



Stop Ford's attack on treaty rights

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Tenants fight greedy landlords

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Workers power can beat attacks on people and the planet

SHUT IT DOWN



Millions take to the streets during a general strike in France. More coverage on page 3

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by: Carolyn Egan

We are seeing working class revolts in France, Greece, the United Kingdom and other areas of the globe. Educators in England overwhelmingly rejected the government's recent pay raise by 98% and passport workers started a five week strike. This comes after months of work stoppages by a variety of unions representing baggage handlers, bus and train drivers, doctors, border officers and more, standing up against the rising cost of living and cuts to public services. These should be extended as the momentum grows and more and more workers take to the picket lines with strong public support.

In France, Macron's attack on pensions has sparked a revolt among trade unionists and the broader population with massive strikes and demonstrations across the country. Millions have come into the streets including workers

at oil refineries, schools, docks, ports and transportation. This type of mass protest has not been seen in decades and has become much more than a trade union fight. Students and young people have been involved from the start, which made the government back down on its plan for compulsory national service.

People learn through struggle and gain confidence as protests spread. A strong push from below in the workplaces has kept pressure on the trade union leaders.

The workers fight in Canada

The same issues are present in Canada. We see the price of groceries and gas, high rents and rising interest rates putting home ownership out of reach for most, alongside attacks on education and the dismantling of our public health system. Life is hard, with the ordinary worker straining to making ends meet and fearing what the future will bring. Racialized communities and women are bearing the brunt

of these attacks.

We recently saw in Ontario low wage education workers standing up and fighting back, defying legislation imposing a collective agreement, and ordering them back to work in the face of \$4000 a day fines. The members were majority women and from diverse communities. With the threat of a general strike the provincial government backed down.

This came after building trade workers went out across the province rejecting tentative agreements that didn't give them the wages they deserved. The mood is there among workers to fight. In the private sector unions are winning strong settlements after very high strike votes showing the determination of the rank and file.

That sentiment has to be organized to take on the Ford government's attacks and the rising cost of living. Years ago the Tory leader Tim Hudak ran on a platform to bring in 'right to work' legislation with the intent of dismantling

unions, taking a page from the Republicans in the US.

With a lot of pressure from activists and labour councils unions launched a major campaign to connect with members, listening to their concerns, calling stewards assemblies.

Activists set up workplace discussions on lunch breaks and after shifts, networks were developed, weekend meetings drawing large numbers went on for months involving rank and file members in organizing a fight to defeat Hudak's attacks and in the process building member centered unions. Many of these continued on after he was defeated through the work of activists. This is the type of organizing that has to take place today. The Ontario Federation of Labour has launched the Enough is Enough campaign with demonstrations across the province on June 3. We know workers are willing to fight if organization is there. The Hudak campaign has valuable lessons on how to build at the base and win.

Indigenous nations say, “No Ring of Fire!”

The first thing you learn about the Indigenous community of Neskantaga, when you log onto their website, is that they have been living under a boil-water warning for 10,290 days and counting. The community is literally surrounded by lakes and rivers, none clean enough to drink from.

That is over 28 years of poisonous water. It has resulted in illness and death, hardship and anger for several generations of Neskantaga people. For years they have been calling on the federal and Ontario governments to address this health crisis, to no avail.

The Cree community is located 436 km northeast of Thunder Bay. Until now it has only been accessible by boat, air and snow road on the frozen waterways. The territory has never been ceded by the Ojibway and Cree people who have lived with the land since the beginning.

Their problems have been ignored until now, out of sight, out of mind, because there was no real economic importance, in capitalist terms. Suddenly, all that is changing. Neskantaga is smack in the middle of what has been called the “Ring of Fire”.

Clean Capitalism?

The last Ontario budget and the recent federal budget agree: the key to a rosy economic future for Canadian capitalism means phasing out of fossil fuels and phasing into extracting the minerals that go into batteries for electric vehicles. They can claim this as a revolution: “Clean Capitalism”. Both levels of government are devoting billions in tax breaks and subsidies for new mining operations and for auto parts manufacturers like Magna International.

Doug Ford recently announced \$5 billion in tax breaks and subsidies to build EV battery manufacturing facilities in Windsor. All of his boasting about bringing good manufacturing jobs back to Ontario hinge on exploiting the Ring of Fire. Several years ago Ford tweeted: “If

I have to hop on a bulldozer myself, we’re going to start building roads to the Ring of Fire.”

Building roads through ecological zones like the James Bay Lowlands, with its maze of lakes, rivers and swamps, is an environmental disaster waiting to happen, not to mention a logistical nightmare. If Ford’s road projects proceed, the purpose is not to benefit Northern communities, but to cart out resources as cheaply as possible.

people, staring straight ahead in disrespect.

The land where these prized minerals are is Indigenous land. History has taught us all that resource extraction under capitalism massively enriches big corporations, destroys the environment where they are found, and provide the bare minimum of jobs and benefits for local communities.

The Northern Ontario community of Attiwapiskat is a prime example.

investments in communities like Attiwapiskat and Neskantaga. It would mean taking the time to train people to fill leadership roles in the development, not just the usual handful of menial jobs. It would mean making big improvements in housing and living standards – starting immediately with clean running water for homes. This means an investment of time as well as money, but if the goal was to benefit people, beginning with the people most

like spent batteries.

And, if the true determinant was benefit to people and respect to the land, it might mean deciding that some resources are better left unmined.

The problem is that, under the logic of capitalist production, the imperative is profit, not people.

To maximize profit things must be done as quickly and cheaply as possible. To maximize profit means the ability to simply walk away from environmental damage left in the wake of extraction. It means maximizes exploitation of labour as well as resources. The environment has no value except for the dollar value that can be squeezed from it.

You don’t have to look further than the “orphan wells” that dot the Alberta oil patch; once the oil wells are no longer profitable corporations have just shut them down and walked away, leaving taxpayers on the hook for clean-up and restoring the environment. There are about 17,000 abandoned wells across the province, some dating back as much as 60 years. The UCP government has created a multi-billion-dollar incentive scheme to bribe corporation to clean up their own mess. Keep in mind that these industries already get huge tax breaks and subsidies to produce their sludge in the first place.

As one observer commented: “When I look at it, it is exactly how a fox would design a henhouse.”

The Indigenous communities of Northern Ontario are right to oppose the plan to exploit the Ring of Fire. Ford and Trudeau will talk about clean, modern, revolutionary mining and industry, but the fox cannot stop being a fox. Capitalism cannot stop being exploitive, wasteful and environmentally destructive – these are the basis of its existence. As long as profit rules over people it will be so.

There are big conflicts on the horizon and we need to be clear. We are in solidarity and support of the Indigenous people who will stand up to defend their land and their culture. “No Ring of Fire!”



He claims to be doing all this in “partnership” with First Nations. That claim is dubious.

On March 29, a delegation of leaders from Neskantaga came to the Ontario legislature to protest the lack of consultation on the Ring of Fire development, and the preceding generations of neglect. Out-going Chief Wayne Moonias, and Chief-elect Chris Moonias stood in the gallery to challenge Ford’s “partnership” claims. They were ejected by security officers.

Before they left they chanted, “No Ring of Fire! No Ring of Fire!” Supporters in the gallery applauded. Below, an obviously furious Ford refused to even look at the Indigenous

The discovery of diamonds nearby was supposed to be a benefit for all in the community. Instead, while international diamond giant De Beers extracts billions of dollars of value per year, providing only a handful of jobs for locals, the community has declared a state of emergency, citing “Third World” living conditions.

People not Profit

If we determined that extracting the minerals needed for efficient power storage batteries really was a benefit to society and the environment, could it be done cleanly and respectfully in real partnership with Indigenous communities?

To begin, it would mean big

directly affected, it could be done.

It would mean listening to the wisdom and knowledge of local Indigenous people who have lived in relationship with these lands from the beginning. Who better to know how changes should be introduced, if at all.

It would mean taking great pains to minimize the environmental damage of the extractive process itself. It would mean taking responsibility for the environmental impact of the resultant industrial processes, beginning with making sure they are powered by clean, renewable energy. It would mean taking responsibility for cleaning up afterward and safely disposing and recycling of waste,

Justice – United Conservative style

Alberta’s Danielle Smith is in trouble – which is par for her term as United Conservative Party leader and premier.

This time she is accused of attempting to obstruct justice. Recordings have been released of her conversations with Artur Pawlowski, Christo-fascist, anti-vaxxer and one of the organizers of the convoy border blockade in Coutts Alberta.

In a video call last 11 minutes, Pawlowski basically demands that she get him off the hook. Why the leader of Alberta’s government would engage in a long conversation with such a notorious figure is scan-

dalous enough, regardless of what they discussed.

Smith assured Pawlowski she was doing all she could to influence his case, saying she was speaking to officials in the Justice Ministry “almost weekly”. She admitted she couldn’t come right out and tell them to drop the charges against him, just repeatedly suggest that prosecution was “not in the public interest.”

To be fair, Smith wasn’t singling out the manic street “preacher” with a long list of arrests for disturbing the peace in Calgary anti-LGBTQ stunts. She has been meddling with the Justice Ministry on behalf of all those charged with violating public health

measures during the pandemic.

During her run for UCP leadership she promised “amnesty” for everyone facing COVID. Then she got elected and discovered that is an impossibility under Canadian law. She tells him: “I thought we probably had the same power of clemency that they did in the U.S. . . . I’m not a lawyer by training.”

It is sad when the convoy crowd confuse Canadian law and constitutionality with that of the US. But when the premier of a province does it, it is criminal incompetence.

The premier sent out her deputy, Kaycee Madu, to explain to media why Smith was innocent. He insists



that she did not speak directly to the prosecutors in the case, only to those prosecutors’ bosses in the Ministry of Justice. This, he says, “is entirely justified.”

Madu may not be the best judge of such matters. Just a year ago he was removed as Justice Minister after he phoned Edmonton Police Chief Dale McPhee to get him to kill a \$300 ticket for texting while driving. That’s known as obstruction of justice.

With the election looming in May, the ANDP is doing all it can to get mileage out of the scandal, and even some of her supporters are afraid she has “crossed the line”. While not likely to bother her right-wing rural base, the bad publicity may cost Smith support in contested suburban Calgary ridings. Polling shows the ANDP and UCP in a virtual tie.

Can the French revolt become a revolution?

An explosive cocktail that mixes striking workers with youthful fury has exploded on the streets of France. Charlie Kimber says the rebellion can reshape the whole of society—but will require organisation

‘France has entered a Marxian state of pre-insurrection. Orderly protest over the retirement age has mutated into a deeper crisis of the regime.’ That’s how the Telegraph newspaper’s world economy editor Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, described the situation of strikes and protests last week.

Some socialists in France also speak of a “pre-revolutionary period”, a “revolutionary crisis” or “revolutionary potential”. Are they right, and if they are how do we go from mass struggle to revolution?

Certainly there is more than a simple trade union battle over pensions taking place. Ten days of actions called by the unions have seen huge strikes and mobilised millions on the streets. But also sections of workers, fuelled by determined organisation at the base, continue indefinite strikes in parts of refuse collection, refineries, energy, docks, ports and transport.

Young people are mobilising in larger numbers than ever, and the government was last week in retreat from its plans to impose compulsory national service. “We said to ourselves that adding an ingredient to an explosive cocktail was not a good idea,” explained a ministerial adviser.

Last Thursday, outraged at state repression, tens of thousands of people took part in more than 165 demonstrations nationwide against police violence. Predictably some faced—police violence.

The Russian revolutionary Lenin, writing at the start of the First World War, put forward some symptoms of a revolutionary crisis. It had, he said, to be “impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change”.

This is important because splits at the top act as “a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth”. But there also has to be a determination for “the lower classes not to want to live in the old way”.

Another feature is that “the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute”. And as a result “there is considerable increase in the activity of the masses”.

These are not a list that you can tick off against social reality. How much division at the top, how much pain, how much mobilisation? And as Leon Trotsky stressed, each of these factors interacts with the other.

“The more decisively and confidently the proletariat acts, the better will it succeed in bringing after it the intermediate layer, the more isolated will be the ruling class, and the more acute its demoralisation. And, on the other hand, a demoralisation of the rulers will pour water into the mill of the revolutionary class,” he wrote.

A revolutionary crisis is not simply the endpoint of a growing social movement. It’s a result of



Strikes against pension reforms are spreading to a broader revolt against Macron

Flickr/force-ouvriere

the intersecting relations between classes. And it’s also a moment when, the real divisions in society are revealed.

People learn lessons in struggle about the hostility of bosses, police, judges, media and, government—and the solidarity of allies. Trotsky also said that revolutions were not about reaching some point on a proletarian struggle thermometer. They were a moment of “the direct interference of the masses in historical events.”

A revolutionary crisis develops because of what the exploited and oppressed do in a situation where tensions have ripened to an extent where what they do matters profoundly. To say there is potential doesn’t mean that a revolutionary uprising is immediately on the cards today in France. It indicates that the sweep of resistance is great enough to set in train a process that points towards revolutionary conclusions.

Forcing out Macron, for example, would show it is possible to win change beyond elections and formal political mechanisms.

The key is for revolutionaries to be strong enough to advance demands that bring together economic and political struggle through the method of class

organisation. They have to be independent of the trade union leaders and the reformist political parties. The aim is to make workers aware of their own potential power and to lead away from reliance on false hope in parliamentary manoeuvres.

The best demands are those that liberate workers from the straitjacket of “realism”. There need to be intensely practical and immediate fights, and those that reach further. Land, peace, bread and all power to the workers’ councils is an example from 1917 in Russia.

Bringing down Macron would direct attention toward abolishing the fiercely undemocratic constitution of the Fifth Republic which allowed the president to impose the pension assaults by decree. This has to set off a process of discussion throughout the working class on what will replace it.

As well as defeating the attempt to raise the pension age, workers have to fight to reduce it. Freeing themselves from the bureaucratic narrowness of agitating only about pensions, workers have to call for pay rises for all. They have to struggle for the full rights to picket and protest, and the removal of

the laws that allow the state and corporations to order some strikers back to work with the threat of fines and jail.

This raises the question of leadership. This doesn’t mean that if only we had a revolutionary socialist at the top of the CGT union federation there would now be an insurrection in France. Leadership has to be implanted in substantial sections of the working class.

Lenin sees the party as what differentiates a revolutionary situation from a revolutionary crisis. It is the instrument that doesn’t just line up a collection of important issues but welds together the fight on all fronts around the spine of workers’ power.

At the same time as fighting over workplace issues, revolutionaries say workers have to confront the anti-migrant Darmanin law, and all the measures that oppress and brutalise Muslim and black people.

At times of deep crisis, the state and its forces become the strategic target. The state is the intersection of political control and the economic dictatorship of big corporations. To undermine state power there should be demands such as the abolition of the ultra-repressive Brav-M (Motorised

Brigades for the Repression of Violent Action) unit and the removal of the cops’ armoury of grenades and gas.

Crucially all of these demands are realisable only through the systematic growth of rank and file organisation both in individual workplaces and by coordinating between workplaces.

If all these possibilities were fulfilled today it wouldn’t mean socialism would be achieved overnight. But workers would start to see alternative sources of power and decision-making that could destroy and replace the capitalist state. Everything that diverts and delays that process is fatal. It creates openings for the bureaucrats to squeeze life from the struggle.

Lenin wrote, “It is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution. Revolution arises only out of a situation in which objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, ‘falls’, if it is not toppled over.”

When revolutionary leadership is lacking, the dead hand of the union leaders and the reformists can misdirect even the mightiest uprising. May 1968 saw a much bigger wave of revolt in France than today. Repression of student protesters triggered an immense movement of workers.

On 13 May, transcending the confined vision of the union leaders, an immense demonstration brought together school and university students, and workers from all over the country. One account describes the marchers embodying “the flesh and blood of modern capitalist society, an unending mass, a power that could sweep everything before it, if it but decided to do so”.

From that day, three weeks of a general strike began, mobilising 10 million workers throughout the country. It was the largest general strike in history up to that point. Factories didn’t just close, many strikers occupied them and turned them from places of production to sites of collective political organisation.

President Charles de Gaulle was unsure of whether the army and the police would follow his commands. But union leaders and MPs insisted the struggle was for wage rises, not a new sort of society. They lowered workers’ horizons to better pay, which the government and bosses granted only to launch bitter revenge when the struggle ebbed.

Revolution wasn’t impossible. It failed because of the poisonous leadership of the union bureaucrats and the reformist Communist Party. For revolutionaries, the challenge is to prevent a similar process today.

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Tenants fight for affordable housing

Housing costs are soaring across the country and around the world while banks, developers and landlords make huge profits. But tenants are refusing to be pushed out of their homes. Ritch Whyman spoke to long time anti-poverty and working class activist David Galvin about tenant fights in Hamilton, Ontario.

by: **Ritch Whyman**

Working class people in Hamilton have been facing a deepening housing crisis over the past decade.

Recent reports show that rental costs have skyrocketed over 13-20% in just the past year. This is on top of several years of similar increases.

At the same time corporate landlords and developers have continued to increase the practice of renovations. In 2019 a year after Ford removed rent controls, the Landlord and Tenant Board (notorious for routinely siding against tenants) saw 21 applications to evict tenants due to “renovations” in Hamilton. That has soared to 103 eviction applications in 2022.

A common and routine practice has been for landlords looking to cash in on skyrocketing rental costs is to refuse needed repairs, or to create serious issues in order to evict tenants so they can jack up the rent.

While the City of Hamilton council and staff talk about the housing crisis, they ignore the role played by senior city managers and city policies that actually promote and condone this practice and increase the deepening housing affordability crisis in the city.

One of the recent cases of attempted renovation showed not only the depth of the crisis, but also the lengths landlords and property management corps and their allies at the City of Hamilton will go to try and evict tenants.

Tenants at 1038 Main St. E, smack dab in the centre of the lower city, found themselves without water on December 28th 2022. The landlord had already been trying to drive tenants out. It now appears that they manufactured this crisis by allowing pipes to freeze during a cold snap.

The city by law department, run a previous candidate for the Tories, refused to pursue the corporate landlord through a stricter set of

charges instead opting for a course that would allow nearly unlimited appeals and left the tenants without water for nearly 3 months.

investigation showed that the city clearly did not inspect the building to verify the landlords claims. As we go to print the landlord has

jack the rent up. Prior to the landlord refusing to fix the water in your building, had they been working on ‘renovicting’ tenants? Were they

pled units out of 60+ total. Three households have since left due to deteriorating conditions, leaving 7 units occupied.’



The number of renovations has soared in recent years

The city’s own senior staff then sided repeatedly with the landlord in granting appeals and supported the landlords’ assertion that they had to clear everyone out to make the repairs.

Tireless tenant organising and an inspection from a local UA (plumbers union) activist exposed the landlords claim that no repairs could be made until all tenants were removed. The independent

been able to restore cold water to all the units.

Socialist Worker interviewed long time anti-poverty and working class activist David Galvin who is a tenant at the building.

Socialist Worker: It’s widely acknowledged that there’s a housing crisis in Hamilton. Much of this spurred by corporate investors “renovicting” tenants in order to

driving tenants out prior to this?

David Galvin: Malleum, who bought the building about 4 years ago, undertook a campaign of buyouts and renovations on the King St. side. Over the next two or three years other tenants were evicted for legitimate reasons such as non-payment of rent or unlawful behavior. By the time the current owner allegedly issued N13s in March 2022 there were 10 occu-

SW: What sort of support have you received, if any, from organisations – ACORN, labour, other community groups and local politicians?

DG: Tenants have received tremendous support from ACORN and its local organizer Olivia O’Connor. Local media have been invaluable in getting our plight publicized. The Mayor’s office and City Council, and in particular Ward 3 Councilor Nrinder Nann and her staff, have steadfastly supported us in words and deeds.

The city water department has pitched in with regular deliveries of water.

The city’s Tenant Defence Fund has proved invaluable in allowing us to secure legal representation. Mike Wood, from Hamilton Tenants in Unity, has spent hours on the phone with me personally, bolstering my spirits. Anthony Marco of HDLC, other union representatives and members have been highly supportive.

Newly elected MPP Sarah Jama has showed the flag, so to speak, by visiting our building.

Tenants at 1083 have joined together to support one another emotionally and logistically in a communal spirit I’ve never before seen manifested in our building. If I’ve left anybody out, I hope they forgive me, their efforts are equally appreciated.

Unfortunately members of the bylaw and building departments have been largely unhelpful.

SW: What made you decide to fightback against the ‘renoviction’

DG: I love the place where I’m living and don’t want to give it up. Also, because I’ve lived here for so long my rent is relatively low. My income is also low, so that I can’t afford to live anywhere else (except of course for subsidized housing, which is difficult to access).

for rising

Liberal budget bullshit

by: **John Bell**

The “highlights” of the federal budget are the so-called “grocery rebate”, massive investments in “clean” capitalism, and helping students go into debt deeper and faster.

Grocery money

Leading “affordability measures” in the budget is a one-time rebate to low income Canadians, supposedly to offset the high cost of food. The kick-back would give a low-income family of 4 a GST rebate of \$467, and a single person \$234. A qualifying senior citizen would get \$225.

Eligibility details are not yet clear, but it is expected to affect 11 million households. Keep in mind that there are more than 7 million seniors alone.

That family of 4 gets just under \$9 a week – 2 packs of baloney. Eat hardy.

The measure does nothing to discourage the “greed-flation” and profit gouging by the big

expected to cost us all \$1.1 billion every year going forward.)

Student debt

The budget acknowledges the high cost of post-secondary education – sort of.

It is increasing the amount students can withdraw from their RESPs in the first term from \$5,000 to \$8,000. They are not increasing government contributions to RESPs, just letting you spend it quicker. Not only does this do nothing practical to reduce student debt, it will likely end up increasing debt.

Disability justice

Like every other level of government, the Liberals have done all they could to avoid raising support for Canadians with disabilities. As a result, many of them are driven to consider MAiD, and early death, out of economic desperation. So a reform intended to give control and dignity to sick and dying people is perverted into an instrument of inhumanity, which after all is kind of capitalism’s

Clean capitalism?

In her budget speech, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said: “In what is the most significant economic transformation since the Industrial Revolution, our friends and partners around the world — chief among them the United States — are investing heavily to build clean economies and the net-zero industries of tomorrow.”

This hyperbole translates into lots of corporate welfare perks for auto companies making components for EVs, and for the mining industries extracting the resources need to power EVs.

They pledge \$16.4 billion over 5 years in tax credits to reward big business investments in “clean manufacturing, clean tech and hydrogen power innovation.”

This is in addition to previously announced \$4.6 billion handouts for the glamorous but ineffective carbon capture and storage technology so popular with fossil fuel corporations.

As usual in federal budgets, subsidies to the fossil fuel industry are not spelled out, but you can bet your ass they amount to billions.

For the purposes of the budget, increased extraction of minerals used as components of batteries for electric vehicles, such as chromite, cobalt, lithium, manganese, nickel, graphite and copper. And we all know how environmentally friendly resource extraction industries are. According to the UN, Canada is second only to China for the world’s worst mining environmental record.

In addition, these resources are generally found in unceded Indigenous lands, like Ontario’s “Ring of Fire” in the James Bay lowlands. Conflicts are unavoidable as corporation rush to take advantage of a bonanza financed in part by taxpayers. These lands are some of the most environmentally sensitive on the continent, beside the fact that they belong to somebody else.

It is true that operating EVs is cleaner than internal combustion vehicles – but that’s a pretty low bar. They are only as clean as the production of the power used to mine and refine their components, manufacture them, and dispose of the toxic materials left behind after their use. Again, the track record of Canada’s energy producers, whether making power or cleaning up afterward is an ugly one.

Ultimately, the Liberal talk about saving the environment is more about saving the automobile industry.

This Liberal budget follows the pattern set by Trudeau over the years. Nickels and dimes for the working class and billions for corporate interests.

There is also, of course, billions allocated for war.

The Liberals are still pursuing new fighter jets at a cost of \$19 billion initially, although the final figure will be closer to \$80 billion.

No matter the spin from Trudeau and Freeland, this is a pro-war, pro-corporate budget.



Trudeau's budget gives billions to corporations and the war machine

grocery oligarchies that drive rapidly rising food prices. Raising taxes on agribusiness and grocery corporations to pay for the rebate is noticeably absent from the budget.

It is worth noting that food bank use is up between 60% and 124% so far in 2023. Most food banks are staffed by volunteers, with food donations by working people.

At any rate, a pitifully small one-off kick back is not a solution to the affordability crisis facing Canadian workers and seniors. It is more about putting a Liberal veneer on a budget that mostly rewards big business. These stunts are not about providing real relief, they are just vote buying.

(As an aside, at a press conference Ontario’s Premier Doug Ford was asked why there were no such “affordability measures” in his recent budget, Ford answered that he had already done that in previous budgets. As evidence he cited his disastrously short-sighted automobile registration sticker program that cost the government \$2.2 billion when it was implemented in 2022 and is

thing.

It would be a lie to say the budget has no new spending for disability support. Barely. The feds pledge to spend \$10 million over 2 years to “increase capacity” for returning PWD to the workforce, a spit in the ocean.

This paragraph encapsulates government inaction:

“Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$21.5 million in 2023-24 to Employment and Social Development Canada to continue work on the future delivery of the Canada Disability Benefit, including engagement with the disability community and provinces and territories on the regulatory process.”

Translation: more talk and any real measures postponed to some distant “future”.

As the permanent effects of long-COVID, and repeated (and unnecessary) infection become more apparent, we are about to see a massive new wave of previously healthy individuals enter the ranks of the disabled. Look for this to be a major battle in the years ahead.

SW: What role do you see senior city management and some councilors playing in assisting developers and ‘renovictions’.

DG: Staff in the building and bylaw enforcement departments seem to be heavily biased toward developers. They have betrayed 1083 tenants at every turn. For example, instead of invoking the Vital Services By-law, which would have allowed immediate action against the landlord, including large fines, they chose to rely on the Property Standards By-law, which affords longer compliance times, multiple levels of appeal and less severe fines. City Council, and especially Councilor Nrinder Nann, have been very supportive of tenants at 1083.

SW: Do you think you would have had any success in bringing this to light without support from organisations such as ACORN?

DG: ACORN has been indispensable in this fight. They

against the situation they are facing across the city, province, and country?

DG: It is vital for tenants to organize, fight back and support tenant-friendly politicians at all levels of government.

SW: What solutions do you think are necessary to support tenants i.e.: stringent enforcement of by-laws to defend tenants as opposed to landlords, stronger push by the city to license and fine landlords, return to rent control and long term investments in geared to income housing?

DG: We need stronger bylaws to protect tenants, for example against renoviction. But even more important, we need bylaw officers who will actually do their jobs. We need a landlord registry, the return of rent controls on vacant units and of course a huge increase in the supply of affordable housing. Some of these things are provincial



Hamilton ACORN members march to expose slumlords in the city

helped kick off the original news coverage by CHCH. Without all the publicity we’ve received we might not have got as much support from City Council.

SW: How important is it for tenants to unite to and fight back

responsibilities, so we must await a change in provincial government to see them taken seriously. Hamilton can and should act immediately on matters in their own purview, such as anti-renoviction bylaws and landlord registration.

Trump arraignment a dangerous moment

It is hard not to celebrate the arraignment of Donald Trump for fraud, related to paying hush money to a porn star during the 20—election campaign. As Mary Trump observed: “A Trump indictment will cause the country to run out of beer.”

But there are very real risks that Trump and his supporters will be able to parlay this into a renewed election bid. In recent weeks Trump’s support among Republican voters has surged and he was able to raise \$7 million overnight for his campaign and legal defence.

Part of the problem roots in the nature of the charges. The fraud case, the misuse and violation of election spending laws, of which Trump is almost certainly guilty, are hard to explain and seem trivial to the casual observer. What did he do? Screw the banks? That makes the charges themselves fodder for Trump’s supporters, whipping up witch-hunt conspiracy theories:

“You can look at ancient history, and you can see this is the kind of thing that ends a civilization,” ranted Rudy Giuliani.

“This prosecution is pure, Bolshevik style witchhunting,” blustered Donald Trump Jr.

“There’s no proof Trump slept with Stormy. There’s no baby,” FOX News pundit Jesse Watters correctly pointed out.

This statement of the New York Young Republicans reveals the cultist devotion which many feel for Trump: “President Trump embodies the American people - our psyche from id to super-ego-as does no other figure; his soul is totally bonded with our core values and emotions, and he is our total

and indisputable champion. This tremendous connection threatens the established order.”

Trump has successfully yoked big business conservatism to the disaffection of the white, mostly male US working class. From the start he has made subtle and then more overt racism central to his persona. If part of his appeal is his outsider, outlaw act, laying these charges may help more than hurt him.

Trump is guilty of far worse, and more clear-cut crimes than fraud. He should be tried for inciting the violent coup attempt of January 6, and attempting to overturn the election results. His well-documented actions were seditious and unconstitutional.

Charging him for these major crimes would put the whole neo-fascist Trumpist movement on trial. And that is precisely why it won’t happen.

The cowardly Democrats do not want to provoke a fight. They fail to pose a real alternative to Republicans. Their claims of creating jobs are undercut by rising cost of living and lousy pay. When rail workers threatened to make historic gains against greedy bosses and unsafe conditions, Biden passed a law forcing them back to work.

When the far-right dominated Supreme Court struck down women’s right to choose, the Democrats discouraged organizing in the streets and just told everyone to wait for the election.

When another mass shooting occurs, Democrats fume and do nothing.

Most of the labour union bureaucracies are just as timid, joined at the hip to the Democrats. So when workers do revolt and fight back, they do all they can to undermine grass-roots militancy. Areas where workers have been most successful fighting back in recent years – like the NYC Amazon workers – are groups with weak or no union bureaucracies to hold them back.

It is almost as if they were trying to drive working-class anger into Trump’s soft-core fascist embrace.

The January 6th inquiry was a major blow to Trump and his imitators in states across the nation. But it only resulted in minor charges against low-level goons. Democrats sought to turn that publicity into a few seats in congress, not wage a fight against the threat of a rising fascist movement. So now Trump has bounced back. Their cowardice and miscalculations are going to come home to roost in coming months.



... continued from page 8

No oversight

Bill 60 does not include any protection against corruption and conflict of interest. Considering the close ties between the Ford government and private sector investors, this should be a great cause for concern. The process for inspecting private for-profit clinics, if there is one, is left to regulations made by the Ford Cabinet, after the legislation is passed.

While public hospitals are subject to the Public Hospitals Act, currently private clinic inspection reports are contracted out to a third party, so are not liable to Freedom of Information laws and other mechanisms of accountability which apply to public hospitals.

Concerns about cost-cutting and poorer outcomes for patients in private clinics not

subject to the oversight that covers public hospitals are not misplaced. A recent study published in The Lancet, looking at the privatisation of public services in the National Health Service in England, found that "Private sector outsourcing corresponded with significantly increased rates of treatable mortality, potentially as a result of a decline in the quality of health-care services."

Bill 60 was pitched as the only means available to clear the backlog of surgeries that have been delayed. But there is another way to deal with this backlog without further incursions of profit-taking into our public system: use existing surgical infrastructure and personnel to expand surgeries within the public system. In hospitals across the province, there are operating rooms that are not being used, in some cases that are closed, because of a lack of funding and staff.

Instead of sitting on \$1.25 billion of unspent healthcare funding as he is currently doing, Ford could use those funds to schedule more surgeries at night or on weekends, invest in the public system, and pay healthcare workers what they deserve. Instead of fighting public sector workers in the courts around Bill 124, they could respect the court decision that found it unconstitutional.

Instead of properly funding the public system to provide healthcare based on need, Ford is going to divert public money to private institutions to profit off of the sick and vulnerable. But across the province people are mobilizing to defeat this move and to reach out to those who have been swayed by Ford's claims that there is no alternative to privatization. This is vital work to shore up the support for public medicare, which though strong, is being eroded by this deliberate starving of the

system.

Even when Bill 60 passes, there will be multiple battlegrounds as the reality of this wholesale attack on public medicare becomes clearer. Such battles have been fought in the past, and we will have to organize in every community to challenge this grab for public funds by Ford and his corporate buddies.

Territorial Acknowledgement

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

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WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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

concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Read the full statement at: socialist.ca/ourstand

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SWEAT by the Bicycle Opera Project

by: Chantal Sundaram

Opera is an art form that almost always tells the story of the upper classes, but this is one that doesn't. SWEAT is a filmed opera about life in a garment factory.

Toronto independent opera producer Bicycle Opera Project first developed SWEAT as a contemporary Canadian opera for nine singers that premiered onstage in NYC in 2016. When the pandemic hit, they decided to revisit it through film. What started as just a filmed version of the staged opera became a film in itself, with dance, movement, and cinematography shot in warehouses in Hamilton and Kingston.

SWEAT the film held its world premiere at the Kingston Canadian Film Festival, and the official program described it like this: "SWEAT tells the story of a group of women working in the garment industry and sets their individual aspirations against the demands of global capitalism."

The film starts with the women betting on horses to get out of their situation: the horses all have names like "Stealth Management." But the two horses at the end of the race are called "Born Rich" and "Eat the Rich." "Eat the Rich" wins, but it's not cause for celebration for the women, who didn't bet on that horse.

The rhythm of labour

The lyrics by Anna Chatterton were based on extensive research and the verbatim words used in garment sweatshops, in some cases from the reports of undercover journalists.

But these are turned into song and spoken



word that mimic the sound and rhythm of sewing production and the assembly line. It is entirely sung, but sometimes using a rhythmic spoken-word opera technique called "recitative," based on those real words from the sweatshops that inspired it. And because it is sung "a cappella," which means voice without any instrumental music, there is even more intense focus on those words.

The film translates the rhythm of the sweatshop visually from stage to screen with cinematic techniques, but also from voice to movement, with a dance choreography that captures life in the factory, just as the music does. The depiction of a rush sewing job on the assembly line with the fear of failure hanging over them is physically powerful. Although some dancers were added for the film, the singers themselves, both chorus and soloists, are key to the dance choreography.

"You must be a single machine"

We hear, see and feel how the women are separate, in conflict, and also pulled together – mostly by the needs of production but then by the needs of survival beyond it. And all by using their bodies and song, with little actual dialogue beyond moments of rhythmic speech-based "recitative."

And even when they break out of the collective machine of their work lives we see and hear how their private lives of missing home and family are the same when they sing and dance about the tastes and feelings of home.

"A single spark and we are dust"

That is the last, tragic line sung in SWEAT. In opera terms, it is a beautiful tragedy, but it also contains within it signs of escape. The doors of the factory were closed in the story,

but not for all of us watching.

Hundreds of young women and girls lost their lives in the March 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Manhattan, and in the 2012 garment factory fire in Dhaka Bangladesh. But a spark can light a flame, which it did in 1911 by inspiring March 8 as a celebration of working women's resistance to this day.

The central character in SWEAT, a worker who fights consistently for the union, is a classic opera heroine, who we identify with and root for no matter what the outcome. She triumphs in the honour of her character and the beauty of the story, whether or not there can be a happy ending – this time.

"Pin your mouths"

The women in SWEAT are repeatedly told: "pin your mouths" just like they are told to pin clothing. Don't complain about lack of overtime pay or the locked doors, and the fire hazards that matter less than profits. And don't tell the story of what happens when you aren't heard, and certainly stop all that union talk.

Workers today are refusing to pin their mouths, from sweatshops to Amazon, to call centres and the gig economy. They are telling their own story where it matters most, but it doesn't hurt for their stories to find a way into the spaces where they are rarely told.

As the description of SWEAT's film premiere says: "no previous opera experience is required."

For info see: <https://bicycleopera.com/upcoming-sweat/>

Brother (2022) - Directed by Clement Virgo

by: Caanan Sahin

Brother (2022) is the story of a Trinidadian immigrant family that settled in Scarborough in the 1990s. Their story is entangled with the stories of other black immigrants in the neighbourhood, where working parents sacrifice everything to build a better future for their children, but their children hit the wall of racial violence when they dare to dream more than their parents can afford to.

Brother is a movie about the fatal contradiction between the imagination of the black community across generations and the impediments imposed by the racial order on black people in Canada. This brilliant snapshot of black immigrant life in Canada stirred powerful emotions in the audience.

Based on a novel written by David Chariandy with the same title in 2017, the movie presents a cinematic narrative very loyal to its source. The family under spotlight consists of three main characters: a single mother who works as a cleaner to put food on the table and to afford rent, and two brothers.

The elder brother, Francis, takes care of the younger one, Micheal, from their early childhood while their mom takes night shifts to earn higher hourly wages. The home, a two-bedroom apartment in a low-rise buildings inhabited by racialized immigrants from the Caribbean and other countries, becomes the refuge of the family.

Trauma and brotherly love

The longest shots in the movie take place in this dim-lit apartment where we are invited to witness the emotional trauma and consuming silence of the working mother as well as the duty-bound co-dependence of the two brothers, up until a point of rupture when Francis, the elder brother, imagines an independent pathway to his own fulfillment.

At the beginning of the movie, we see

Francis and Micheal climbing towards the top of a hydro pole in Scarborough, in which Micheal follows the footsteps of his elder brother. This is one of the figments of Micheal's memory, through which we see "a kid reaching brave in the skull hum of power".

The whole story is narrated through Micheal, whose relatively quiet, introspective and emotionally turbulent world becomes the fabric that absorbs the incidents into his memory to be retold a decade later.

Francis, the elder brother, has great physical strength, an overpowering and protective presence and a very balanced personality who works hard to protect Michael from all kinds of threats, including the harm that might come from the streets. Francis is a surrogate father who is stuck between responsibilities towards his family and his desire to realize his own dreams that revolve around his passion for hip-hop.

The unchallengeable masculine performance of Francis is so readily interpreted by the audience in heteronormative terms that when we are made privy to his queer love affair in the back room of a barber salon with another black male musician, all the conventional notions around black masculinity and sexuality are subverted. Francis' lyrical talent



in hip-hop, his appreciation of his partner's musical creativity and his confrontational personality in situations of conflict flow seamlessly as defining features of 'Brother'.

Racism then and now

Barber shops in Trinidadian or Jamaican neighborhoods were used as a gathering venue for partying and developing an authentic musical language in the 1990s. Sadly but not surprisingly, the same venue is the first address to be raided by the police to harass black youth, predetermining the "culprits" of random crimes leaving a dilemma between being shot or being obedient to the police monstrosity. Brother is a movie about what happens when this dilemma is rejected.

Brother takes us to a point in history that is not far from now. One cannot help asking how much has changed over the three decades since.

When we look at COVID-19's impact on the black population, the huge inequality that still characterizes black labour and the systemic police violence that still receives impunity, we might think not much has changed.

The power of love and community

Two women characters in the film, each from a different generation, connect in their grief for their loved ones. This union is made stronger by Francis' partner Jelly's new presence in the household, which until that moment is treated like a protected castle from the horrors of the outside world.

Ruth, the sacrificial mother whose dreams are shattered upon Francis' departure

from home, and Aisha, who is the love of Micheal from childhood - the only woman who breaks through the walls of the neighbourhood into a university in Montreal to be an IT engineer - bond deeply towards the end of the movie.

Jelly, a black musician and Francis' lover, joins them, generously opening his heart to Francis' mother to show the love he cherishes for his son. From this intimacy, we see a light shimmering, inspiring hope for healing - to move on and to fight for a better world.

The power of resistance

The novel was written in 2017, three years after the BLM movement started. And the movie was made in 2022, just a year after the BLM movement swept the streets of the US and Canada for months. Both the author David Chariandy and the director Clement Virgo speak from the heart of this transformative period in their representation of exploitation, racism, violence and resilience with their nuanced portrayal of the black community in Canada.

At the end of the movie, the two brothers finally climb to the top of the hydro pole and are looking at the vast city of Toronto, whose streets unfold hundreds of feet below their hanging legs in patterns, and Francis tells Micheal that "A great view... One of the best in the neighbourhood, but step badly on a line, touch your hand to the wrong part while you're brushing up against another, and you'll burn."

While watching Brother, one sees how generations of black immigrants have walked on egg-shells in Canada, and how their generational memory brings forth those out-of-sight stories. Each member of the audience will find their thoughts on racial injustice permanently associated with powerful sequences from the movie upon their departure from the theatre. Only then, Brother's story will be part of a broader collective memory.

Kick RBC off campus!

by: **Bradley Hughes**

The Royal Bank of Canada is the fifth largest investor in fossil fuels in the world. Our only hope in avoiding catastrophic climate disasters is to end the production of fossil fuels quickly. RBC has bet over \$270 billion that we will fail to do this. The bank is also one of the biggest funders of the Coastal Gaslink project – a pipeline to bring fracked gas to the coast for shipping overseas. For years now, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs have opposed the project, as the pipeline runs through their unceded land. RBC is profiting from BC and Coastal Gaslink's colonial violence and oppression on Wet'suwet'en people, who have never ceded their right to exclusively use and occupy their territories.

For these reason students and workers at university and college campuses across so called Canada are organizing to kick RBC off their campuses.

snəwəyəl leləm - Langara College is on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded land of the x'məθk'əyəm (Musqueam) people in so-called Vancouver. The International Socialists club on campus has started a petition to demand that the college board of governors remove the RBC location from campus, end all funding from RBC, and all promotion of the bank on campus and at college events.

Socialist Worker talked to three members of the International Socialists at the college.

Winter Paul is a student in the business management program. They explained that the college claims to be “part of a sustainable society by having LEED Gold Certified buildings, being a carbon neutral campus, bringing a comprehensive waste reduction and recycling program into action, encouraging sustainable transportation options for commute by providing bike racks and carpooling incentives.”

But if the college wants a sustainable future, it should end its relationship, “with an ecocidal company investing in the past.”

Paul also pointed out that the college's responsibility for reconciliation with Indigenous people means that it, “should divest itself from RBC who has upright shrugged off Wet'suwet'en people's opposition to build Coastal Gaslink pipeline.”

Another student, Amaranta MacAllister, links their opposition to RBC on campus to the role of banks in society at large, “Many point to the jobs and the economic relief created by the pipeline, located on mostly unceded land, and RBC investment for why we should also support this bank. We must, then, ask the most important questions: why must we rely on this conglomerate—who has successfully evaded environmental resolutions and policies at every turn—to help our economy? Why do we allow these commercial institutions to operate in open defiance to the green transition promised, but vaguely expanded upon, by our government? Are we, as working class citizens, apt to accept the running of our country and our future by for-profit banks, with RBC being the definite lead in a gang of fossil fuel investing banks in Canada?”

Erfan Rezaie teaches physics at snəwəyəl leləm - Langara. He told us that, “it's hypocritical of the college to, on the one hand, claim they are committed to sustainability, and on the other hand have a close partnership with RBC, a climate criminal in the worst sense. Students and faculty were of course never asked whether they wanted to have RBC on campus, so if we are sincere about solving the climate crisis, the least we can do is demand our institutions stop supporting fossil fuel extraction.”

The campaign to kick RBC off campus at snəwəyəl leləm - Langara is just getting started.

Email VancouverIS@socialist.ca to get involved.



There were 40 actions across Canada on 'fossil-fools' day on April 1st calling for RBC to divest

Ford's Bill 60 will gut public hospitals

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

Premier Doug Ford's Bill 60, sweeping legislation that will dramatically accelerate the destruction of public healthcare in Ontario, is being rammed through at lightning speed.

The bill, which has already passed second reading, is being pitched as the solution to the backlog of surgeries in Ontario by vastly increasing the number of private for-profit surgical clinics and diagnostics. In fact, far from relieving pressure on public hospitals the bill will worsen critical staffing shortages. It will expand already widespread up-selling to patients, as investors seek to maximize profit. And all of this will take place with even less oversight than currently exists for private clinics.

The backdrop to Bill 60 is the criminal underfunding of the healthcare system by the Ford government and its predecessors. Ontario has the lowest levels of beds and healthcare funding per capita in the country. As the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions stated in a 2021 report, low levels of beds are a marker for low levels of staffing: “If Ontario hospitals had the same staffing as hospitals in the rest of Canada, there would be 45,000 more hospital employees in Ontario.” Low hospital funding and few beds means hospital patients are discharged more quickly. Ontario has the shortest length of stay in Canada. It is in this context of an underfunded and overstretched public health system that Bill 60 has been offered up as a ‘solution’ to the crisis.

Staffing crisis

Ontario is facing the worst hospital and healthcare staffing shortage in memory. The combined impacts of COVID and deliberate wage suppression by the Ford government through Bill 124 have left healthcare workers exhausted and demoralized. Not only does Bill 60 not provide relief to front-line workers who are struggling every day under crushing workloads, it will aggravate the situation by siphoning staff from public hospitals to work in

the proposed new private clinics.

At the Ottawa Hospital's Riverside campus, private corporation Academic Orthopedic Surgical Associates of Ottawa Inc. is operating an after-hours surgical clinic privately within the hospital, using the hospital's operating rooms, supplies and hospital staff. This shows that there are not two different pools of staff that will work in parallel – there is a single under-resourced pool of staff that the private clinics will draw from.

Private clinics will poach workers away from the public system because they won't fall under legislation that deliberately underpays and creates intolerable pressure on staff. Despite claims by Minister of Health Sylvia Jones that applicants for these new licenses would be required to submit staffing plans meant to “protect our public hospitals and to ensure that they are not in any way impacted”, there are no teeth in this process, and no indication of how an applicant would be rejected if their staffing plan fails to ensure public hospitals are not impacted.

Ramping up profit

Profit for investors in private for-profit clinics will come from cream-skimming less complex cases, concentrating the most complicated cases in public hospitals. It will also come from up-selling patients, which is already happening.

A 2017 report by the Ontario Health Coalition documented the proliferation of user-fees in private clinics and surveyed patients about the fees they were being charged. The report found that patients were afraid to voice complaints about extra user-fees, not wanting to cause tension with the physician prior to surgery. Some were told the extra user-fees were required in order to receive better quality care or safer care. Some feared not being able to get appointments or receiving worse or even unsafe care if they did not pay.

Bill 60 will only make this situation much worse.

...continued on page 6



Ottawa rallies to stop for profit healthcare

photo: Joel Harden