

The new banking crisis and capitalism Make the rich pay!

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From Windsor Salt to PSAC to Thorncliffe rent strike, workers are turning up the heat

ESCALATE



Windsor Salt workers extend the picket line into the Detroit water



Thorncliffe Park tenants are not going anywhere. Thousands are on a rent strike

Workers across the country have had enough and are looking for ways to fight against greedy bosses and landlords. The soaring cost of living and the austerity imposed in the public sector are squeezing the working class. Strikes and other actions are becoming more widespread and militant.

The high profile battles throughout the last number of months, from strikes in France, the UK, Greece, and the US are reshaping the horizons of workers. The results of these fights are mixed. In some cases, strikers are sold out by union leaders, some strikes result in stalemate or partial victories. But there is no doubt that workers are feeling the mood to push further.

In Canada, the PSAC strike showed that workers were prepared to escalate tactics.

At many Federal work-sites including military facilities and ports, workers partially or temporarily shut down access.

Strikers led shutdowns of ports in Montreal, Vancouver and St John's. In Hamilton, union members occupied the lift bridge that controls access in and out of Hamilton ports delaying ships from entering. Members built strong picket lines at border crossings and hundreds of workers protested at Toronto's Pearson International Airport in a show of strength.

Ultimately the actions forced the Federal Government back to the table. As we go to press it seems there is a deal for 120,000 of the PSAC workers although the Canada Revenue Agency workers are still on picket lines.

The PSAC strikers are not alone. Public sector strikes at universities have become

common from the CUPE 4600 strike at Carleton to the current strike by maintenance workers at Toronto Metropolitan University. There are new strikes being announced frequently. Strikes by bus drivers in Outaouais and Kitchener have just been announced.

The strike at Windsor Salt in Ontario is now in its tenth week and workers have been escalating tactics to try and force the company back to the table. Recently, workers extended their picket lines to include the port where the salt is distributed prompting the Seafarers union to halt shipments. It is that kind of solidarity that can beat the bosses.

Beyond the strikes, there are new more abrasive tactics among tenant organizations. In Toronto's Thorncliffe Park, tenants in 3 buildings all owned by Starlight investments have

been fighting above guideline rent increases for more than a year. The landlord is now demanding the illegal increases be made retroactively which has led more than 1000 tenants to call a rent strike.

Other tenants across the city - where the average monthly rent cost just hit \$3000 - are looking at the case closely and preparing to mimic the tactics.

The multiple crises of capitalism - environmental destruction, massive inequality and perpetual war are the harbingers of a new and more destructive era for working people.

Fights against the far-right, against the bosses and against the banks and landlords can only be won through mass solidarity and the destruction of the system that perpetuates these abuses.

The Mask Drops

Slowly but surely hospitals across Canada are dropping their requirements for mask wear outside specific clinical settings.

This is happening at the same time as a new strain of the COVID virus, the Arcturus variant, is spreading quickly across Europe. Health experts in the UK call for a return to general mask use when in public. Note that, so far, the call has not come from the Conservative government.

One said: "If [the] government won't act to enable everyone to 'live' with COVID, vulnerable people will continue to require precautions and, ideally, others will act with an appropriate level of altruism."

As one of those "vulnerable" people, let me just say I don't hold much hope. Unless political leadership joins with public health experts to spread a unified warning message, people will pretend that everything is okay. If my hospital cannot muster this sort of "altruism" what chance do I have anywhere else?

Arcturus

I don't know who is in charge of naming these new variants, but I wish they would quit picking vaguely mythological, comic-book sounding names like Omicron and Arcturus. I half expect them to become a new super hero duo on Disney Plus. (Arcturus is the name of one of the brightest stars in the northern sky, and what that has to do with a virus eludes me.)

Information about Arcturus is coming out as it spreads. It seems that it is about 20% more communicable than Omicron. It is also "milder", at least for those with robust immune systems, so many who get it experience it as a bad cold or serious hay fever. As a result many of those people don't bother to isolate, mask or take precautions. They

go about their business as usual.

I think I just figured out how it is more communicable.

Of course it is not business as usual for seniors, cancer patients, and any of the millions of others with immune system problems. As with previous variations it is leading to a spike in hospitalizations and

virus is still changing and is still capable of causing new waves of diseases and death."

Willful ignorance

So why are our leaders burying their heads in the sand? Why are hospitals dropping their mask requirements?

The fact remains that the people

forced overtime. Not increased risk of workplace injury from overwork or violence from patients. Masks.

Hamilton's McMaster Children's Hospital dropped their mask requirements in April. Masks are now "encouraged" but not mandated. In their announcement they "ask that you stay home if you're feeling

For instance, it was the "senior communications advisor" who announced that Toronto Hospital for Sick Children no longer requires masks. Moreover, they said it was done on advice from "the Toronto Region Hospital Operations Table". Sorry, the whichwhatnow?

Remember the good old days when we had a "Science Roundtable" taking its marching orders from Doug Ford? Well I guess even a gang of tame doctors and academics was too unruly. Now we have a CEO roundtable.

For the government, the move reinforces the myth that the threat of pandemic is over and it is time for "business as usual". I also think they have done their analysis, concluded that those most likely to die are elderly or have health conditions that limit their "productivity", and are content to cull the herd. (See above, eugenics)

For the administrators, they no longer have to pay to provide masks, or personnel to screen hospital visitors. With the money they save they can hire more administrators. (Canada has 10 times the number of hospital administrators as Germany; Germany has twice the population of Canada; Germany ranks at the top of healthcare providers in the OECD while Canada is near the bottom.)

Here's the thing. Wearing a mask at hospital (and serious hand sanitation) should have been standard practice all along, knowing what we know about how illnesses spread. Just 5 or 6 years ago, when my own health issues led to more frequent hospital visits, not only were masks unknown outside of OR and ICU settings, hand sanitizer was almost invisible. In a city of millions. With a majority dealing facing declining health and living standards.

This is primitive. Worse, it is barbarous because it is done not out of ignorance, but greed. The mask has dropped, indeed.



Vancouver protest calls for the return of mask mandates in hospitals

deaths

According to the WHO – and yes I know their track record on COVID has been less than stellar, but no one else seems to be keeping track – 14,000 people have died from Arcturus in the past 4 weeks. And this strain is just getting going.

It also looks like Arcturus is going to increase the incidence of "long COVID" conditions and disabilities among those it doesn't kill. "An estimated one in 10 infections results in post-COVID-19 conditions, suggesting hundreds of millions of people will need longer-term care," says the WHO.

And they remind us, this is not the end of it. "And, as the emergence of the new XBB.1.16 [Arcturus] variant illustrates, the

most susceptible to this and previous iterations of COVID are some of the least "valuable" members of society in capitalist terms. We are either no longer "productive" (i.e. retired) or play a limited role in production. And there is a mindset, deeply ingrained in those oligarchs who own and run our system, that demand that anything that is not "valuable" should be eliminated.

As I have previously argued, this means a return of ideology of eugenics.

And it is accompanied by sometimes ludicrous gas-lighting. For example, this TorStar op/ed piece actually argues that we are losing nurses to burnout in Ontario because they had to wear masks all the time. Not a 3-year wage freeze. Not

unwell."

So, don't go to the hospital if you're sick, I guess.

Or consider this gem, from the CEO of Windsor's Bluewater Health Network: "We recognize that COVID-19 is here to stay ... We have to plan to gradually and safely go back to normal" These 2 statements are incompatible, like saying the peg is square but we are going back to round holes. This isn't science, it isn't even logical. It is the magical thinking that eugenics is based on.

When you see these articles rationalizing dropping mask requirements in hospitals you might notice they always quote administrators or executives. Never nurses, never any other frontline hospital workers.

ACAB Ontario edition

Warning: disturbing details.

A disgraced OPP officer, convicted of multiple crimes since 2018 has been enjoying getting full pay.

In fact, Constable Jason Redmond has been suspended with pay since 2015 when he was charged with drug trafficking. It took 3 years for the case to come to trial; he was convicted but given no jail time and a year's probation, with full pay.

In October 2021, Redmond was arrested and charged with sexual assault. In 2018 he raped an unconscious woman and filmed himself doing it on his phone. He showed it to his victim, to "teach her a lesson" and shared it widely with his friends because "he thought it was funny."

He remained on full pay. In fact, he was paid so much in 2021 that he made it to Ontario's "Sunshine

list" of public employees receiving more than \$100,000. Somehow this drug dealing rapist took home \$121,047.90 that year.

Five years after the assault Redmond has been found guilty. He awaits sentencing. That may have to wait a while because Redmond is facing other charges. According to OPP sources he is "facing 17 additional serious criminal charges including assault, aggravated assault, assault with a weapon and others in connection with multiple victims."

All while getting full pay. The OPP says there is nothing they can do. They say they have been trying to fire him since 2015.

It doesn't seem they have been trying very hard. If anyone can name another worker, whose boss has been trying to fire him for almost 9 years, all the while paying him what must be nearing \$1 million taxpayers' money, we want to hear about it.

Poilievre has a problem with women

The recent visit of President Joe Biden to Ottawa was designed to generate some happy photo-ops for his

beleaguered friend, Justin Trudeau.

As annoying as most of the political theatre was, one couldn't help enjoying the spectacle of Biden repeatedly owning Tory leader Pierre Poilievre and his misogynist caucus.

In the official reception line, when Poilievre introduced himself as "leader of the loyal opposition", Biden openly laughed and repeated: "Loyal." Then in his speech when he

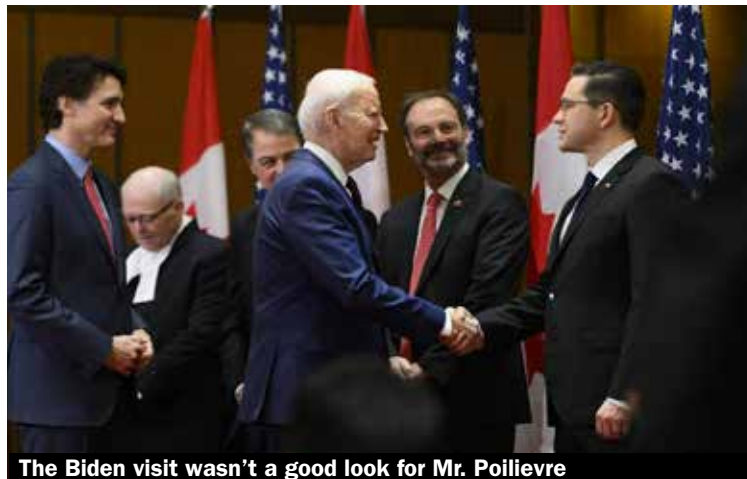
noted that half of Trudeau's cabinet were women, a large portion of the Tory caucus refused to stand or applaud. Biden again laughed at them

in parliament to put more women MPs around him in the front row.

It all points to the CPC's women problem. Only 22 of 119 Tory MPs are women, for 18.5% - the worst record of any party.

Not only do the Tories have trouble attracting women as electable candidates, women voters don't seem to like Poilievre either. Recent polls show that more than half of women voters actively dislike the Tory leader.

It seems that women do not respond to his social media rage farming tactics. Or maybe it has something to do with his decision to deliberately court the far-right on-line incel crowd.



The Biden visit wasn't a good look for Mr. Poilievre

and called them out.

First Poilievre tried to shrug off the whole thing. But a few days later he reorganized the seat assignments

Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders show up for climate and Indigenous sovereignty

by: Chris Wiercinski

On April 5, RBC held its annual shareholders' general meeting in Saskatoon. Maybe they chose Saskatoon to avoid protests from Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders and their allies, but they found they couldn't hide.

A strong delegation, including Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, elders and youth, along with Indigenous representatives from other nations where RBC invests in oil and gas projects around the world, arrived in Saskatoon. They were met with a heavy police presence, including at least one sniper on an adjacent building.

The Land Defenders came, credentials in hand, to address the shareholders. They were there to remind everyone that RBC was the bank most heavily invested in fossil fuels. They were there to state their opposition to pipelines being built through their unceded territory, and the violent police state tactics that the RCMP, the BC government and RBC were all involved in.

Despite having credentials, the delegation was not allowed into the main meeting room with shareholders. They detoured into a side room, and not allowed to present the briefs they had prepared. RBC CEO Dave McKay kept interrupting them with platitudes about diversifying and divesting from fossil fuels, and concerns about climate change.

Their claims are dubious. RBC's investment in fossil fuel has risen from \$200 billion to \$250 billion to include CGL gas pipeline project.

As usual, RBC says they have consulted with Wet'suwet'en representatives.

Again this is nonsense. The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs had to sue the Liberal government, and win, to gain status at pipeline consultations, and then opposed the project.

Outside the meeting about 150 local supporters gathered to show support. Hereditary Chief Na'Moks of the Wet'suwet'en Beaver Clan reported to the crowd about the disrespect being shown to the delegation inside. He and Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, of the BC council of chiefs (UBCIC) condemned RBC's contempt for the Land Defenders, and mourned the destruction of pristine lands and rivers caused by pipeline construction.

Roishetta Ozane, a Black woman who had come from Louisiana to voice local opposition to RBC's Gulf South project, told supporters

she had never been treated with such disrespect, and rightly accused RBC of "setting the standard" for environmental racism.

RBC's efforts to avoid exposure backfired. Local, national and international media coverage focused on Indigenous-led opposition, and aired RBC's dirty laundry of deep financial involvement in dirty fossil fuel projects. Even among shareholders discontent is rising. A third of them supported a resolution that the bank must obtain free, prior informed consent before starting projects in Indigenous territory. And about 25% said RBC's climate plan was inadequate.

Dave McKay and his execs will have a harder time pushing their greenwashing after this.

From Wet'suwet'en to Saskatchewan

Representatives of Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan were in attendance in Saskatoon to show support, but also to speak with delegates about the Wet'suwet'en struggle to defend their land and water.

The recently passed "Saskatchewan First" bill signals that the far-right Saskatchewan Party government of Scott Moe is in a hurry to sell of mineral rights in the north, threatening Indigenous communities.

The Onion Lake Cree Nation is already taking the government to court over the regressive act, arguing Indigenous communities were never consulted.

Chief Bobby Cameron, of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, addressed the Saskatoon support rally. He explained that the province is using a 1930 law to assert control over all mineral rights. At that time, racist laws forbade Indigenous people from meeting, organizing, holding festivals or even hiring lawyers to represent their interests. He argued that no construction could begin without fully informed consultations and consent from communities directly affected.

He charged that the province had never consulted with Indigenous communities, never respected their knowledge of the land, and never shared to benefits of development. Those days must end.

RBC, backed by provincial and federal governments, is culpable of widespread environmental destruction. And they are financing, directly and indirectly, attacks on Indigenous sovereignty and land rights. The two things are connected. To oppose their greed for profit, Indigenous land defenders and climate activists must stay united.



Wet'suwet'en Chiefs protest RBC in Saskatoon

Indigenous leaders furious at cover-up of toxic tar sands tailings leak

by: Brian Champ

Kept in the dark about toxic tar sands "tailings" leaking from the Imperial Oil Kearl facility for 9 months, northern Alberta First Nations lambasted the Alberta energy regulator at a hearing of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on April 17th:

"All trust with the Alberta government has been broken ... they cannot be trusted to oversee this mess" said Chief Allan Adam of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

Kearl's "tailings" containment structures failed in May, 2022 but the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) only went public this February and the company never informed the nearby First Nations of the leak.

The Committee heard how AER reflects "the interests of the regulated parties rather than the public interest."

This "crisis shows these failures on multiple fronts and we fear that Kearl is just the tip of the iceberg. We are bracing for even more catastrophic events unless there are real reforms," said Mikisew Cree First Nation Chief Billie-Joe Tuccaro.

Daniel Stuckless, director of the Fort McKay Métis Nation was more direct: "scrap it and build it back."

Tar sands extraction is wholly a



Canadian settler colonial project, first developed to use the bitumen as a road paving material in the mid-20th Century and only later as a source of fossil fuel energy. They were developed on Treaty 8 lands without regard to the local Indigenous populations, who assert their treaty rights to use their traditional lands.

However, tar sands oil projects were undertaken with no regard to these rights. Production expanded five-fold from under 100,000 barrels per day in the early 1970s to the mid-1990s: then it exploded, surpassing a million barrels per day by 2005, inexorably rising to its current level of over 3 million barrels per day.

The expansion of tar sands oil production has had a devastating environmental impact on the First Nations in the area and farther north to the Arctic Circle along the route of the Athabasca River. The incidences of rare cancers and other illnesses is higher here than in communities in the southern parts of the province. The removal of boreal forest to access the bitumen has destroyed ecosystems that Indigenous people in the area have stewarded and relied on since time immemorial.

As the scale of production has risen, so too has the scale of the toxic tailings which are visible from space. In 2020 these toxic "ponds" encompassed an area of about 120

square kilometers. The industry admits that containment structures cannot prevent seepage to the local environment, and their regular failure demonstrates the lack of a permanent solution to the problems of waste from this industry. Instead the industry and regulators ask First Nations and the public to trust them to contain the risks.

It is reminiscent of the nuclear industry saying don't worry about radioactive waste because the technological fix will eventually be found. Meanwhile, the dangerous waste piles up and threatens communities in its shadow.

Impact benefit agreements that First Nations have signed, in an attempt to limit the risks of tar sands development, and for jobs and the funding of local services for their people have made band council leaders reticent to speak out. This is beginning to change with recent failures of industry and the regulator to even inform, much less contain the toxic mess.

ACFN Chief Adam also pointed the finger at the federal government for "the lack of enforcement, lack of funding, lack of political will" and called for federal government intervention.

But the AER and the provincial and federal governments bend over backwards for the tar sands industry, despite the crocodile tears of Imperial Oil CEO, Brad Corson.

The truth is there is no safe

way to continue expanding tar sands production, both because it destroys the local ecosystems that Indigenous peoples have stewarded for millennia and because it will release planet killing quantities of carbon if allowed to continue.

Tar sands workers are trapped in jobs that perpetuate this destruction, in conditions dangerous to their health, and susceptible to replacement by automation. Many jobs in this industry are relatively high paying, but they are not immune from the impact of inflation and union busting: recently, 400 kitchen, housekeeping and janitorial workers represented by UFCW Local 401 at Wapasu Creek Lodge, a work camp for Kearl tar sands workers, were issued pink slips after voting down a \$7 per hour decrease in pay from the camp operator Civeo last November. Many of these workers are members of the local First Nations.

Building solidarity between Indigenous fights for sovereignty over their treaty lands, which includes their traditional rights to hunt, fish and trap, and the fights of workers for better wages and working conditions is crucial to winning a vision for a just transition to a world where working and living can be brought into alignment with the environment that humans and all living beings rely on to survive.

Financial markets: there's trouble ahead, the rich should pay the bill

The second and third largest banking collapses in US history last month were just the tip of the iceberg, writes Rob Hoveman

When the CEO of a multibillion dollar bank personally rings round clients to tell them their money's safe, it's a safe bet that the opposite is true.

Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) was valued at £35 billion, with assets worth more than £200 billion, a year ago. By 9 March, SVB boss Greg Becker was reduced to frantic phone calls. By the following day, the bank was worthless. It was the second biggest banking collapse in US history, surpassed only by Washington Mutual during the financial crash of 2007-08.

The Signature Bank failed soon after in the third largest collapse. Panic spread to Europe as Swiss bank Credit Suisse was taken over by rival UBS to stave off collapse. Only this week, it revealed that it hemorrhaged over £55 billion in the first three months running up to the banking run.

What do these banking collapses say about the state of global capitalism? Just how vulnerable is it now to a serious economic crisis? And will we see further banking collapses?

To get some sort of handle on these questions, we have to delve deeper than what's going on in the financial markets. We have to enter, as Marx put it, "the hidden abode of production" and look at how the capitalist system works to help us understand the specifics of the current crisis.

Capitalism is characterised by two fundamental divisions or contradictions. The first is between capital and labour. Capitalists own and/or control what Karl Marx called the "means of production". They are the tools and raw materials that go into creating something, whether it's Amazon warehouses, oil rigs and drilling equipment or call centres and telephones.

The working class are obliged to sell their "labour power", their ability to work, in order to make a living. If you read a mainstream economics textbook, you'll be told that profits are the "reward" capitalists get for taking risks and making smart investment decisions. In reality, as we saw during the pandemic and strike wave, it's the labour of working class people that produces profit and keeps the system going.

Workers don't get the full value of what they create back in wages, a gap Marx referred to as "surplus value". This is the basis for profits, which capitalists get their hands on through this process

of accumulation for accumulation sake". It means firms have to plough back the profits they make into more efficient methods of production to get or stay ahead of their competitors. Raising the productivity of labour, making more things, more cheaply than their rivals, is one of the central ways capitalists try to do it.

This makes capitalism much more dynamic compared to previous modes of production such as feudalism. But it is also what plunges the system back into perennial crises. That's because the very process of driving up productivity by investing more and more on technology forces down the overall rate of profit.

investments into new technology, it can help to undercut competitors while others try to catch up. But it will force up the ratio of dead labour to living labour. And, because only living labour creates new value, it has a negative impact on the overall rate of profit. It means there is a tendency for the rate of profit to fall under capitalism. And this crisis of profitability is the underlying cause of the financial crisis of 2007-08 and capitalism's sluggishness since.

The role of the financial sector The financial sector is vital for the dynamism of the system. Capitalists don't just rely on their own profits to plough back as investments. Imagine you're a capitalist who needs to expand production but doesn't have the money readily available to advance the investment. It means you have to borrow it. This could be from another capitalist with money to lend, but banks and financial institutions behave as intermediaries. Firms and people with money they don't need to use immediately deposit it, while others who need money can take out loans.

Finance allows the channeling of money into productive investment, but the growing chains of credit and debt leaves the system open to crisis. As Marx wrote, "Banking and credit become the most potent means of driving capitalist production beyond its own limits, and one of the most effective vehicles of crises and swindle."

Capitalism creates huge chains of credit and debt across the world economy as banks and other institutions borrow and lend. These transactions are predicated on continued capital accumulation and profit maximisation. But there is no guarantee that profits will be realised in another sector, or that debts won't be recalled due to crises elsewhere in the system.

As Marx writes, "The chain of

payment obligations at specific dates is broken in a hundred places, and this is still further intensified by an accompanying breakdown of the credit system. All this therefore leads to violent and acute crises, sudden forcible devaluations, an actual stagnation and disruption in the reproduction process, and hence to an actual decline in reproduction."

What triggered the bank runs?

At least three of the US banks that collapsed in March were known as "crypto-friendly". Some might think it was simply a consequence of the deflation of the cryptocurrency bubble that began in May of last year. The best-known cryptocurrency Bitcoin, for example, is now trading at just over a third of its peak value of \$65,000 in 2021.

However, the four US banks and Credit Suisse in Europe were not brought down by the deflation of the crypto bubble. The reason for their demise were the much higher interest rates in recent months—which were also responsible for pricking the crypto bubble.

Inflation has risen across many advanced capitalist economies to levels last experienced in the 1970s and early 1980s. The principal weapon to combat inflation being used by central banks in general, and the US Federal Reserve, in particular, is raising interest rates.

SVB had tied up much of its investments in three to five year "bonds". These are basically IOUs issued by the government to fund its debt, which it pays interest on until they're repaid in three to five years' time. They had been paying more than the interest rates on short-term government bonds, when rates set by the Federal Reserve were very low. To calm the markets over the Credit Suisse collapse, rapidly arranging its takeover by UBS who received government guarantees over its bad debts.



Customers line up to take their money out of Silicon Bank

of "exploitation". But bosses don't exploit workers simply to fund their appetite for vulgar superyachts.

The second division is within the capitalist class, a band of warring brothers who constantly try to gain an advantage over one another. Competition drives forward capitalism and has led to a system of "production for production's sake,

Capitalist production brings "living labour" and "dead labour" together. The first is workers' labour, the second is the labour that went into the raw materials and machinery used. It's "living labour" that adds new value to the final product while "dead labour" only passes on existing value.

When capitalists plough

These investments should have been safe as houses. But once the Fed raised short term rates, the value of SVB's bonds plummeted as no-one would buy them rather than short term bonds now that the longer-term ones were paying lower interest rates than short term ones. This meant that, if SVB sold their bonds to meet the withdrawal of deposits, it would produce huge losses for the bank. And that's if it could sell them at all—as suddenly the market for longer term bonds had become extremely illiquid. In other words, no-one actually wanted to buy them.

US president Joe Biden and treasury secretary Janet Yellen rushed to confirm that the banking system was basically sound. Most importantly, they said all depositors would be guaranteed their money back if they wanted it, even those exceeding the \$250,000 legally guaranteed by the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. And the Fed also made billions of dollars available to other banks experiencing difficulties.

Christine Lagarde, head of the European Central Bank, made similar reassuring noises across the Atlantic. The Swiss authorities tried to calm the markets over the Credit Suisse collapse, rapidly arranging its takeover by UBS who received government guarantees over its bad debts.

Such state support and state reassurances seem to have restored some calm in the financial markets for now. But the spate of bank collapses is the fragile tip of an iceberg in increasingly warm waters. JP Morgan chief executive Jamie Dimon warned of a hurricane heading for the US and other economies because of rising interest rates as long ago as last June. In a recent letter to JP Morgan shareholders, he writes the current crisis is not over yet “and even when it is behind us, there will be repercussions from it for years to come.”

Globalisation, low profits and crisis

To understand why Dimon might be right, we need to look back over the last 40 years of capitalist globalisation and the relatively weak growth. The world financial system has seen very considerable deregulation in the same period.

There have been two significant consequences of the combination of globalisation and low rates of profit in the productive sector. The first is the large growth in government, corporate and personal debt worldwide, all of which are now much higher proportionately than in the last great bout of inflation in the 1970s and early 1980s. The second is the explosion of increasingly complex and arcane forms of financial speculation.

After the last big financial crisis and bank bailouts in 2007-08, governments turned to austerity. Central banks tried to stimulate economic growth. They did this through ultra-low interest rates and “Quantitative Easing”, essentially the printing of vast amounts of money.

Monetarists, a free market school of economics, predicted this combination would cause commodity price inflation—the price of goods in shops. They were wrong. But it did produce asset price inflation—the value of property and stocks and shares. The rich became much richer as a result whilst the rest of us suffered austerity.

However—again contrary to right

wing ideology—making the rich much richer produced only anaemic growth in the real economy. The major economies in fact seemed headed back toward recession as the Covid lockdowns struck. The lockdown of the major economies saw a further big boost to money printing, making the rich even richer. But this time there was also increased government spending to stop an even greater and longer lasting collapse in production.

The problem of inflation

When lockdown eased off, four factors kicked in to mess up the production of goods and precipitate inflation. Firstly, there was the dislocation produced by the pandemic with shipping in the wrong place and other supply chain problems. On top of that, there was and indeed still is the relative “tightness” of the labour market—a lack of workers because of illness and the Great Resignation and Retirement.

Secondly, there was the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the grinding proxy war between the US and Russia. This had multiple inflationary impacts. Russia and Ukraine accounted for some 30 percent of grain traded in world markets and these supplies were disrupted.

The supply of Russian gas, which

as a result of “exceptional” climate conditions.

Finally, years of low investment in the productive sector made production much more vulnerable to the shocks caused by pandemic, war and climate crisis. There has been a lot of hype about the growing flexibility in production. In reality, it has proved much less flexible than anticipated in the face of significant shifts in demand—changes in consumption spending after Covid and lockdown.

Higher interest rates, led by the Fed, can be lethal in this context. So much debt has been incurred and so much investment has been made on the basis of the very low interest rates since 2009. Higher interest rates threaten the very possibility of those debts being paid off.

The rate rises are intended to combat inflation. It's hoped they'll squeeze bosses who set prices and wages as well as workers who have mortgages and other debts. But higher interest rates are a particularly ridiculous way of addressing an inflationary crisis rooted in supply chain shocks, not “too much money”.

The problem of combating inflation without a financial collapse

Governments and central banks are walking a tightrope between

even lower if they were forced into a mass fire sale.

And, perhaps more significantly, there has been a huge withdrawal of deposits from regional banks. Most recently estimated at \$600 billion, it severely impairs their lending ability. There are also serious concerns about the financial health of the much less regulated “non-bank” financial intermediaries. They now account for some 50 percent of total global financial assets.

The think tank Onward estimated that some 20 percent of companies in Britain are “zombies” last year. And, with tighter bank lending and higher interest rates, their number is likely to have grown even higher and many more will be on the verge of bankruptcy.

Real estate is also in trouble. Blackstone is a “non-bank intermediary” which manages a trillion dollars of investments. It recently tried to interest rich investors in its Real Estate Investment Trust, claiming that property prices will go up as investment in new buildings was bound to decline with the credit squeeze.

But, instead of investing, investors sought to withdraw some \$5 billion. Commercial real estate is even more vulnerable with a broad consensus

Japanese central bank may well continue his predecessor's ultra-low interest regime. Unlike other advanced economies, Japan seems stuck with battling deflation rather than inflation. But, the point remains, that the US remains heavily dependent on maintaining the appetite of foreign investors for its bonds.

Add to all of that the worry that a deadlock in Congress will mean it doesn't agree on the federal budget, meaning the government will technically run out of money. The chances of this have increased as a result of the unprecedented indictment of Donald Trump by a Democrat district attorney, which has polarised congressional politics even more.

The World Bank says, “The global economy has experienced four waves of debt accumulation over the last fifty years. The first three ended with financial crises in many emerging and developing economies. During the current wave which started in 2010 the increase in debt in these economies has already been larger, faster and more broad-based than in the previous three waves.”

They are just 2.2 percent growth to the end of the decade, which is one third less than the first decade of this millennium. But that is already likely to be far too optimistic.

The World Bank's gloom is now echoed by the latest projections from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They are worried about inflation remaining stubbornly high and the increasing “deglobalisation” of the world through growing trade barriers and geopolitical tensions between the US and China.

Can we tame the monstrous power of the financial markets?

Financial markets can seem to exercise a monstrous power. They appear to have the power to screw us when they don't like the government that we elect. So much for democracy! They also hold us to ransom when things go badly wrong for them with demands for bailouts.

Look at what happened to Tories Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng, when they challenged the economic orthodoxy prevailing in the financial markets from a right wing perspective. They would have hit a Jeremy Corbyn Labour government even harder had he been elected.

However, if the state took control of the banks and other financial intermediaries, then the financial markets could no longer hold us to ransom.

Ultimately the taming of the financial markets means no half measures. If we are to stop these financial and economic crises, we need to break with capitalism and its logic of competitive accumulation and the waste and chaos of the market. Instead, we need a socialist society run based on workers' control. It would mean an economy that's democratically-planned to meet social needs of the many, not the profits of the few.

In other words, we need a socialist revolution where working class people take power through our democratic bodies.

Of course, that's not around the corner, but we've seen the resurgence of working class power and self-activity in the last year. There's trouble ahead—and they're asking us to pay the bill. Our job is to make sure they don't succeed by ensuring the wave of strikes breaks through.

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the European Union had become particularly dependent on, was reduced. Western states made strategic decisions to switch sources to liquid gas from the US. Russia was also a significant oil producer and exporter, and oil prices shot up as a consequence of the war. And there was also disruption to the supply of rare earth elements from Ukraine, which are vital in the production of semiconductors.

Thirdly, the climate crisis has had a big impact on the production of foodstuffs. Grain prices had already seen a sharp spike before Covid lockdown after Canadian grain production was hit by severe drought. Other foodstuffs have suffered since

combating inflation and precipitating a financial crisis even worse than 2008. The Fed is still raising interest rates and seeking to impose higher capital requirements on banks as reserves against loss of confidence. Interbank interest rates—the rates banks now charge each other for their lending to one another—are now much higher than they were before the SVB collapse.

There are now multiple points of vulnerability piling up in the system. US regional banks currently have some \$620 billion of losses on their books if they were forced to sell bonds at current prices. Although this is just a notional scale of vulnerability as bond prices would fall

that offices are particularly exposed. Estimates suggest that the market is some 21 percent down from its peak. Bloomberg reports that a \$1.5 trillion wall of debt is looming for US commercial properties, due for repayment by the end of 2025.

Another area of vulnerability is US government bonds held by foreign investors. Surprisingly, perhaps, Japanese investors now hold more bonds in value than the Chinese. This is a product of the ultra-low interest rates in Japan over the last decade and a half.

If this were now reversed, US politicians fear that the Japanese appetite for US bonds will dry up. It seems that the new governor of the

Alberta election: danger ahead

by: **John Bell**

Danielle Smith and her far-right UCP gang have declared their true colours. They want to convert Alberta into a semi-autonomous fiefdom, modeled after the most far-right state governments in the US: Florida and South Dakota.

At a recent campaign stop, Smith declared: “I look at the Americans. I look at Ron DeSantis in Florida and Kristi Noem in South Dakota. They’ve been able to create little bastions of freedom, and we can create a little bastion of freedom in Alberta as well.”

What would this “bastion of freedom” look like?

Freedom?

DeSantis is famous for: banning books, opposing public health measures during the pandemic, basing policy on conspiracy theories, leading an anti-gay crusade that has brought him into a very public battle with the Disney corporation, restricting abortion, criminalizing trans people, and championing gun ownership.

He, like other Republican politicians, has sought to roll back civil rights for Blacks by stealth. The gerrymandering of electoral districts and restrictions on registering Florida’s Black voters have reduced Black representation at the state and federal level.

As for climate change, DeSantis is not a denier per se, because he has demanded piles of federal money for projects to mitigate dangers like rising sea levels and storm surges; but at the same time opposes measures to limit carbon emissions or promote sustainable energy.

Kristi Noem, South Dakota’s governor, is less known but is even more toxic than DeSantis. A career politician, she has been an anti-abortion, anti-gay crusader from the start. SD has the most restrictive abortion laws in the

US, and has recently outlawed gender-affirming surgeries for trans people. She is a major proponent of fossil fuels and pipelines, and has voted against environmental safeguards and regulations throughout her career. Small wonder SD has become a magnet for neo-Nazi groups and militias.



SD set itself up as a tax haven for the oligarchy. The super-rich can create a “trust”, register it in SD, and stash their money safe from any income or inheritance taxes.

If these are “bastions of freedom”, it is freedom for white-supremacists, bigots and corporate plunderers.

UCP

Alberta conservatives have been courting the far-right and stoking toxic resentment toward the federal government for decades. They did so with the encouragement and collusion of

the fossil fuel industry. This was the base of Stephen Harper’s power. But with the creation of the UCP and the ascent of Smith to premier, the far-right rhetoric has been turned up to 11. Even creepy Jason Kenney denounced them as “extremist”.

They were aided by resentment and skepti-

passing dubious laws to assert provincial jurisdiction over previously federally-mandated matters such as human rights and Indigenous reconciliation, and threatening to scrap the RCMP and replace them with a force loyal to Alberta. All the while she demands that federal transfers to Alberta should increase.

Their reactionary social credentials are a given, so look for Smith and her UCP candidates to keep their lips sealed to avoid any stupid gaffes, and concentrate on their message of “we’ll put money in your pocket”. To that end their first major policy announcement of the official campaign was a major tax cut across the board. This they say will give \$750 to \$1,200 to taxpayers earning less than \$60,000. It is easy to cut taxes when you are hell-bent on dismantling the social programs they fund. They won’t be talking about that part.

As for Rachel Notley’s ANDP, instead of running strongly counter to the UCP’s far-right agenda, they have been trying to prove just how right-wing they too can be. As the press has noted, their platform is a cut-and-paste of policies of past Conservative governments, particularly Peter Lougheed. They announced that their economic policy will be guided by Todd Hirsh, chief economist of ATB Financial, and lecturer at University of Calgary. His position is that Alberta should be using its oil revenue to subsidize other corporations, to diversify the economy. But Notley steadfastly promises to support O&G, and wrangle more subsidies out of Ottawa.

Promises to restore social services privatized by the UCP in recent years are vague and secondary.

The strategy, to poach conservative voters unhappy with UCP extremism is shaky at best. The UCP’s crass vote buying, in the midst of an affordability crisis, may tip the scales in the handful of suburban swing ridings that will determine the outcome of the May 29th election.

...continued from page 8

Since then al-Burhan and Hemeti have each become wary that the other might be out to do them over. To stay on top, al-Burhan has repeatedly spoken of integrating the 100,000-strong RSF into his own forces. The RSF wanted to delay it for ten years, but the army said it should happen in two years.

Hemeti has tried to pose as a born-again democrat who, on reflection, believes the coup was a mistake and is now sincere about implementing civilian rule. Nobody should trust either of these thugs who have jointly carried out the repression of demonstrations and strikes throughout the last year and a half.

The RSF has its origins in the notorious Janjaweed militia that brutally repressed rebels in Darfur, leaving hundreds of thousands of people dead.

One of the positive aspects of the resistance committees is that they’ve always

insisted on “no to negotiations, no to partnerships and no to legitimising the coup plotters”. But this will now be tested.

It was worrying one of the sources used



by the resistance committees tweeted to “stress that all citizens should resort to the nearest safe shelters if necessary”. “The path to stability is to achieve the demands of

the revolution by overthrowing the coup junta, unifying the armies, and establishing a single professional national army capable of protecting the land,” it said.

Certainly, the coup forces have to go. But to push for a “unified” or “professional” army is to feed the illusion

that a military group can emerge inside the state forces that will be on the people’s side.

There can be no compromises with any of the military commanders. The anti-coup forces have to become more actively militant and to pose an alternative centre of political power to al-Burhan and Hemeti. Strikes, linked to mass demonstrations, can be the way for the resistance committees to take control into their own hands.

Territorial Acknowledgement

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

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WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of “just transition” for affected workers.

Workers’ power
Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth’s resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

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

social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

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

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

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Stop the far-right campaign against trans and non-binary people!

by: **Canan Sahin**

Anti-trans hatred is one of the two pillars of far-right mobilization today, the other one still being anti-refugee hatred, which seems to have been dormant to a certain extent in the US and in Canada after a peak in 2015 and 2016, but still vibrant in the UK.

The distinguishing character of the far-right historically is their vocal, dangerous and militant racism. Now, this movement of hatred has wedded its racism to transphobia seamlessly everywhere. Just as they target the most vulnerable of migrants, refugees, they attack the most vulnerable among the LGBTQ2S+ people: transgender, non-binary, transsexual, gender non-conforming and even gender-questioning people. Sadly, gender-critical or trans-exclusionary radical feminist (TERF) choir gives the anti-gender diversity right-wing legitimacy from the left.

We are encountered with a situation of double-fencing: one around biologically reductionist binary gender norm and the other along the borders today. The putative anti-trans mobilization of the far-right seems to have been concentrated on trying to block Drag Story times in public libraries and some other venues. In that very community event where children of various genders listen to a story from a Drag Queen, whose visible transgression of biologically reductionist sex-gender congruity potentially helps children to open their horizon about possibilities about human gender variance, the far-right perceives a threat to the rigid structures of gender binary and repackages this fear under the guise of child-protection.

They are right in sensing a threat to biological essentialism because for almost a century, trans and gender non-conforming people have been fighting for recognition, affirmation and transition without being pathologized medically, stigmatized socially and discriminated politically. All the gains that have been made in terms of human-rights clauses (Bill C-16 in Canada), gender-affirming medical and psychological care during childhood and adolescence (some states in the USA), gender-recognition based on self-declaration of identity rather than medical certification (Gender Recognition Act in the UK) have been won after decades of fierce fight by trans people.

Reproductive justice and trans rights

Given that restriction on abortion rights in the US happened in the same atmosphere a year ago, it is safe to say that the priority of the far-right agenda is geared towards controlling gender expression, sexual orientation and reproductive rights globally. The same way pro-life movement intends to block the safe paths available for women who choose not to reproduce, anti-trans hatred intends to block the safe paths available to children and adults of gender-variance to transition and public expression.

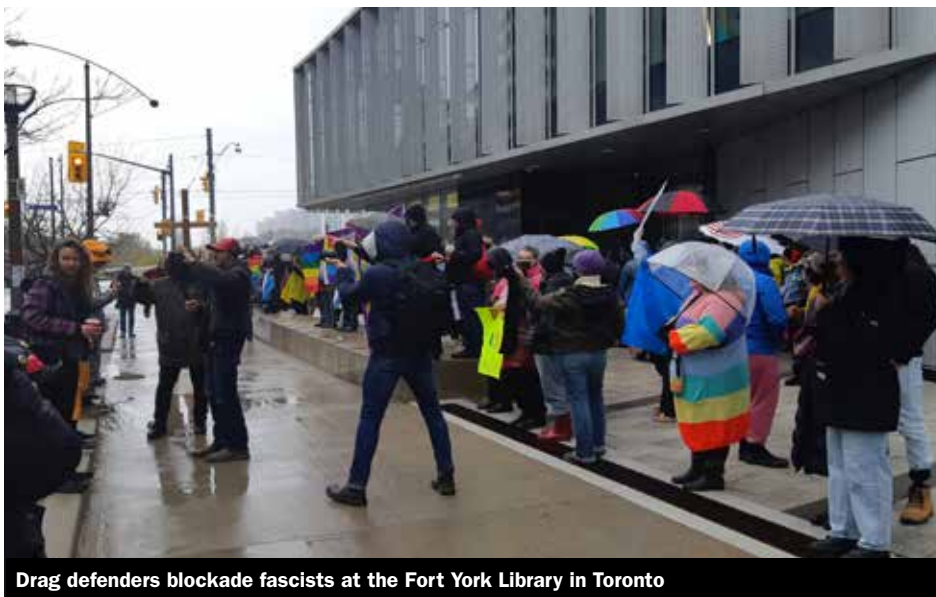
In its core, they aim to surveil human bodies, secure binary cis-gender norms and heterosexual family institutions. The outrage of the far-right is facilitated and given a green-light by the conservative right-wing politicians, coercive state institutions like the police and right-wing media sensationalism.

In the US, this year alone, 533 anti-trans bills have been introduced across 49 states by the Republicans. Sadly, 54 of them have passed so far with alarming consequences for trans children, their families, trans-affirming educational consultants and mental and medical healthcare practitioners. Some of the legislation bans trans and non-binary kids from joining sports teams; some lock them out of the bathrooms; some introduce

punitive measures for the parents seeking gender-affirmative care; some oblige school and community members to out the children they are supporting; some ban healthcare providers from prescribing puberty blockers and hormones to trans adolescents; some even introduce penalties for prosecutors who refuse to take legal action in compliance with the new legislations.

This is a full-fledged legal-political attack on trans children and their parents by the

rhetoric on so-called evolutionary biology and psychology; and we have witnessed a resurrection of religious bigotry whose naturalization discourse of inequalities is mainly borrowed from a transcendental order of things that should not be disturbed. With its secular and ascetical wings, the far-right today seeks to develop a response to the crisis of insecurity in society so that they can manufacture a coherent interpretation of the crisis for the masses.



Drag defenders blockade fascists at the Fort York Library in Toronto

Republicans in preparation for their 2024 election campaign. While the state assemblies carry out the legal-scriptural attack, the far-right carries out the same function by mobilizing hatred physically on the streets. Without beating the latter with a united front by mobilizing the workers' unions, community activists and the youth, we cannot defeat the former.

Instances of anti-hatred mobilizations in so-called Canada in Peterborough, Toronto and Ottawa against far-right show us how our ranks can indeed expose the far-right agenda, inspire solidarity at a greater scale and debunk the hypocritical arguments of the far-right about child-protection.

One critical question for us to answer is the timing of these attacks. Why are we witnessing "a war on trans people" now?

Today, global capitalism is grappling with a multitude of crises: cost-of-living crisis which manifests itself with high inflation rates globally, climate crisis which has taken the earth to the brink of collapse, and a political crisis which has destabilized the centrist status-quo, creating far-right tendencies on one hand and triggering massive movements of workers and youth on the other. Whenever capitalism is faced with a deep and systemic crisis, there are two major forces in place.

One tends to be the fascistic forces who aim to obscure the real class antagonism at the heart of capitalism by creating false hostilities through scapegoating ethnic minorities, marginalized communities and gender-variant people, and the other one is the tendency of working class politics, which serves to demystify the roots of oppression and expose the class nature of this exploitative system.

The former tendency responds to the crisis by attempting to tighten territorial borders, redefine so-called nations and draw contours around binary gender-roles. Their motivations have always been reactionary and conservative, full of fear for change and full of hatred for those who threaten the class-harmony, heterosexual family and national integrity.

We have seen more secular versions of the far-right pathetically trying to base their cissexist, transmisogynist and colonialist

Using Trotsky's words, fascism is in fact a plebian (commoner in ancient Rome – resonating today with the "ordinary" masses the far-right frequently refers to) movement of the masses endorsed by big capital to restore order.

In the collaboration between the far-right and the Republicans today in the US, we can sense a glimpse of this tacit alliance. As the crisis of capitalism deepens, which is the most highly likelihood, we will witness further polarization. Therefore, it is the task of the revolutionaries everywhere to mobilize workers, students, and all the community activists in defense of the trans rights. Those who think it is the task of the police to protect the Drag Queens, or it is the task of the elected officials to prevent anti-trans bills are at great fault. Without mass mobilization of the workers and the oppressed, it is not possible to defeat the far-right, crush their legitimacy, weaken their ranks, confuse their supporters and prevent their growth.

Another critical question that concerns those who seek to understand the centuries-old gender prison concerns the root of the oppression on transgender people. Does anti-trans hatred emanate from the cis-heterosexist system? Yes. It does. Then, where does the cis-heterosexist system come from? How is it related with the class character of capitalism?

The premise of Marxist theory is that ideas that prevail in society do not come from thin air. Human consciousness is embedded in the social and material context that provides a constant flux of input towards and feedback into the ways we make sense of ourselves, others and our conditions. When matrimonial or matrifocal societies transformed into class societies based on tilting the land using tools and animals like oxen, not only the division of labour changed, but also it acquired a gendered dimension. Reproductive capacities of cis-women came to be perceived as disruptive when it came to working the land and beneficial when it came to meeting the needs of those who controlled the surplus since this capacity can be used to reproduce the prospective generations of labor force.

Historical defeat of cis-women went

hand in hand with the reinforcement of the biologically essentialist notions of womanhood and manhood, whose union must be secured in a wedlock both to reproduce the division of labor at publicly and domestically and produce the next generations of labourers. This consciousness, in this case, consciousness of the ruling class cis-men, permeated the masses, creating gender norms through both overtly coercive mechanisms and pervasive theological or mythic ideologies.

What colonialists such as the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the British did in the Americas, Africa and the East Asia was subjecting gender-variant and non-heterosexual existences and orientations to genocide. Two-spirited people in so-called Canada came to embody the non-conforming and rebellious features of Indigenous peoples, giving further legitimacy to violent colonial practices.

Capitalism and reproduction

Modern capitalism, on the other hand, was oriented by a profit-motive without a clear formula to address the reproductive imperatives of capital accumulation. Early mass migration into urban areas as a result of enclosures in Britain created a workforce consisting of women, children and men, whose average life-span was almost half as long as the upper class people.

By redrafting civil codes around marriage, family and childcare, capitalism sought to solve the crisis of reproduction similar to the early class societies, albeit by generating more mature institutions. With scientific and medical developments, capitalism also created taxonomies of sexual orientations and gender expressions, pathologizing some and normalizing others with a more secular language.

When we think of set of discriminatory ideas around sexism, homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny and cissexism, on surface level, they seem to be operating in an unequal power dynamic between men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals, and cis-gender and trans people. However, each set of ideas have a source and a purpose related with the class interests, which underpins the social relations in capitalist system.

As a system based on appropriation of surplus value from labor, be it in manufacturing or service industries, the primary objective of capitalism is to secure its extended reproduction by displacing the cost of subsistence of workers out of its inventory as much as possible. For capitalism, the episodes of deep crisis – now we are in a prolonged crisis of stagnation – are also times when reproduction of the system as a whole is faced with a crisis: a crisis of care.

Privatizing healthcare by opening a vitally important sector to profit, abandoning the long-term care to the mercy of private institutions, distributing welfare crumbs only aimed at families with children, leaving people who do not have kinship support and children on their own without affordable housing, the state and capitalists make deliberate choices in service of the long-term interests of capital accumulation.

The far-right responds to the erosion of safety nets by assuming the role of a public police for our bodies. Our response, on the other hand, should be based on a desire to smash the binary gender prison since working class does not have any interests in the surveillance and policing of gender roles.

By showing a broad based and united solidarity with trans people in our schools, workplaces, unions and neighbourhoods, we can expose the far-right for what they are: "a bulk of fascists consisting of human dust".

On May 26 and 27: vote for public healthcare

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

Ontario Premier Doug Ford's privatization of hospital services poses an existential threat to medicare. The Ford government is moving full speed ahead to take thousands of surgeries and diagnostic tests out of local public hospitals and privatize them to for-profit hospitals and clinics.

But a fightback is building right across the province in defence of this key working class gain – one which was the product of mass struggles over many generations.

The Ontario Health Coalition, representing local health coalitions and 500 organizations across Ontario, has launched a community-led referendum on the question, "Do you want our public hospital services to be privatized to for-profit hospitals and clinics?" The referendum – with in-person and online voting – will take place May 26 and 27th.

The push is on to involve as broad a swathe of the population as possible to express their opposition to Ford's attacks. And momentum is building. Students have organized advance votes, and unions are also playing a key role in mobilizing people to organize the vote.

At recent union conventions including United Food & Commercial Workers, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, United Steelworkers and Canadian Union of Postal

Workers, stewards and unit chairs voted and also took ballots back into their workplaces.

Advance polls are being organized at key neighbourhood hubs in cities and towns across Ontario.

The Ford government has no mandate to sell off our public hospitals. That is why the Conservatives are trying to move at lightning speed to push this privatization through.

Before the June 2022 election, they denied they were moving to privatize hospital services, just as they denied they were opening up the Greenbelt for developers. They lied.

Ford is banking on frustration at the growing crisis in the public healthcare system – a crisis created by long-term underfunding and understaffing, and the burnout this produces – to force through the 'solution' of privatization.

Public healthcare is indeed in crisis – but this crisis was deliberately created to drive through profit-taking by Ford's corporate cronies. We can't let them get away with it. We need properly funded public healthcare for all, not one system for the rich and another one for the rest of us. This means fighting for services for the uninsured, fighting for equity and fighting for decent pay for all healthcare workers.

Ballots will be counted in the days following the referendum, and on May 31st delegates from local coalitions across the province will deliver those ballots to Queens Park. The bigger the vote, the more people will have been mobilized to push back. This is the force we will need to stop Ford.

The debate around privatization is raging, and the public pushback is shaping the terrain. While Ottawa Hospital has moved headlong down the privatization path by inviting a private surgery consortium to use the public hospital's infrastructure, an initiative at Sunnybrook and Michael Garron hospitals in Toronto shows there is an alternative that could reduce surgery backlogs entirely within the public health system. These solutions point to investing in our public healthcare system, paying the workers properly and increasing staffing to proper levels to meet patient needs and not corporate greed.

• For more info: publichospitalvote.ca



Lineups at the OHC's advance polls in Toronto

No to military rule!

Support the Resistance Committees in Sudan

by: **Charlie Kimber**

The leaders of the anti-democratic forces that staged a military coup in Sudan have fallen out—and their followers are fighting for control, guns in hand. Sudanese doctors' committees say civilian have been killed around the country, with many more military casualties.

Sudan could be torn apart by a vicious competition between the military elites. The people who have fought for revolutionary change in Sudan since the end of 2018 have to mobilise independently of both these reactionary groupings. They have to remove them all from the scene.

People in the capital, Khartoum, said they heard heavy gunfire and tank shelling on Saturday. It followed failed negotiations between the army, paramilitary and civilian groups over a power-sharing deal.

Since the coup in October 2021, Sudan has been run by a council of generals. There are two military men at the centre of the dispute. One is general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is the head of the armed forces and in effect the country's president. The other is his deputy and leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—general Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as

Hemeti.

The two generals united in the coup to crush a deal that was supposed to institute civilian rule. The military had agreed to this with a gullible, liberal wing of the movement that forced out dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

The military was never going to voluntarily hand over its control. And so—when the time

came for a civilian government to take over—the generals swept away the pretence of being good democrats and once again grabbed power.

The military, which has a long history of mass murder and torture, thought it could intimidate the population of 45 million into fearful acceptance of its rule. Instead, it met an enraged fightback

Heroic mass street movements, based on grassroots resistance committees, fought back and made it impossible for the regime fully to stabilise its rule. The military feared it might be swept away by the revolutionary forces.

So it sought a new arrangement to pacify some of the opposition and produce a government acceptable to Western imperialism. This liberal camouflage was designed to clear the way for funds and trade deals.

Both al-Burhan and Hemeti wanted to make sure the generals retained their vast wealth and excluded ordinary people from decision-making. In addition, they were determined to prevent accountability for the military's crimes. These include the massacre of at least 186 people at a protest camp on 3 June 2019.

The army and a section of the opposition led by the Forces for Freedom and Change Central Council agreed to an outline deal on 5 December last year. Once again, it claimed it would install a civilian government and organise elections within two years.

But, almost immediately, al-Burhan told troops, "Do not listen to what politicians say about military reform. No one is to interfere in the affairs of the army at all."



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