

Workers fight back page 3

From BC ports, to National Steel Car to Metro grocery — workers are taking on corporate greed



Socialist Worker

\$2 | No 655 | July/August 2023

socialist.ca

CANADA IS BURNING

While wildfires break records, Trudeau builds more pipelines



Despite the poor air quality from wildfire smoke, more than 30 actions called for the Liberals to end fossil fuel subsidies

Sub standard

In April of 2010 the single biggest human-caused environmental disaster occurred in the Gulf of Mexico: the Deepwater Horizon offshore drilling platform exploded, beginning a 4-month long gusher of crude oil from the ocean bed. A number of corporations were involved, but ultimately BP was responsible.

The explosion released over 200 million gallons of oil fouling almost 200 square kilometers of the Gulf, destroying the fishing and shrimping industries and washing up on beaches from Mexico to the tip of Florida. Years later scientist report that the site is still leaking oil, reports denied by the US government and BP.

What is crucial to know is that the Deepwater Horizon was designed to operate at depths of up to 3,000 meters, which is risky enough, but in its greed BP was exploiting oil deposits at almost twice that depth, about 3 miles beneath the ocean surface. Responsible scientists pointed out what the disaster itself proved: there is no safe way to drill for oil or operate at those depths.

Please keep all that in mind, while I change gears and talk about the OceanGate submersible incident recently in the news.

Unless you have been stuck on the ocean floor, you know all about the implosion of the sub, and the deaths of the ultra-rich passengers and OceanGate's captain, designer and corporate CEO Stockton Rush.

Reactions were polarized: the more we discovered about Rush's arrogance, his disdain for regulations and basic safety measures, the more jokes and satiric memes appeared. In response the liberal media grumbled about how mean and nasty the unwashed masses are. Why can't we just be civil: billionaire lives matter too.

As my friend, political writer Nora Loretto observed, the OceanGate offers a telling political Rorschach test. The majority, facing crises of affordability, precarious employment, environmental destruction and an obscene gap between the oligarchic ruling class and the rest of us, is hard-pressed to feel sympathy for frivolous billionaires who paid so much to die so ridiculously.

Rather than rant about the idle rich, let's zoom in on Stockton Rush. The business and entrepreneurial media loved the guy, interviews and quotes abound, so we have a pretty clear picture of his ideology and ambitions.

In a TV interview Rush said, "I'd like to be remembered as an innovator." I'd say that ship has sailed (sorry). He continued: "I think it was General McArthur who said you're remembered for the rules you break. I've broken some rules to make this [sub]. I think I've broken them with logic and good engineering behind me."

Rush insisted that too much

safety was "a waste" and that regulations were designed to stifle his "innovation". His interviews are a jumble of libertarian jargon and piratical self-confidence. He comes off as a cross between Ayn Rand and Jacques Cousteau. Unfortunately for Rush and his passengers, no amount of free market "logic" can trump the laws of physics. Deep sea scientists and submersible experts publicly pleaded with Rush to stop the

the Titanic sub went beyond exploration – he said it was his gateway into a multi-billion dollar industry that harvests oil and gas from the ocean."

Stockton Rush imagined himself as the Elon Musk of the ocean floor, and set out to huff, puff and bluff his way to the big time. Fossil fuels was his golden ticket. Isn't it funny how often, when you look beneath the surface (sorry), things come back to the oil and gas industry.



Living in a bubble. Stockton Rush tests his doomed sub

trips. When one such expert, Rob McCallum, wrote expressing a long list of concerns, Rush's lawyers threatened to sue him.

For me, the kicker was that Rush saw the Titanic trips as a dry run (sorry) for bigger and creepier things. According to The Insider corporate newsletter: "OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush's ambitions for

So to return to where we began, OceanGate boss Stockton Rush considered his real endgame to cash in on exploiting deep-sea oil and gas deposits at depths beyond what are considered safe.

In these days of climate change and promised transition to sustainable energy, who would be irresponsible enough to propose dangerous

new deep water oil wells?

In April the Trudeau government okayed new deep sea drilling projects in the Bay du Nord, off Newfoundland. Along the way they also exempted exploratory drilling from environmental regulations. One of the corporations they are working with is BP.

One last word. Scientists are warning that our oceans are in severe crisis. Mass die-offs of marine and bird species, extinction of coral reef habits and murderous deep sea trawling by factory ships take their toll. Warming oceans mean melting ice caps and glaciers, altering salinity and leading to destruction of coastal environments. They also spawn more, and more violent cyclones and hurricanes and alter weather patterns.

We desperately need to explore the oceans with the intent to understand this destruction and search for ways to heal the damage. We need safe equipment, meeting scientific standards, to allow us to study the deep oceans. What we do not need is cheap, unsafe, lowest bidder technology designed to maximize profits and intended to exploit the very resources that are the root cause of the crisis in the first place.

Everything about the destruction of the OceanGate, the career of Stockton Rush and its fossil fuel back-story is an indictment of the insanity of neo-liberal capitalism.

Indigenous genocide denial on the rise

In early June a group of people, who deny reports of unmarked graves at a former Residential School site at Kamloops BC, showed up on Indigenous land, in the middle of the night, equipped with shovels. Their aim was to dig up the grounds to prove that no children were buried there.

Luckily they were detected by people from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc nation and prevented from acting out their ghoulish plan.

In late May the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc leaders announced that ground-penetrating radar had detected more than 200 unmarked graves on the school grounds. Survivors and families have provided testimony that the number is 2,000. As well as desecrating the grave site, denialists have pursued a campaign of social media harassment targeting survivors and families.

Kimberly Murray, a lawyer, member of the Kahnstatake Mohawk Nation, and the independent special interlocutor for missing Residential School children and survivors, said that such actions were prompted by the vocal work of a "core group" of prominent right-wingers who "deny, defend or minimize the physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse" inflicted on Indigenous children in the schools.

In recent months figures like Jordan Peterson, former George W Bush speech-writer David Frum, and conservative opinion writers Terry Glavin, Jonathan Kay and Barbara Kay have been part of a concerted

campaign designed to stoke denialism surrounding the genocidal policies of the Canadian state since its founding. The Residential School system was a lynch-pin in those policies.

"Denialism is violence. Denialism is calculated. Denialism is harmful. Denialism is hate," Murray told the media.

A recently published report on the slow pace of investigation into missing children cited the top concerns of still grieving survivors and families: Access to and destruction of records, access to and protection of sites, complexity and timeline of ground searches, shortcomings of existing investigation processes, affirming Indigenous data sovereignty, challenges of responding to media and public disclosures and an increase in the violence of denialism as well as many other barriers.

We need to reaffirm our support of Indigenous nations and communities in their struggle for justice – there can be no serious "reconciliation" without it.

Moreover, we need to step up support and solidarity and support for sovereignty struggles now ongoing, like that of the Wet'suwet'en in BC, and those yet to come, like Indigenous communities in the so-called "Ring of Fire" in the James Bay basin.

And we need to recognize that, like attacks on Trans and LGBTQ+ rights, Indigenous genocide denial it a core tactic in organizing and mobilizing far-right extremists across Turtle Island.

International student workers occupy and win!

by: Perna Subramanian

Hundreds of students faced with deportation have been occupying the CBSA site on Airport road for more than 2 weeks. The constant demo has brought support from labour, faith and community organizations. And the fight has paid off. The Federal government has stayed all the deportations until investigations can be completed.

The students had fallen victim to a scam perpetrated by unscrupulous immigration agents who had sent them fraudulent admission letters. This is a far too common type of fraud used to exploit international students for financial gain.

Deportation of these students must be understood within the broader context of forced/compulsory migration, a phenomenon influenced by the dynamics of neoliberal globalization and unequal development. The threat of deportation for these students highlights several key aspects of forced migration. Firstly, it emphasizes the geographical disparities that drive individuals to migrate from less privileged regions to more developed areas, whether within their own country or across international borders. Seeking improved

opportunities and living conditions, these students ventured to Canada, a relatively advanced nation compared to their places of origin. This underscores the economic inequalities and limited prospects that propel individuals to seek a better life elsewhere.

Secondly, forced/compulsory migration disproportionately affects vulnerable populations who are unable to fulfill their basic material and subjective needs in their home countries. In this particular case, unscrupulous recruiters exploit the aspirations of these students, enticing them with false promises and ensnaring them in precarious situations where their futures are endangered. Motivated by a



desire for better education and future prospects, these students fall prey to individuals who exploit their vulnerability for personal gain. Threat of deportation of these students also reflects the exportation of labor re-

sources from their countries of origin to Canada. This transfer of labor contributes to the restructuring of global labor markets, where countries with higher demands for skilled labor attract migrants from regions with limited opportunities. The deportation of these students disrupts their efforts to contribute their skills and knowledge to the Canadian society they have become a part of. This loss of talent and contributions emphasizes the detrimental impact of expulsion on both the affected individuals and the destination country.

But students are winning this fight, and they also require that we stand with them. As we write this, deportation orders have been stayed, in response to the protests. But the fight is not over and many questions remain.

As socialists, it is crucial to stand in solidarity with migrant students, condemning the actions of fraudulent agents, and demanding systemic change that prioritizes the well-being and rights of all individuals. To support the ongoing battle for international students, I encourage you to follow

organizations such as the Naujawan Support Network and the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, where you can stay informed about recent developments and take part in meaningful actions.

Victory to the longshore workers!

by: **Bradley Hughes**

Over 7,000 workers at more than 30 ports in British Columbia have been on strike since July 1. Every year, these members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union move \$180 billion worth of cargo which represents 16% of all of Canada's trade. That's over \$500 million of cargo every day. The power of these workers to disrupt profits has terrified business owners and their representatives in the provincial and federal governments.

The union has been trying to get the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association to agree to a reasonable settlement for their members since February. In a statement from the union, ILWU president Rob Ashton explained that, "Longshore workers kept this Province and the Country running during the Pandemic and when Canadians were told to shelter in place, our people went to work! We worked in difficult and hazardous conditions to ensure that the communities where we live, and all Canadians had the necessary supplies and personal protective equipment to defend against the Covid19 virus. This was an unprecedented time in the history of the world and longshore workers stepped up and proved that we are here to support the people of Canada. It is

unfortunate that our employers hold us in such contempt."

Like employers everywhere, instead of showing gratitude to the essential workers that kept their profits flowing, the BCMEA refused to negotiate on the main issues put forward by ILWU members. As a result, the union issued a strike notice, and lines have been up since 8AM July 1.

The unions objectives in this round of bargaining are to stop the loss of work through contracting out, to deal with the employers planned job losses through increased automation, and to get a wage

increase that protects them from inflation.

The employer made things worse over the July long weekend by walking away from negotiations. Their statement to the media concludes, "the BCMEA is of the view that a continuation of bargaining at this time is not going to produce a collective agreement. ILWU Canada needs to decide if they are going to continue this strike with no hope of settlement, or significantly modify their position."

The employers are no doubt hoping to be rescued by their friends in

the Federal Liberal government.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Surrey Board of Trade have both called for the Federal government to legislate the ILWU back to work. The Surrey Board of Trade went even further calling for additional legislation to take away dock workers right to strike permanently.

The Federal Minister of Labour, Seamus O'Regan has been in Vancouver since the strike started negotiating with both the union and the bosses. So far, he has not talked about back to work legislation. But

Liberals are no friends of workers. It was only two years ago when the Liberals passed legislation requiring the workers at the port of Montreal to return to work.

Employers organizations have pointed to the halt of cargo as a source of inflation if the strike continues. What they are really saying is that their members will use any shortages or delays as an excuse to gouge us and raise their profits at our expense.

BC Premier Eby echoed business owners concerns before the strike started, saying that he's "profoundly worried about the potential impact of a strike at our ports." However, the BCNDP government's response to the disruption to gasoline supplies in wake of the catastrophic 2021 flooding that closed all the highways into the lower mainland shows how he could allay his concerns and support the strikers. While the gasoline supply was halted the province imposed rationing and a price freeze. When this strike leads to shortages, the province could do the same thing, protecting working people from price hikes from greedy businesses.

When the Liberals show their true face as representatives of big business and bring in legislation against the dock workers we must all show our solidarity and join the picket lines to defy the law. A victory for the ILWU is a victory for all of us.



Picket lines are holding strong. We need to oppose any federal back-to-work legislation

Breakthrough for janitors in the lower mainland



Workers hold strike pledge cards at a mall in Vancouver

More than 2500 SEIU workers in BC have won significant gains in an historic fight. The workers have been jointly bargaining with 8 of Canada's largest cleaning services fighting for much needed improvements in working conditions and wages. They have just ratified a new city-wide collective agreement that lasts for 2 years.

These workers, who clean everything from office buildings to shopping centres, post-secondary institutions and the Skytrain and transit system, came together to fight for an agreement that covers all the unionized workers in the region and provides better wages and job security.

The new agreement has strong language against subcontracting, better health benefits and a host of other improvements.

"By standing together and voting to strike cleaners across the city have been taken seriously, We won wage increases that are above inflation."

- Agnes Estimo who works at Best Service Pros at Metrotown and is on the Justice for Janitors Vancouver Branch Local Executive.

Socialist.ca spoke with Jorge Villatoro and Christine Bro, Organizers with SEIU local 2.

Let's start with the process, How did this strategy of city wide central bargaining develop?

Christine: SEIU Local 2 across Canada has always had a strategy or organizing janitors across a sector to raise standards and engaging in city-wide central bargaining is how workers are able to achieve this goal. We already have master agreements in other major cities like Toronto and Ottawa.

In terms of the Vancouver market, there was only one company that was organized with SEIU Local 2 in 2016. So, workers started to come together and organize company by company. The process entailed both organic organizing strategies and going through Labour Board elections (before card check was implemented in BC) as well as client leverage campaigns and sometimes a combination of both.

The first major campaign that took off the ground was with Best Service Pros at five post-secondary institutions in BC. Following this major win, another big company - Alpine Building Maintenance organized in 2019, then Bee-Clean Building Maintenance.

This organizing started in 2017 and by December 2022, the majority of workers in the city were organized with SEIU and in a position to begin a process of city-wide bargaining.

Read the full interview at socialist.ca

National Steel Car workers walk out

by: **Ritch Whyman**

1400 members of USW 7135 set up picket lines over the July 1 holiday weekend at National Steel Car in Hamilton Ont. The workers rejected a "best last offer" of 4%, 3% and 3% over 3 years and some minimal increases to pensions in the second and third year.

The plant is one of the largest train car manufacturers in North America and is owned by multi-millionaire Greg Aziz. The owners made millions during the pandemic as orders for shipping cars increased to offset supply bottlenecks.

For the past 2 decades workers have been told they need to hold their wage expectations in line with inflation. Now with inflation and cost of living soaring for workers employers like National Steel Car are refusing to accept wage demands in line with inflation.

Starting wages at the plant currently leave new workers with hardly enough to afford the skyrocketing rent and housing costs in Hamilton. On top of the price gouging by the grocery and gas oligarchs below inflation raises are correctly viewed as the equivalent of pay cuts.

At issue is also workplace safety. NSC has been under scrutiny for 3 workplace deaths in a 22 month period at the height of the pandemic. The last fatality of welder Quoc Le in June of 2022 saw workers at the plant hold demonstrations

demanding action and a police investigation into the murder of workers by management's lack of safety concerns.



Since the picket lines went up, the plant has been shut down with barricades blocking rail lines and 24/7 picket lines. Picket line solidarity from other union members, locals and Labour Council has already occurred.

The past 2 years have seen workers striking and fighting to keep up with the cost of living crisis. Sadly the union leadership at upper levels has refused to mount a united fight against the profiteers and cost of living spikes, instead leaving each group of workers to fight on their own.

If the strikes at Windsor salt, the port of Vancouver and Steel Car were linked in a broader fight against the pandemic profiteers gains for workers across the board would be made. That is why its important to not only support the strike but demand these fights be linked and built into a national fight around the cost of living crisis and interest hikes.

Picket lines are 24/7 at Burlington St and Kenilworth.

Forest fires, climate catastrophe and capitalism

Canada broke a record for the largest area of forest ever burned in one year. People across the continent have had to deal with toxic smoke resulting in some of the worst air quality in the world. Brian Champ outlines how this is an inevitable result of capitalism's addiction to oil and points to the strategy needed to end the chaos.

While the smoke from Canadian wildfires that made headlines around the world may have temporarily cleared from skies of major cities, the crisis continues in the forests in the north of Turtle Island.

As of July 3rd, there have been 3,283 fires since the beginning of the fire season and 8.4 million hectares of forest burned. This has already smashed the previous annual record for area burned of 7.6 million hectares set in 1989.

On June 18th the area burned was over 17 times greater than the same day in 2021 – the most recent bad wildfire year – while the number of fires was up by 19%. The intensity and size of the fires that early in the season is alarming. In most years, the fire damage is worst in the hot months of July and August.

This crisis will get worse before it gets better.

It is a major humanitarian disaster, and is creating dangerous air quality conditions in communities downwind and contributing further to the climate crisis.

More than 16,400 people were evacuated from the Halifax-area communities of Tantallon and Hammonds Plains at the end of May from the path of a fire that destroyed 200 buildings, including 151 homes. As of mid-June, all but 4,000 had been able to move home.

Across Alberta, 14,000 evacuees are still not able to return home, as six evacuation orders remain in effect. These include Indigenous people in the Fort Chipewyan Métis Nation, the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation whose communities and lands are under threat by a still raging wildfire nearby. These Indigenous communities have already been bearing the brunt of toxic tar sands tailings polluting their waters and impacting health, continuing the long impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous people throughout so-called Canada.

Wildfires still raging have closed Highway 4 at Port Alberni on Vancouver Island since June 6th, isolating towns and First Nations communities on the west coast of the Island. The Donnie Creek fire in northern BC has closed the Alaska Highway isolating remote communities there.

Wildfire as climate catastrophe

Wildfires have always been a feature of forest and grassland ecosystems. Some species have evolved particular adaptations to survive the repeated fires, and Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge includes practices that minimize the impacts on human communities in those environments.

But the increased intensity and frequency of the fires is driven by drier and hotter conditions because of rising greenhouse gas (GHG) levels in the atmosphere, and resource industry practices that make forests more susceptible. Global heating is also increasing the intensity and frequency of other catastrophes – hurricanes, tornadoes, derechos, flash flooding, drought, etc. This will only get worse unless the warnings of climate scientists are heeded.

Growing forests are carbon sinks.

absorb carbon does not recover for one or two decades depending on the intensity of the fires.

Burnt out land left behind is more susceptible to flash flooding and erosion, and has enduring negative impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. In 2019-2020, Australian bush fires burnt over 24 million hectares of land – they were estimated to have killed or displaced 3 billion animals with some endangered species driven to extinction.

Capitalism, fossil fuels and climate crisis

Rising atmospheric CO2 levels are inextricably linked to the massive expansion of fossil fuels that continues to accelerate – a trend that is linked to the logic of capitalism and imperialism.

The first factories in England connected to the industrial revolution

Despite the additional costs to power the factories over using water power, this gave immense advantages to factory owners. The portability of the fuel allowed factories to be located nearer to large population centres where labour power could be exploited more ruthlessly. And factories could run at full intensity according to the needs of production.

Gasoline and other fuels refined from crude oil were even more advantageous, especially with the development of the internal combustion engine. The British War Cabinet Minister during WWI, Lord George Curzon, enthusiastically proclaimed in November 1918 that “The Allies floated to victory on a wave of oil.”

Imperialist spheres of influence that were carved out in the Middle East during and after the war were partly driven by the need to control oil production.

transformed the production of food worldwide incorporated pesticides and fertilizers that were products of the petrochemical industries dependent on crude oil and relied on gas-powered farm equipment.

In the 1950s, atmospheric measurement of CO2 levels began at Mauna Loa – recorded at around 315 ppm, up from the 1850s level of 280. Ever since WWII, CO2 emissions have been on accelerating upward curve reaching over 418 ppm in 2022. Now, there is a general scientific consensus that the highest “safe” level of CO2 is 350 ppm, a level that was reached in the late 1980s.

Capitalism and the Metabolic Rift

The inability of those at the helm to reverse these trends shows that capitalism is a destructive system in its blind pursuit of profits.

Before capitalism, most labourers had a direct relationship to the land, and had an interest in maintaining a sustainable interaction with the natural environment around them.

The development of private property in land, and the enforcing of it through the enclosures by fences and hedges over hundreds of years in England, forcibly removed peasants from the land. At the same time, a rising capitalist class operated textile mills and other factories, and the paupers newly expelled from the land formed the bulk of the emerging working class.

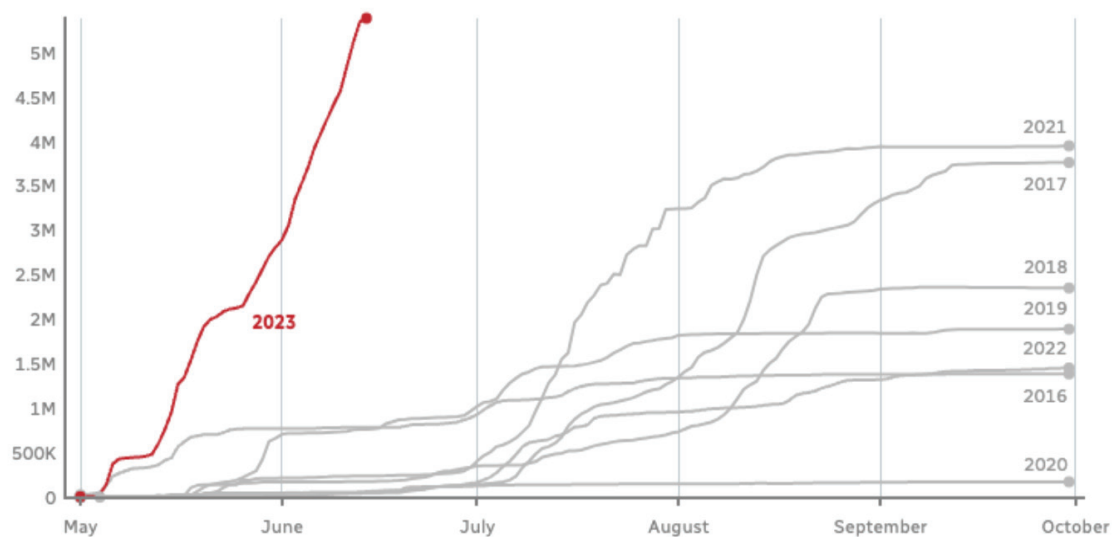
Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island had developed bodies of Indigenous knowledge, traditions, law and spirituality centred on sustaining a relationship with the land and the plants and animals that lived there.

Based on the doctrine of discovery, European settlers displaced Indigenous peoples and destroyed the basis of their independent existence, to gain access to agricultural land, water and natural resources. Through conquest, settler colonialism established private property in land, a concept that had been previously been unknown, laying the basis for capitalism in the “new world”.

Capitalism's profits rely on access to resources on Indigenous lands to feed production, but are generated from surplus value – the difference between the value created by workers in production, and the cost of their labour power to the bosses.

How much has burned so far this year in Canada

Estimated cumulative hectares burned in wildfires from satellite-detected hotspots



Record breaker. Canadian Wildland Fire info Service tracks the destruction

Trees remove CO2 from the air through photosynthesis in their leaves or needles, sequestering carbon into their roots, trunks and branches and releasing oxygen vital for humans and other animals to the air.

When forests burn this sequestered carbon is released in huge quantities as CO2, the most important GHG, and the capacity of the forest to

used water power to drive the productive machinery. But this placed limitations on their location – typically in sparsely populated towns and rural areas – and exposed them to the unpredictable flow of rivers. The development of steam power, fueled by coal, changed all this resulting in an explosive expansion of the factory system.

But it was after WWII that the centrality of fossil fuels to political and economic power came into its own. There was a massive expansion of car and truck production, the building of roads, pipelines and other infrastructure, particularly in the US and other rich countries including Canada. The “green” revolution in agriculture that

Capitalism



For Marx, the labour process “is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction between [humans] and nature, the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence.” Humans are part of nature, and any idea that human society is separate from nature is an illusion.

Marx argued in his major work *Capital*, while discussing capitalist agriculture, that capitalism “produces conditions that provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself.”

This metabolic rift goes far beyond agriculture. To paraphrase Marx: Capitalist production only develops by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth - the natural environment and the worker.

35 years of “Climate Action”

This is shown by the failure of international efforts to even significantly slow the growth of emissions.

In 1986 the Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases (AGGG) was created to review scientific research on greenhouse gases (GHG) and their increased concentrations in the atmosphere.

Two years later, Jim Hansen’s testimony to a US Senate committee that “the greenhouse effect has been detected and it is changing our climate now” and the first international climate change conference seemed to show there was an appetite to tackle the problem.

But when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created that same year, the direct involvement of independent scientists was excluded because of concerns from the US government that they would interfere.

Initiated at the 1992 UN “Earth Summit” in Rio, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was ratified in 1994 to “stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere” and since then nearly yearly “conference of parties” meetings have been held to oversee this process, using assessment reports and summaries for policy makers developed by the IPCC.

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris Agreement were developed on this track.

Despite these efforts, more than half of the rise of the CO₂ all carbon emissions since the pre-industrial era have come after 1990.

This is partly due to obstruction: The Kyoto Protocol was never ratified by the US and was abandoned by Canada under Harper in 2012; the Paris Agreement was abandoned by the US under Trump.

But the agreements had fatal flaws from the beginning: emissions from fossil fuel exports are not counted against the producing country; market mechanisms like emissions trading, carbon offsets and carbon taxes allow emitters to delay and defer real emissions reductions; the agreements are voluntary and lack enforcement mechanisms – even if they had been mandatory which global power could or would enforce them?

In reality, the global economy is beholden to economically powerful fossil fuel corporations. The 1% at the global and national levels are compelled to accumulate capital by maximizing profits or lose out to those that will. While some do invest in renewables as an alternative, they do so only if it is profitable. High profits in the fossil fuel economy and entrenched infrastructure mean any shifts that are happening are too slow and shallow.

Military, economic and political competition between nations complicate the picture where a handful of

Canada’s real contribution to global emissions.

This is also the reason the Liberal government maintains the fiction that they have a credible climate plan while continuing to build pipelines for exporting fracked gas and tar sands crude. Their plan does not mandate a transition, but relies on ineffectual market mechanisms, like a carbon tax, billions of dollars in subsidies to fossil fuel companies for carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) – completely unproven technology – and other boondoggles labeled as “clean” technology. Using the “clean” label they muddy the waters between greenwashing and real solutions.

The forestry industry is also a factor in the unfolding crisis. It is an \$35 billion (net GDP) industry, with exports of \$46.2 billion that employs about 165,000 workers with a 35% unionization rate. From a planetary perspective, the great temperate and tropical rainforests are the lungs of the earth, converting carbon dioxide into oxygen and sequestering carbon for long periods.

But the forestry industry only sees value in the forests as so many board feet of lumber or reams of paper. Even in the best case when used as lumber for long lasting products, 70% of the carbon in a tree is emitted.

Pro-industry websites will brag that deforestation is not happening, pointing to the requirement for replanting under Canadian law. But the drive to harvest the last old growth forests on Vancouver Island shows that very dense forests packed with carbon are in danger, while recently replanted forests take many years to recover.

While young forests absorb carbon faster than older ones - centuries old forests have a

huge amount of carbon sequestered that we cannot allow to release. Recent research from the US also shows that dense old growth forests are less susceptible to wildfires, burning with less intensity than replanted forests.

Forest fires and politics

While the federal Liberals acknowledge the connection of the continuing wildfires to climate change, they do not suggest that more urgent, mandated action is required than their plan. But this plan, supported by the federal NDP, is a smokescreen for continued reliance on fossil fuels and fails to stand up to log-

ging destroying the capacity for carbon absorption

Right wing politicians in Alberta tried to blame climate activists for starting the fires, and Conservative Party leader Poilievre accused Trudeau of using them to distract concerns over inflation. Tory premiers and other leaders deny the climate crisis or at best pledge money for unproven CCUS technology to lower emissions

The NDP in BC and Alberta have consistently failed to oppose pipelines and continued fossil fuel production, while propping up a failed Liberal climate plan.

The Green Party has also failed to consistently oppose pipeline building or provide the leadership for the urgent and just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy that is so desperately needed.

The climate movement, at whose forefront lies Indigenous blockades of pipelines and other fossil fuel projects, along with protecting biodiversity and sequestering carbon on lands under their control, is left without mainstream political allies. The reform proposals and policies that do exist in the mainstream fall far short of anything that will make a difference to the scale of the crisis we face.

The climate movement has brought forward climate justice based solutions like the Leap Manifesto and later the Green New Deal. But no political party has embraced these solutions. In the NDP, resolutions championing these ideas have been proposed by the grassroots but have been repeatedly rejected and/or deflected and have failed to change party policy.

There have been more demonstrations and strikes by workers to hold the line against inflation and to preserve public services in the past few years. These show that there is a growing mood for workers to push back against attacks on living standards and working conditions. But the economic impact of the climate crisis will mean inflation will continue to increase and the profit drive will see more attacks on the public services workers rely on.

There needs to be a credible transition plan at the appropriate scale that leaves no worker or community behind if there is to be climate justice. A plan that respects the sovereignty and rights of Indigenous people, while creating training and jobs for workers to transition away from producing fossil fuel as well as transforming work for those in other industries, including forestry

workers.

There are real dangers for the co-optation of the transition that will not serve the interests of workers, Indigenous people or the environment. Liberal subsidies for non-union jobs in EV plants in Ontario and mining development in the so-called “Ring of Fire” are being promoted as the Just Transition. But these are about profits for the car industry and mining companies, not justice for Indigenous people or green jobs for workers. And replacing mass production of gas burning cars with mass production of electric ones will not save the environment.

Climate justice will come from continuing to build the links between the struggles of workers, Indigenous peoples and communities struggling for social justice into a force for change from below. Workers must be won to supporting the Land Defense Alliance of First Nations that have pledged resistance to mining developments in the “Ring of Fire” while also fighting for gains in wages and working conditions against their bosses.

Goods or services are brought to market under capitalism because of the value they can be exchanged for. But these same goods and services also have a use value. But it is not for this use that production is undertaken: there must be profit – the value returned over production costs that goes to the boss.

This logic is killing our planet – as long as this surplus value returns it doesn’t matter if production results in longer term destruction.

The “planetary use value” of fossil fuels buried in the ground is not considered because it doesn’t contribute to their short term economic calculations. Similarly, the use value of the forest as a growing sink of carbon is not considered by those who profit from forestry products. The use values of ecosystems, climate patterns and air quality are similarly neglected.

But by neglecting these “planetary use values” to preserve the profits of a tiny minority, we are destroying the very basis of life as we know it on the planet. Other use values, like providing shelter, food and clothing to all as a human right, are also neglected for the profit motive.

If we are to have any hope of a livable future these priorities have to change and capitalism overturned in favour of planned production for the needs of all human beings and the plants and animals that make up the ecosystems on which we all depend.



powers dominate, but are also drawn into political conflict and war, often over the control of fossil fuels. Modern warfare also consumes huge quantities of fossil fuels, which are exempt from emissions accounting.

Canada’s Responsibility

In 2021, Canada had 0.5% of world population yet accounted for 1.5% of global emissions officially. This is bad enough, but the true contribution is much larger, since 80% of crude oil extracted in Canada is exported and the subsequent emissions do not count in Canada’s column. This at least doubles

The far-right and Islam

by: **Sid Lacombe**

At a recent confrontation in Ottawa, far-right bigots attempted to protest a number of schools supporting 2SLGBTQ+ rights. They were met by hundreds of counter protesters who stood in solidarity with the students and shut the haters down.

The event was a victory for solidarity - the far-right groups didn't get the chance to disrupt school activities as planned but there are a host of new questions that have been thrown up in the wake of the events.

One question concerns how to respond to the group of Muslim community members who joined with the far right. There are videos circulating that show young Muslim children stomping on pride flags and there are now reports of further potential protests including the Muslim groups. There have already been similar events in Calgary and another in Ottawa led by Muslim community groups.

Unsurprisingly, the bigots are using the footage to show that they are a welcoming group - open to all people, races and faiths. This helps them to hide their white supremacist roots and dulls any criticism of their actions.

But these are the same far-right groups that have exploited anti-Muslim sentiment to build their base. We on the left and in the solidarity movements need to be clear on both what is both behind this phenomenon and what we can do to stop it.

History of Islamophobia and the far-right

Islamophobia is a central pillar in the foundation of the far-right in Canada and has been for many decades. Many of the groups that are now pivoting to protest Drag Queen Story Time (DQST) and more broadly, 2SLGBTQ+ events built their base on the demonization of Muslims.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the US we saw an up-tick in Nazi activity across the country. They saw the whip-up of anti-Muslim hatred as an opening to try and recruit and build a base.

They were pushed back, not only because of anti-fascist organizing in the neighbourhoods that they were targeting but also because of the mass anti-war movement that developed between 2001 and 2003 against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Anti-war activists rightly identified Islamophobia as a key ideological tool for the Imperialists so the anti-war movement centred their activity on both stopping the war and confronting anti-Muslim hate.

Crucially, there were new inroads built between the anti-war left and the Muslim community suffering from the worst impacts of the war frenzy that had been whipped up. At one point the right started to refer to the antiwar movement as the Sharia-Bolsheviks.

Those developments would be slowed by the decline of the anti-war movement and by a concerted effort by the media, politicians and their right wing supporters to drive a wedge into this burgeoning unity.

Stephen Harper and his trusted aide Jason

Kenney spearheaded the effort but many Conservative and Liberal politicians followed suit. They began spending more time at Mosques and Islamic centres across the country trying to build a base by appealing to certain sections of the community with more right wing ideas on social policy. In Ontario, local MPPs developed a campaign against same sex marriage, for example, which was promoted and pushed at the very same Islamic institutions that had joined with the left to oppose war.

At the same time the Canadian state fabricated stories of the threat of Islamic terrorism and used billions of dollars to entrap many Muslims across the country in made-up terror cases.

There are many examples of how this was done - from Project Thread- which accused 19 students from Pakistan of being an Al-Qaeda terror cell without a shred of evidence, to the Canada Day bombers- whose conviction was overturned because of gross violations of law to the Toronto



18case which used a CSIS informant to build a terror case where none existed.

This process of wooing potential Muslim voters with the most reactionary politics while simultaneously attacking vulnerable Muslims with terror accusations was calculated to isolate Muslim groups that were finding a political voice and to sow confusion in the general working class population.

The Canadian state also used the pretext of the 'war on terror' to implement vast new policing and spying powers. Stephen Harper in an interview said that the greatest threat to world peace was 'Islamicism' - further whipping up Islamophobia.

Others in his party tried to push the conservatives further to the right by further demonizing Muslims. Kellie Leitch, a candidate for the Tory party proposed a 'Barbaric cultural practices hotline' which was designed to target Muslims.

All of this provided the far-right with ample fodder to feed their base and they focussed almost exclusively on pushing Islamophobia.

After the election of Donald Trump in the US,

the far-right was feeling bold and began organizing rallies at City Hall in Toronto in January 2017. The main call from the bigots was to stop motion 103, which called to "condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination".

The bigots jumped on this motion and began a campaign of disinformation. They argued that the law would result in an inability to criticize Islam and that it would force the adoption of Sharia law in Canada. The motion was about none of those things and on top of that it was non binding. But the far right did grow by lying about it.

Those far-right forces also joined with sections of the pro-Israel movement in Canada, particularly the Jewish Defence League - a listed terror group in the US - to attack Palestinian rights as well as Muslims.

Islam and Imperialism

The use of Islamophobia has always been about the needs of the Imperial powers. The strategic significance of the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia has resulted in constant Western interference in the region. NATO countries, led by the US have sponsored coups and invaded any country that does not comply with the orders of the Imperialists.

The massive oil reserves are part of the motivation but the key strategic location in between the NATO powers and the rivals in Russia and China is also central.

This interference has always led to NATO support for some of the most reactionary regimes and forces in the area. For example, the Imperial powers from the UK to the US have always boosted the reactionary politics of the Saudi regime to divide and conquer in the region. They calculate that as long as the sectarians are in power it will stop the possibility of Muslim or Pan-Arab forces from coalescing into a unified anti-Imperial force.

Unfortunately, some of the far-right politics of these governments spills over into the diaspora.

Religion and reactionary politics

This is not an issue with Islam specifically — it is a constant in every religion. The far-right Islamophobes in Toronto were often joined by right wing Hindutva ideologues tied to the right wing BJP government of Narendra Modi in India. Like the JDL, these groups are trained at a young age to hate Muslims - usually to meet the needs of both a domestic ruling class and the Imperial powers.

Likewise, Christianity has many threads that run from the far-right evangelical movements which are the base of the new attacks on 2SLGBT+ people to the left movements of the liberation theologians. It is common to see religious figures on both sides of the demonstrations at the events today, advocating for very different positions.

These vast differences within religions develop because of the material conditions that their practitioners are present within and the political forces that use that context to maintain power. The liberation theologians moved left because they were immersed in movements against Imperialism.

We see the same process pushing religious fol-

lowers to the right. The far-right in Israel is funded and supported by the Christian right in the US and so on.

The Western Imperialists were the first to enforce anti-2SLGBTQ+ rules in their colonial possessions as a part of a larger divide and conquer strategy and western evangelicals fund anti-2SLGBTQ+ groups around the world.

What does this mean for today?

So, it isn't Islam specifically that needs to be addressed here. It is the larger right wing trajectory of our society and the impacts of Imperialism that are behind this phenomena.

We must not let this situation be used to build Islamophobia. In fact, we need to redouble our efforts against all forms of hate from Islamophobia to anti-semitism. When the far-right forces are through with the Muslim groups that they now hide behind, they will turn on them with a renewed vigour and we need to stop that too as we did in the early years of the anti-war movement.

The broader Muslim community is not responsible for the position of one small group and we need to remember that to avoid setting up a situation where the demonization could spread. The Muslim 'community' is as diverse as any other with lots of different ideas on offer.

White people are never asked to answer for the actions of others of their own race - despite the fact that they are responsible for the vast majority of violent crime in our society. We cannot ask that of a marginalized group. To do so would only build more racism.

Crucially, we need to build the biggest possible movement to defend the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people. Small groups of people from different religions or political trends will be brought into the orbit of the far right. In the current context that is inevitable. The way to stop it is to build a movement large enough that there is no appeal to joining the right at all - regardless of which group you may belong to. We need to sap the ability of the right to find any hearing in any community and that includes, unions, schools, faith groups or in our neighbourhoods.

Muslims are not responsible for the rise of the far-right in Canada. Those responsible are the oil and gas industry players that built and funded the entire convoy movement and the Canadian state which uses racism and religious intolerance to divide the population and weaken resistance to their aim of maximizing profits. Our tasks are to organize against the bigots and to build a movement that can challenge the ruling class at the same time.

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.

Find us on: @socialist_ca \socialistca socialist.ca

Never miss an issue.

Yearly subscription **\$30**

Institutions, 1st Class & U.S. **\$50** international: **\$60**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Mail to: PO Box 339, Station E,
Toronto, ON Canada, M6H 4E3
Phone: 416.972.6391 / E-mail: reports@socialist.ca

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

Join the Socialists

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Fill in the form and send to **International Socialists**,
PO Box 339 Station E Toronto ON M6H 4E3
416.972.6391 / reports@socialist.ca

The new age of catastrophe

Alex Callinicos' new book looks at the many crises facing people and the planet today.

by: **Faline Bobier**

Alex Callinicos' new book, appropriately titled, *The New Age of Catastrophe* opens with the following line, "The world lives in the shadow of catastrophe."

For many of the world's people that first line describes what is now the daily experience of living under capitalism with the destruction of nature and its effects, like the wildfires raging here in Canada, economic stagnation and inflation forcing people to choose between rent, food or medication, and the renewed military conflict in the heart of Europe, where NATO and Western forces are helping to escalate the war in Ukraine.

Callinicos begins the book by looking at the previous age of catastrophe, specifically the first half of the twentieth century which saw two world wars, the Great Depression, the Stalinist terror, the rise of fascism and the Holocaust.

What ties these two periods together is the economic system which underpins them both. As Callinicos emphasizes throughout his book, the multiple crises we are living through - economic, environmental (including the Covid pandemic which is itself the result of agribusiness and the encroachment of humans into natural habitats), imperialist war-mongering in Europe - are the result of an economic system based on profit for the few at the expense of the many:

"Such events cannot be seen as exogenous shocks, as mainstream economics affirms; they rise from a multifaceted structural crisis of the entire capitalist system and, more broadly, of the civilization that fossil capitalism has created. We are living what James Galbraith has called 'the end of normal'."

The last age of catastrophe ended only through the mass destruction and loss of life caused by World War II. From the post-war period until the early 1970s it looked like capitalism had been able to stabilize itself and provide (at least for workers in the global North) a social safety net and guarantee of income. However, as crisis returned to the system in the early 1970s with the return of recession, unemployment, stagflation, etc. capitalist governments the world over abandoned their flirtation with Keynesianism (the notion that government intervention could forestall crisis) and turned to neoliberalism and the notion that the market must rule, at the expense of the lives and livelihood of workers and the poor.

Austerity and cuts

This period has seen growing attacks on public services such as healthcare, education and social housing as the world ruling class attempts to shore up their profit margins against the falling rate of profit, predicted by Marx in *Capital*. But even these savage attacks have not restored health (i.e. profit rates) to their system and there is a world-wide recession looming.

All the hallmarks of the last age of catastrophe are returning with a vengeance: military conflict that threatens to spill far beyond the borders of Ukraine, the rise of fascism most clearly heralded in the heart of the system by the domination of Trump on the increasingly rightward moving GOP, a debt-ridden economic system that limps from crisis to crisis and is now threatening a world-wide recession. And that recession is already happening for countries in the Global South, as Marxist economist Michael Roberts pointed out in a recent column:

"Since the end of the pandemic, the sharp rise in interest rates on global debt and a strong US dollar (much of global debt is in

dollars) have forced yet more countries to the brink of default on payments and into further poverty."

In the chapter "Revolt and reaction" Callinicos speaks to the increasing polarization the age of catastrophe is bringing: "The neoliberal version of capitalism is breaking down amid a multi-dimensional crisis that is simultaneously economic, (geo)political, and biological. The result is a crisis of hegemony, the decay of the dominant forms of bourgeois rule."

Matter was able to galvanize a multi-racial movement that spread internationally and challenged the foundations of capitalism, built as it is on the erasure and slavery of Blacks, Indigenous people and other colonized peoples. Black Lives Matter also challenged the racist climate created by Trump's appeal to fascist groups such as the Proud Boys to 'stand back and stand by'.

Similarly, the question of gender is contested territory. The emergence of a proud movement for trans liberation and for the right

women are not 'real' women are capitulating to the biology as destiny argument, which was fought against at the beginning of the women's liberation movement. Gender was seen as a rigid and constricting set of 'norms' that limited women's ability to choose their own futures. This is why it's tragic that some feminists are capitulating to the same argument when it comes to trans individuals and their right to assert their chosen gender identity. Equally tragic is how it helps the bigots and the right divide and conquer our movements.

Climate crisis and resistance

Callinicos argues that the various environmental movements against climate change and for climate justice are another beacon of hope in the current era of crisis: "These movements are immensely important because they represent a moment of political transition - from despair motivated by the immensity of the threat of climate catastrophe to willingness to take action on a massive scale, together with others."

But, he also argues, to win the struggle to save our planet we will need much greater mobilizations, which can really hit capitalism where it lives - in the generation of profits.

Andreas Malm points out the folly of expecting capitalist governments and fossil fuel companies to share the sense of urgency of climate activists: "They [the ruling classes of the world] are not perturbed by the smell from the blazing trees. They do not worry at the sight of islands sinking; they do not run from the roar of the approaching hurricanes; their fingers never need to touch the stalks from withered harvests; their mouths do not become sticky and dry after a day with nothing to drink. To appeal to their reason and common sense would evidently be futile. The commitment to the endless accumulation of capital wins out every time."

The level of mobilization required to create a society with new priorities that favour working people and the planet requires the participation of the world working class.

Working class and revolution

This class is very much still, as Marx described, the potential gravedigger of the poisonous system he described in *Capital*.

The experience of the pandemic brought home the importance of ordinary workers who kept the system going: the nurses and other health care workers, grocery workers, delivery people, workers in logistics, transit workers, etc.

These are the same people who already suffering from the consequences of a crumbling system - a system which enriches those at the top but is taking away with both fists any gains that working class people have made - our public healthcare system, our ability to house, clothe and feed ourselves and our families - and which is consigning those in the Global South to even worse poverty, famine and displacement through the twin evils of climate change and the usury of the IMF and World Bank.

The *New Age of Catastrophe* gives a compelling picture of the destructive nature of the economic system we live under. But it ends on a hopeful note, which is the potential of human beings to organize ourselves to overturn this system and transform it into a socialist society based on human need, not the generation of immense wealth for a tiny minority: "The terrifying prospects we face demand that everyone become part of the struggle to rescue humankind. As the great Irish Marxist James Connolly put it at the start of the first age of catastrophe, 'the only true prophets are they who carve out the future which they announce.'"



The New Age of Catastrophe

Alex Callinicos

The rise of the far-right

This is nowhere more evident than in the belly of the beast, the US, where we may well see the spectacle of a presidential race featuring a criminal and racist thug who is spawning more of his followers daily and an ineffectual Democratic opponent who pretends to stand for progress but whose party has done nothing to fight the defeat of Roe vs Wade nor to support striking workers and which is stoking the process of a widening war in Europe through NATO expansion and sending deadly arms in a proxy war against Russia.

With fascists in power in Italy and Hungary and the rise of the far right in many more places it may seem we are in for some kind of replay of the debacles of the last century. But, Callinicos argues, as did Marx before him, that the outcome is not a foregone conclusion. It depends on what we do and how we organize ourselves.

In the depths of the pandemic Black Lives

it has affirmed for individuals to choose their own gender has seen a backlash by both the far right and, unfortunately, by some feminists and some on the left.

The far right are using attacks on trans people and events like drag queen story times at public libraries as a way to spread their message of hate and to attempt to divide and conquer. This was brought home by a recent attack on an inclusive school curriculum at a school board office organized by the far right in Ottawa. Members of the Muslim community attended the far-right protest and media got pictures of young Muslim children stepping on Pride flags.

The far right in this instance were attempting to make use of Muslim families (whom they have also targeted in their Islamophobic rhetoric and attacks) to further their vicious and increasingly threatening presence at trans- and 2SLGBTQ+ positive events.

In this climate feminists who insist that trans

Turn up the heat on Ford

Join mass protest for public healthcare

Doug Ford may be on an extended vacation but healthcare campaigners are working hard to ramp up the pressure to stop his plan to privatize healthcare.

After the huge success of the province wide referendum which saw 400,000 people vote against privatization by a whopping 99%, the Ontario Health Coalition and its local groups are planning a major rally at Queen's Park when the legislature reconvenes in September.

More than 700 people joined a province-wide health summit in late June to come up with plans to build towards the September rally.

Summer closures

The crisis in Ontario healthcare is growing and there are worries that many areas will be hit hard during the summer. The province has already announced the closure of the emergency room in Minden. Urgent care centres in Fort Erie and Port Colborne will no longer operate overnight. And many more hospitals are closing their doors as Ford's cuts continue to decimate the system.

Health networks are being forced to consolidate services at one hospital rather than offer services at many locations. The province chalks this up to staffing shortages but those shortages are a direct result of underfunding. The attacks on nurses' wages through Bill 124 for example, mean it is no longer viable to live on a nurse's salary, so people are leaving the profession.



Tory Health minister Sylvia Jones passes the blame onto the healthcare networks which operate as independent entities, claiming it isn't the province that is shutting down services. But the hospitals have little choice. If the funding is not made available they are forced to hire staff from temp agencies that drive up the costs and make the situation even worse.

The main people hurt by local service shutdowns are low income, seniors, Indigenous and racialized communities and those who don't have the resources to travel large distances for care.

Ford is sitting on billions in unspent healthcare dollars, but he refuses to make the investments needed to keep the system afloat. He is hoping that the collapse of the existing system will mean people will be more accepting of privatized services as an alternative.

What we are seeing however, is a huge response with communities organizing to protect their local services. The residents of Minden have been traveling the province protesting at MPP offices and at Queen's Park.

The goal of the health campaigners is to gather as many people together for a unified push to stop Ford's plan. The task for all of us is to think about how to make this the biggest event possible. This means reaching out to local community groups, unions, student associations and others to join the rally when the legislature returns on September 25.

Protect Trans students

Fight NB Conservative attacks on policy 713

by: Rebecca Rogers

The Government of New Brunswick has made changes to policy 713, which protects sexual and gender nonconforming students in schools. Not surprisingly, the PC government took rights away from students.

Under the original policy, which was brought in by the same government, students under 16 who were trans or non-binary could use their chosen name and Pronouns in the classroom without their parents knowledge, although not on official documents.

Policy 713 has been changed so now, if a student under 16 wants to use their chosen name and Pronouns they have to get their parents permission. This will force many trans and non-binary students to continue to be deadnamed and the wrong Pronouns to be used for them. This will cause many students to suffer from anxiety and depression, by pushing them back into the closet if their parents don't agree with their wishes. It will lead to more suicide attempts and unfortunately some successful attempts.

Another change to policy 713 is that before students were able to play sports on the team that represented their gender identity, now they have to play on the team that represents their

gender assigned at birth. Again a policy change that will affect a students mental health.

On the issue of mental health, one of the things that the Minister of Education William Hogan said was the students that had concerns

about how their parents would react could work out a plan with a guidance counselor or a school psychologist. There are two problems with this. First, it is not the student, but the parent who has a problem. Second, there is

currently an 84% vacancy rate for school psychologists in the English school system in New Brunswick. The situation is not much better in the francophone system. There is also a high vacancy rate for guidance counselors.

These policy changes have not been implemented, and actually, at the time of writing, haven't been voted on yet. There has been a strong push back against these changes. There have been walkouts in many schools involving hundreds of students. There was a demonstration at the legislature of around a thousand people.

As well, there was a demonstration in Moncton of around 300 people, with strong union support. There is also a petition opposing the changes which currently has over 16 thousand name on it.

On a different note, eight PC MLA's have spoken out against these policy changes. If they stand their ground, and that is a big if, there is a chance that these changes will be defeated when they come up for a vote.

The Liberals say they are going to change the policy back to what it was. However, can we really trust the Liberals to change anything? The answer is of course no. We will get these changes reversed by fighting for them - through taking to the streets and not backing down.

