Liberals also organized some anti-strike meetings, like one of construction workers at a Montreal south shore arena – it was later revealed that it was not a real union meeting and the arena had been paid for by the Montreal Association of General Contractors, who had given non-union personnel and unionized workers who had refused to the strike the day off to attend the meeting and later disrupt an official union meeting.

But the government also used negotiation. Before long, the new public service minister got in touch with the three jailed leaders and said he was prepared to negotiate “a true settlement.” The Common Front announced a truce and called for an end to all work stoppages; it was understood that the

three leaders would be released on probation.

However, the cabinet was divided and Justice Minister Choquette moved to stamp out all efforts at conciliation. Despite the fact that the Common Front had lived up to its part of the bargain, the three leaders remained in jail.

Eventually, Pepin, Laberge, and Charbonneau opted to appeal their sentences and were released on May 23 – but only after the work stoppages were called off.

## Legacy

While the events of April-May 1972 left behind a deep radicalization and politicization in the Quebec working class, it only raised the question of what workers’ power could achieve. As labour historian Jean-Marc Potté wrote in 1975:

“By its silence, the bourgeoisie of Sept-Iles wants to forget the May strike and the great fear that it felt at that moment. It wants to repress this nightmare and try to ignore that it lives on a powder keg that could explode again. It would like for this event to disappear from the collective memory of workers: they should only remember long periods of submission...the workers of Sept-Iles unfortunately answer this bourgeois silence with their own silence. But for opposite reasons. The conclusion of the movement of May is felt by them as a defeat: they had to return to work with Law 19 still in place and without the release of the union leaders from jail. They are currently digesting this bitter disappointment, and the danger that the bourgeoisie will succeed at erasing May 1972 from the memory of the workers of Sept-Iles remains. But maybe the militants of Sept-Iles will react to this silence by defending everything positive that was revealed in May 1972.”

There is huge value in ensuring that the memory of this heroic and spontaneous uprising of workers’ power is not forgotten fifty years later.

It reminds us that, in the course of a week, the impossible can become possible in the hearts and minds of thousands. It also demonstrates that, in the words of the CSN Manifesto, as working people “we can only count on ourselves.” No matter the outcome of this one battle, that lesson matters for the future.

# US and Russian proxy war escalates as Nato pours arms into Ukraine

**A**lmost 100 days since the invasion of Ukraine, the grim pattern of Russian assaults and Nato escalation continues. The US said on Tuesday that it will provide Ukraine with long-range rocket systems, as part of the recent £32 billion aid package.

The new weaponry includes long-range rocket launchers called Himars and precision ammunition with a range of up to 50 miles. "I've decided that we will provide the Ukrainians with more advanced rocket systems and munitions," US president Joe Biden wrote in the New York Times newspaper "That will enable them to more precisely strike key targets on the battlefield."

A senior administration official said Ukraine provided the US with assurances it would not use the Himars to attack Russian territory.

In addition, chancellor Olaf Scholz said Germany would supply its modern Iris-T air defence system to Ukraine. He also said Germany would provide Ukraine with a radar system to locate enemy artillery.

A few days earlier Ukrainian defence minister Oleksii Reznikov said the country was taking deliveries of Harpoon anti-ship missiles from the US via Denmark. It was also receiving the M109 Paladin armoured self-propelled howitzer directly from the US. The M109 can fire shells, each weighing 100 pounds, at distances of over 25 miles.

Chillingly, Russia held exercises this week involving the Yars nuclear-armed mobile missile system, according to the country's defence ministry.

The exercises, held in the central Russian region of Ivanovo, involved about 1,000 soldiers who practised moving the missile systems. The Yars system has a range of 6,500 miles. The missile was last test fired, according to publicly available information, on 19 February—a few days before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine's armed forces have started evacuating Severodonetsk, a key city in the Donbas region. The Russians on Wednesday controlled 70 percent of the provincial capital, according to the governor of the eastern Luhansk region. Severodonetsk, now largely evacuated and bombed out, had a pre-war population of more than 100,000.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) newspaper reports, "Cracks are appearing in the Western front against Moscow, with America's European allies increasingly split." It says that one group of countries, led by France and Germany, are increasingly worried about the cost and danger of hurling more and

more powerful armaments to Ukraine. These governments feel under pressure as the cost of living crisis intensifies and anger grows over soaring prices and shortages.

A poll last month showed that 46 percent of



Germans fear that heavy weapons deliveries increase the danger of the war spreading beyond Ukraine. Other polls have shown similar figures in Italy and France.

A strike in Italy on 20 May organised by the

smaller, more radical trade unions included slogans against Nato's involvement in the war as well as demands over the cost of living. France's president Emmanuel Macron faces parliamentary elections on 12 and 19 June.

But Biden can rely on Boris Johnson. The WSJ says that Britain and the US see Ukraine as "the front line in a broader war pitching Russia against the West".

The US is not backing off. And, even though there are divisions, the European Union continues to push to limit Russian energy supplies even as people see petrol, gas and electricity costs rise.

The West hopes it can reverse its humiliation in Iraq and Afghanistan, humble Russia and then confront China. Putin hopes that, if he can take enough territory in the Donbas, he can proclaim some sort of victory that will boost him at home—and send a signal to Russia's other neighbours.

Ukraine's people are swept into a proxy war between these powers—both are fixed on their own imperialist interests.

As the war reaches a tragic milestone of 100 days, we need a new phase of resistance in both Russia and the West. It has to fuse opposition to imperialist slaughter and a fightback against the strangling of working class living standards.

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## changing the world in an age of capitalist crisis

June 18 | across Canada

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# Organizing For Power

## The limits of the McAlevey model for new trade unionism

by: Peter Votsch, CUPE retiree

Jane McAlevey, a long-time social justice activist and a former union organizer with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), has written several books calling for new perspectives and strategies on union organizing. Her ideas have led to a training program, delivered internationally, called Organizing For Power (O4P).

Her ideas for union organizing have been welcomed by left activists in the labour movement: a call for combative, class struggle unionism, based on rank and file involvement in organizing, and escalating workplace actions. McAlevey criticizes traditional top-down organizing models, led by professional union leaders, instead looking to times when unions were able to make significant gains: the Congress for Industrial Organization (CIO) drives in the 1930s and the Chicago Teachers' strike in 2012.

Unfortunately, her organizing model falls short of the examples she sites and limits the role of the rank and file when they should be leading the struggle.

### McAlevey's Model

McAlevey places the worker and working class communities at the centre of change. The 'whole worker' organizing model is one that brings union values into communities, not just workplaces, and makes these values their own – thus creating a new class consciousness.

She looks in particular to the 1930's, when millions of workers in industry were organized into the CIO between 1933 and 1937. She quotes approvingly the work of socialists such as William Z Foster, member of the Communist Party of the USA, on organizing in the steel industry, and how members of left-wing organizations were embedded in the industries they aimed to organize. These organizers saw the role of rank and file workers as key, along with their families and communities. She sees this as the key to victories today.

She credits this model of organizing with successful campaigning for the 8-hour day, health and safety, labour laws, and the end of segregation in the South. This she compares to 40 years of decline in the labour movement.

Similarly, she takes modern day inspiration from teachers in Chicago who organized their fight with the city around the needs of the students and the education system in Chicago as a whole, bringing together in a powerful way both teachers on strike, with parents and students from working class families, who saw their interests reflected in the teachers' demands.

Unfortunately, she interprets Foster's call for 'careful training' of left-wing workers as specialized training for "organic leaders" in the workplace, respected by both workers and management, who may not be activists at all – these 'leaders' would be trained by the professional union organizers, and lead the drives. The rank and file would play more of a cheerleading role – a clear departure from Foster's model, and that employed in the drives of the 1930s.

She calls for "structure tests", to test the strength of workplace organization, which might begin with signing petitions, but can escalate to shop floor actions, possibly including walk-outs. This would be a gauge of support for organizers on the outside, and a show of strength in the workplace to other workers and management.

While this is quite positive, McAlevey is quite cautious when she defines success as actions supported by at least 80% of workers. Similarly, when it comes to strike votes, McAlevey calls for a "super majority" of 90%,

a threshold that must be reached prior to going on strike. This cautious strategy is explained in terms of the strength of corporate anti-union campaigns in the US. This criteria necessarily limits rank and file initiative on the ground, and the possibility of building support through taking action when activists in the workplace feel it is called for.

a contract, whoever was elected at the top.

Socialists have an understanding of the union bureaucracy as a middle layer between capital and labour. They will at all times defend the structures in the union that give them their livelihoods, against bosses' attacks, or against a rank and file that wants to go further than the usual negotiated norms. This is espe-

favour left-wing leaderships in unions. Their presence in leading positions can often create openings for rank and file activity, as McAlevey suggests. However, the election of such leaders does not put the rank and file at the centre of union activity. Only rank and file led union organization, whether at the workplace level, or at a wider cross-industry level, can ensure that those activists on the shop floor make all the calls, no matter who is in the union leadership.

This leads to McAlevey's misinterpretation of Foster's model for organizing when she emphasizes his stated need for training: Foster looks at training the most progressive and left-wing workers, and suggests that organizing work be opened up to the widest possible layers of rank and file workers. The contrast with the concept of the 'organic leader', is to be noted here.

She feels that if there is enough democracy and participation from below, these tendencies can be countered – however this is a misunderstanding of the union bureaucracy as a middle layer between workers and capital. Therefore, McAlevey maintains, with sufficiently radical leaderships, unions should be able to replicate the union drives of the 1930's, the Chicago teachers' strike of 2012, and other teachers' strikes throughout the US that took place in 2018-19.

### Leadership from Below

It leads to tension in her analysis: can a rank and file union be built and sustained from above? Is that the lesson we should learn?

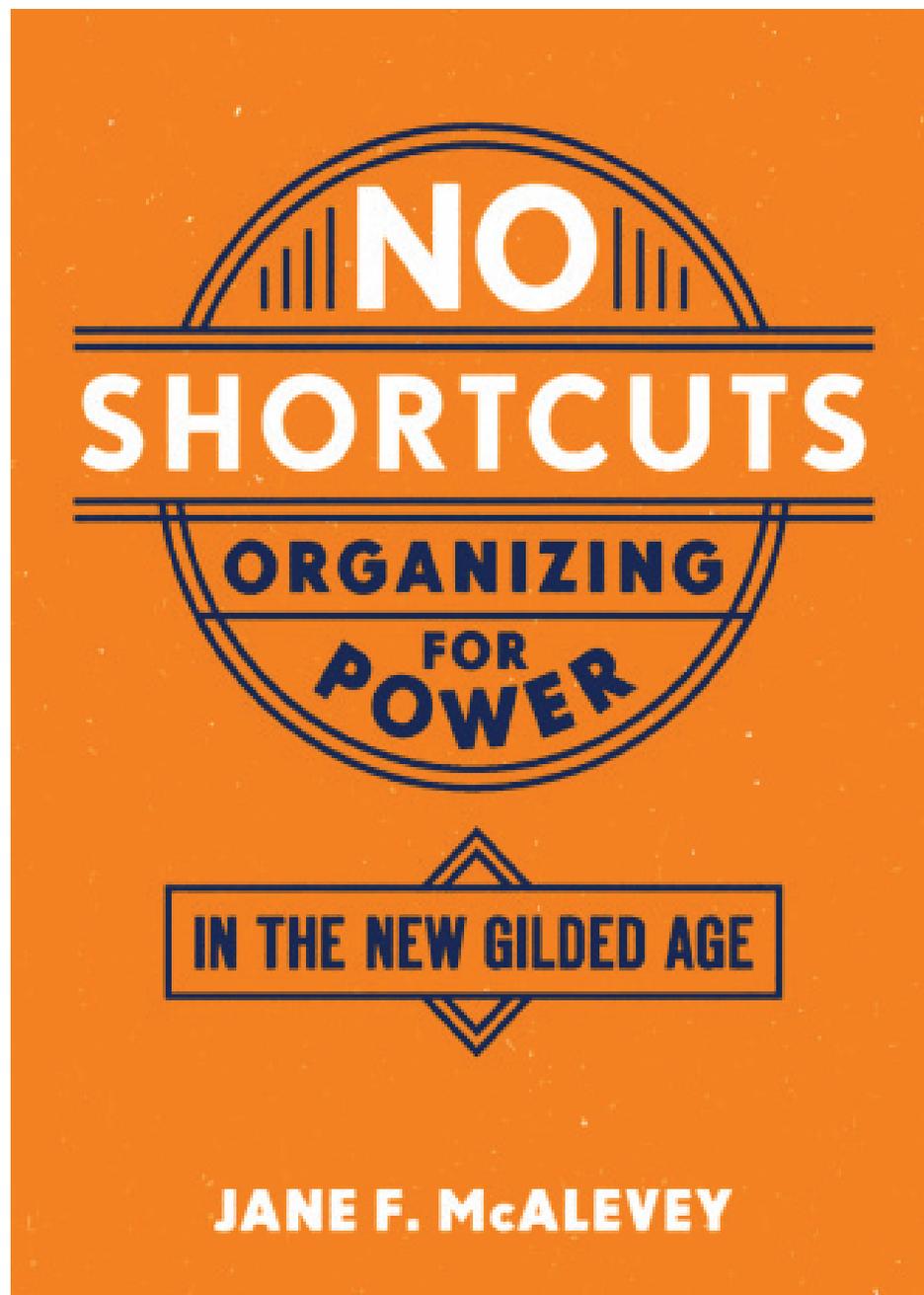
A deeper look at the CIO drives of the 1930s, and its rank file leadership from those who worked in industry at the time, and the important role of socialists at the workplace level, would seem to contradict this. As would the formation in Chicago of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) in 2004, whose work in the teachers unions and in working class communities laid the groundwork for a mass strike that took place eight years later.

The successful unionization drives at Amazon and Starbucks would also provide a contradiction to any top down model being successful. Similarly, the push behind "Striketober" in the UAW, IATSE, BCTGWU and the Teamsters came from the rank and file participation and activity, and resulted in important gains. In the case of the John Deere strike, it led to major changes in the structure of the United Auto Workers, structures that had been in place for decades.

### Struggles Going Forward

McAlevey's analysis is a welcome addition to the ongoing discussion taking place in the labour movement as to the way forward in winning strikes and building union power – this is especially true of her commitment to 'class struggle unionism'. However it underplays the role of the rank and file, and rank and file networks in the re-building of such a tradition in the labour movement. Electing pro-worker officials cannot be a substitute for action on the ground.

Certainly, the election of such leaders should be welcomed by socialists everywhere. But we need to understand the victories of the past, as being the keys to the victories of the future – putting union organizing, bargaining, and strike action back in the hands of the rank and file. It's those victories won through wildcat walkouts, mass strikes and growing solidarity on the picket line that provided the victories of the 1930s, that of teachers throughout the US – and is the way forward for durable victories today and tomorrow.



She correctly states that what are understood as separate functions, organizing and certifying the union, then negotiating a first contract, should not be seen that way. That bringing in professional bargainers when the professional organizers depart leaves rank and file participation as minimum, and naturally leads to a lower level of success.

McAlevey feels that these tactics, taken together, can turn around many years of defeats for unions and the working class in general.

### Union Bureaucracy and the socialist critique

Unfortunately, despite some important fundamentals, McAlevey sees democratic, rank and file led structures in unions as built from above, by more militant or leftist leaders, not by rank and file workers themselves independent of the union leadership. This means a reliance on the election of Left leaders of unions for the strategy to succeed, not in building rank and file networks that could build at the shop floor level, whether organizing, or fighting for

cially true when such a movement from below wishes to challenge the basis of the state and capital, their bargaining partners.

A most famous recent example is that of the Days of action, mounted by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) against the Mike Harris Tories of the 1990s. When Harris first came to power, he point blank refused any communication, even routine, with the OFL. This was clearly a challenge to 'business as usual', where union leaders lobbied politicians of all stripes for specific legislation and legislative insights. It led to the OFL calling a series of escalating city-based 'general strikes', beginning in 1995, and culminating in the Toronto General Strike of October 1996. At that point, there was tremendous pressure, brought by socialists and union activists throughout the labour movement, for the OFL to call a province-wide general strike. But this would have raised the issue of power, and who would govern – the OFL backed down.

This is not to say that socialists do not

## Sound the alarm! RCMP off Wet'suwet'en land

by: **Brian Champ**

**O**n Thursday, May 26th over 800 people joined an emergency zoom call organized by the Decolonial Solidarity Network to Sound the Alarm about the imminent threat of drilling under the Wedzin Kwa river, the lifeblood of Wet'suwet'en territory.

Dini ze' (Hereditary Chief) Na'Moks of the Tsayu Clan and Dini ze' Woos of the Gidimt'en Clan spoke along with Sleydo', spokesperson for the Gidimt'en Clan. She detailed the ongoing harassment by RCMP towards Wet'suwet'en people on their own unceded territories to push through the CGL pipeline. RCMP officers visit daily at all times of day and night to intimidate and harass. The level of harassment has increased recently, linked to the imminent threat of drilling under the river.

The Wet'suwet'en people have vowed to continue to resist - they are pledging to #KillTheDrill and they are asking for people across so-called Canada to reconnect with the spirit of resistance that was exemplified by the #ShutDownCanada movement of February, 2020. After the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs evicted coastal gaslink employees from their land and the U.N. called for Canada to remove RCMP from the territory, the RCMP invasion began. Sleydo' recalled the moment not long after this "when thousands of people shut down Canada in one of the most epic and memorable moments in our history. From coast to coast you blocked intersections, railways, ports and camped out at MPs offices to demand they respect Wet'suwet'en jurisdiction and stop Coastal Gas Link and you made global headlines forcing Justin Trudeau and John Horgan to commit to title discussions with

the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs as set out by the landmark Delgamuukw case."

Sleydo' identified three targets for the campaign: publicly calling out the companies contracted to drill under the river to honour Indigenous sovereignty and justice and walk away from the contracts; calling for the Canadian and B.C. governments to stand down the RCMP and recognize Wet'suwet'en sovereignty over their unceded land; and calling for financial institutions to divest from the CGL pipeline. To find ways to act, see: Sound the Alarm for Wet'suwet'en available along with more information at [yintahaccess.com](http://yintahaccess.com).

One of the online actions available is to publicly shame Quanta services, which is the publicly traded parent company of the contractor that is commissioned to drill under the Wedzin Kwa. Calling out these companies that care about their public

image can create further difficulties for the construction of this disastrous pipeline for the Wet'suwet'en people and planet. But identifying government and financial institution targets is also extremely important. Without Canada's perennial colonizing force, the RCMP, CGL construction would not be able to continue - the B.C. or federal governments could stand the RCMP down right now despite their playacting otherwise. Without the financial backing of RBC and many other Canadian banks, the funding for this planet killing project would dry up.

The stakes have been raised higher by the announcement on June 1st by the B.C. Crown that they are pursuing criminal contempt charges against at least 15 of the land defenders arrested last November in the latest colonial invasion by Canadian imperial forces onto unceded Wet'suwet'en land. Those charged include Layla

and Logan Staats and Skyler Williams. These 1492 Land Back land defenders travelled west in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en people, to defend their sovereignty and to fight for people and the planet. Several thousand demonstrated for Climate Justice Now! at Queen's Park on November 6, 2021, an event which featured Logan and Skyler just before they headed out west - the November 6th organizing committee and the United Steelworkers (USW) each contributed financially for their trip. While it is terrible that these criminal contempt charges are being pursued, it will mean that questions about the legitimacy of the Canadian state have a chance to be heard in court proceedings as the narrow interpretations of the lower courts have ignored the fact that the Supreme Court recognized the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs as sovereign in the landmark 1997 Delgamuukw /Gisday'wa decision.

We need to recapture the spirit of February, 2020, when so many people joined port, rail and road blockades in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en to #ShutDownCanada. We need to build on the growing awareness of the Indigenous genocide on which Canada is built that was shown in last year's sea of orange on July 1st. We need to stand together and reclaim public space for grassroots movements for economic, social and climate justice.

Those that are able should consider travelling to the Yintah to stand with the Wet'suwet'en people. But wherever people are situated there are ways to take action to demand that Wet'suwet'en sovereignty be respected. Look for Wet'suwet'en solidarity actions targeting RBC and other financial institutions, Liberal MPs and the RCMP and the contracting company owned by Qanta services.



## Canada the global arms dealer

by: **Sid Lacombe**

**T**he government of Canada is one of the biggest arms dealers in the world. Our government may describe themselves as peacekeepers yet they have been supplying billions in weapons to some of the most brutal regimes on the planet and have indicated no interest in stopping the process.

The most recent government document outlining exports of weapons has just been released and it shows that Canada is happy to fuel war and thousands of civilian deaths so that Canadian corporations can make billions in profits off the killing.

According to the report, the majority of Canadian weapons sales - 66 percent - go to the Middle East as a region. The biggest recipient by a large margin is Saudi Arabia who have been buying Canadian made Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs). Despite assertions to the contrary, those LAVs have been used to attack and kill civilians in the brutal Saudi led war in Yemen. As much as \$15 billion in LAVs are expected to be sent to the Saudis and almost \$2 billion worth were sent in 2021 alone.

Weapons sales to Israel grew by 33 percent in 2021 with the main exports being rifles and heavy machine guns. Israel and Saudi Arabia represent 96 percent of all heavy machine guns sold.

After the Middle East, the majority of weapons sales go to NATO members with the UK and US being the largest recipients. The UK

olition-charges, demolition-devices, demolition-kits, "pyrotechnic" devices, cartridges and simulators" to the Americans.



Peace activists block the CANSEC arms show in Ottawa

photo: World Beyond War

buys hundreds of millions in machine guns and ammunition.

The list of weapons sold to the US is quite extensive. Canadian war industries send, "bombs, torpedoes, grenades, smoke canisters, rockets, mines, missiles, depth charges, dem-

Many of the weapons deals are brokered by the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) that is set up to promote Canadian exports abroad. The CCC continues to make deals with countries with dubious human rights records.

For example, according to David Pugliese in

the Ottawa Citizen, the CCC has recently secured a deal with the Philippines even though the president Rodrigo Duterte has been accused of serious human rights violations.

Duterte has publicly stated that he once threw an opponent out of a helicopter and has said he would do so again. The CCC earlier this year brokered a deal worth \$234 million to sell him 16 new Bell 412 helicopters.

None of this should surprise us. The Canadian state was set up as essentially an armed occupation of Indigenous territory and the militarized police continue to attack Indigenous Land defenders.

And the Canadian military footprint abroad is growing. The Liberal defence policy outlines spending increases from \$24 billion this year to \$32 billion by 2026. The Trudeau government boasts that they will increase military spending by 70 percent between 2017 and 2026.

National Defence is also opening up new bases abroad to protect Canadian interests - mainly mining operations - across the globe.

None of these so-called investments will bring peace or freedom to the people of Canada or the world. The main reason the Liberals are both buying and selling new weaponry is to maintain profits for our war industries and to keep our imperial interests secure.