

Revolutionary to the end: John Arthur Bell
1955-2024

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From healthcare to gas plants to the LCBO
FIGHT FORD!

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END THE KILLING IN GAZA NOW

Each week brings new horrors from the Israeli regime. Keep mobilizing for Palestine.



Revolutionary to the end: John Arthur Bell, 1955-2024

With heavy hearts we share the news that John Bell, a life-long revolutionary and tireless contributor to Socialist Worker, passed away on March 28th, weeks away from his 69th birthday.

For decades, John's regular column "Left Jab" combined razor-sharp analysis with humour, providing ammunition – and sometimes comic relief – to activists taking on capitalism's many disasters.

John was born and raised in London, Ontario. As he wrote, "I was born into what was billed as a 'middle class' family, in what is still considered a thoroughly 'middle class' city, smack in the middle of the 1950s. My father was a high school teacher and my mother, a registered nurse, stayed at home to raise four annoying children... if ever there should have been a poster-child for capitalism triumphant it should have been me." Instead, his trajectory led him to an unwavering commitment to the politics of international socialism.

His love of reading and learning was nourished early on by an aunt who was a children's librarian. At university, he encountered the writings of Karl Marx, which he read with enthusiasm. As he quipped, "Marx led to Lenin. Yes, Marxism is a gateway philosophy."

It was there that he encountered the International Socialists, and the idea that the societies in what was then the Soviet Union, or China, were not socialist but "state-capitalist", and that workers in those societies were just as exploited and oppressed as those in the West.

The rebellion of shipyard

workers in Poland in 1980-81 against the Stalinist regime was decisive in pushing John to become an organized socialist. As he said, "either you backed the workers or you backed the generals and their tanks trying to smash the strike. Shamefully, most of the left backed the tanks, characterizing rebellious Polish workers as agents of the CIA

it was an organization that walked its talk."

Over the next decades, John devoted himself wholly to revolutionary politics. His interests and talents were wide-ranging, and sometimes mind-boggling. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of film and music, and was a passionate nature-lover and birder.

In 2018, after several years of a debilitating respiratory illness, he received a double-lung transplant. His new lungs were literally a new lease on life, and his comrades reaped the benefits of his prodigious output of writing, analysing everything from the rise of Trump and the far-right in the US, to disastrous Covid policies, to Doug

in sports, history and much more, drew a loyal readership to Left Jab.

In 1999, John undertook to perform Howard Zinn's solo play Marx in Soho. His masterful performance led one audience member, well-known Indian communist Mythily Sivaraman, to say that at the end, when John walked offstage, she felt it was like finding the real Marx, losing him again and wanting him to come back! Such was John's ability to bring Marx's ideas to life.

In November 2023, John had a fall and broke his hip, which led to his hospitalisation. Over the past years, John had warned of the deadly consequences of Covid policies which left immunocompromised people at risk in hospital settings. He contracted Covid in hospital, which led to a cascade of worsening health.

In the days before he died, despite his failing health, John devoted his remaining energy to writing an article on resistance to the brutal practices of Canadian mining corporations. As one of his comrades put it, he died with his boots on. Despite all of the health challenges he faced for so long, John was in active revolutionary duty throughout and right to the end.

He will be missed more than words can say by his comrades, family and countless friends. But the struggle he enthusiastically supported against this death-dealing capitalist system will carry on, nourished by his legacy.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Pam Johnson and to John's family.

Rest in power, John Bell.

John's last article - written days before he died - is posted on page 3.



or the Vatican... History poses a test for ideas and for organization. The only socialist organization in Canada that passed the test of Solidarnosc was the International Socialists. I joined convinced that

John was immensely talented, and could undoubtedly have opted for a comfortable life in academia. Instead, he was for many years a full-time revolutionary, living on the meagre earnings this entailed.

Ford's privatization of Service Ontario and healthcare, the return of measles and what this says about capitalism's death-cult.

His very accessible and enjoyable writings on popular culture, racism

Left JAB at Canada

John Bell wrote regularly for Socialist Worker and Socialist.ca since 1980. Today the champions of Canada's 1% in parliament and the provincial legislatures proudly defend a nation founded and sustained on genocide, climate crimes and exploitation. For forty years, John has taken on our elites and the craven politicians who serve them. Below we present to you a listing of some of his articles tearing down the sanctity of our national mythology.

War

Let's start with "the good war." John takes on the official glorification of war and recounts how his Dad, "hated Remembrance Day – all he wanted to do, what he was never able to do, was forget. I vividly remember him saying, "If we really cared about veterans we wouldn't make the poor old bastards go out and beg."

Read: War and remembrance
socialist.ca/node/1424

Genocide

While the mainstream media was wringing its collective hands about whether or not we should use the term genocide to describe

missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, John wrote, "The obstruction by the state police is evidence that genocidal practices are not a thing of the past, but bred in the



bone of the colonial Canadian state."

Read: Canada's Genocide
socialist.ca/node/3872

As actions in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en spread, John wrote that "A debate is raging in our media: is Canada 'broken'. Spoiler alert, it was never not broken."

Read: Reaping the whirlwind: Canadian ruling class author of its own misfortune
socialist.ca/node/4035

Racism

At the height of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, John wrote "racism and police violence are not problems unique to the USA. In the last week three Canadians have died when police were called to look after their welfare. Two were Black, one was Indigenous." Here he presents the need to:

Read: Demilitarize, Dismantle, Defund the police
socialist.ca/node/4099

Son of Trudeau

"While the docile media swooned over our shirtless Prime Minister," John was writing about how Trudeau's "government was quietly endorsing changes to the export rules that prohibited arms trade with dictatorships and human rights abusers."

Read: Canada's killer elite
socialist.ca/node/3170

A better world

In 2018, John was the recipient of a double lung transplant and he wrote about world history, his lungs and capitalism, "I cannot be unaware of the sweat and blood of those that produced the wealth that resulted in the "miracle" of my care and treatment. It is not guilt I am talking about here, but my responsibility to look beyond the surface of this system, to find and expose its essence. And doing that, committing myself to fighting for change."

Read: World history meets my lungs
socialist.ca/node/3555

Canadian mining: Trampling human rights at home and abroad

by: John Bell

The recent, openly brutal record of the Canadian government regarding international human rights abuses has left many shocked and scratching their heads. Foremost is the abetting and participation in genocidal ethnic cleansing in Gaza, arming Israel's one-sided war, and denying aid to Palestinian victims through the defunding of UNRWA.

Not everyone is surprised by this, particularly Indigenous people struggling to maintain their rights to their unceded lands. From BC's para-military police assault on Wet'suwet'en land defenders, to the Alberta and Saskatchewan First movements, from Northern Ontario's "Ring of Fire" to Southern Ontario's 1492 Landback struggles, from the Muskrat Falls mega-project in Labrador, to Mi'kmaq fishers trying to claim their treaty rights — wherever Indigenous people across Turtle Island have struggled to assert their rights over their lands and whatever wealth and resources those lands contains, they have been met by military and police opposition.

Small wonder the vast majority of Indigenous people have recognized and expressed a strong connection to the fight for Palestinian freedom.

Some say such a comparison is exaggerated. It also has been said that the way your country operates and treats people in its international business dealings tells you how they would treat people at home, if they thought they could get away with it.

It is past time that people shed the myth of Canadian benevolence on the world stage. If there ever was a shred of truth to that reputation, of UN blue helmets and peacekeepers (something that was always highly

economic onslaught of the early 1980s was the creation of massive, multilateral trade deals like NAFTA championed by the Mulroney, Chretien and Harper regimes in quick succession.

These deals superseded national and local regulations on things like environmental liability, ushered in the concept of corporate "personhood" and rights (thereby weakening human rights and local democracy), and weakened workers' ability to organize and defend ourselves.

In these negotiations Canada traded away much of our manufacturing base in exchange for a much bigger role in global resource extraction. Natural Resources Canada proudly boasts that as of 2024, Canada was headquarters to more than half of the world's publicly traded resource extraction corporations, accounting for \$320.2 billion in revenue in 2023. There were 1,423 Canadian mining corporations, more than half of them doing business internationally as well as at home.

Indigenous communities in South and Central America have a long history of battling Canadian mining corporations. Canadian owned and registered mining corporations are notorious—using para-military violence and murder to prevent union organizing, creating environmental disasters, and rigging elections. In many places in the global south we are known as the 'Ugly Canadians'.

The new "Scramble for Africa"

The original "scramble for Africa" was the period of European imperialist competition that saw the continent divided up between seven foreign powers, backed by military force. England and France were the biggest, but nations like Portugal,



It took two world wars to break down this system of "classical" imperialism, as African nations asserted their independence. But countries that tried to include economic control over their resources as well as political independence soon found things weren't that easy. A program of assassination and execution of nationalist or socialist leaders like Patrice Lumumba in Congo followed. There, Belgian forces colluded with a section of the army under Mobutu to overthrow the free state in its infancy. All across Africa proxy wars and internal conflicts were used to keep a shell of political "independence" in the

Africa's resources. Western consumers raised demand for "sustainable" transportation, but refused to give up their private automobiles. The boom in EVs required new metals and minerals, like copper, cobalt and lithium, used in the production of batteries.

The scramble for these resources coincides with the rise of Canada's dominance in the mining industry. So Canadian economic imperialism is brutally evident today in places like the resource-rich Democratic Republic of Congo. There corporate rule, human and labour rights abuses, and military repression have ravaged what should be a rich nation, empowering only a narrow, local ruling class and their supporters. Workers suffer the worst conditions and rampant human rights abuses to fuel the profits of the "Ugly Canadians".

The prize is huge. DRC produces 50% of the world's cobalt, and contains about 70% of the known world's supply.

As a 2022 report in the *Catholic Register* noted: "From 15 to 30 per cent of Congo's cobalt is mined by unregulated, artisanal miners — barefoot women and children struggling in the mud, washing their minerals in nearby rivers then selling it to more than 200 rebel militias who then sell it on to Canadian mining companies."

The Kamoia-Kakula mine is a joint venture between majority owner Ivanhoe Mines and a Chinese partner, Zijin Mining. Ivanhoe is based in Vancouver, and has grown into one of Canada's biggest and most profitable miners.

To expand its Kamoia mine, the company evicted hundreds of people from their small subsistence farms. They promised to replace them with better, modern housing, schools and medical facilities.

What they got were shacks with tin roofs, no electricity, no sanitation and no running water. A communal well was dug but soon

overused and polluted. People were driven to draw water from a nearby river, heavily polluted by mine tailings. A barely adequate school took 4 years to build, and no health facilities have materialized.

Ivanhoe will realize billions in revenue from this and its other two African megaprojects in the DRC and South Africa. Those living and working in the mines face horrific conditions barely a notch above abject poverty.

Conclusions

The way Ivanhoe operates is no aberration. It is standard operating procedure for mining giants like Barrick Gold, Teck Resources, and Nutrien. Both Barrick and Teck are heavily invested in the new scramble for Africa.

Nor is blame solely on the shoulders of greedy corporations. They are backed to the hilt by government, through tax incentives, subsidies and the fact that Canada has the weakest "white-collar" crime laws in the OECD. It is virtually impossible for exploited people in places like DRC and Bolivia to sue corporations in Canadian courts. This is one of the big reasons for the expansion of mining corporate power here.

Pursuit of profit erases all other concerns. Human rights — in Palestine, in DRC or wherever the ugly Canadians operate — are barely an afterthought, or window dressing.

The brutality revealed by Canada's role in propping up Israel's genocidal war against Palestine has opened many eyes. The pursuit of power and profit revealed in the scramble for Africa is different only in scale. It is time to get rid of double-talk about "Canadian Values" and recognize the only values motivating our government are those that motivate the corporations it serves: profit and greed.



Marching against the dirty mining industry in Toronto

debatable), Canada's imperialistic actions around Palestine, Haiti and elsewhere should be enough to expose the ugly truth: our ruling class is guided, at home and abroad, by corporate greed and the pursuit of profit.

The Ugly Canadian: Mining

A big part of the neo-liberal

Germany and Belgium were enthusiastic and brutal players.

By 1914, almost 90% of Africa was under the direct control of European powers. Looting that began with enslaving humans easily transitioned into natural resources, from ivory to minerals and, as the 20th century dawned, petroleum and uranium.

hands of dictators who supported foreign powers, and kept control of resources and economies firmly in the hands of the new players in imperialism: corporations—especially mining corporations after gold and diamonds.

But in recent years, the crisis of climate change has inadvertently launched a new scramble for

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

A new World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report shows that planetary heating is accelerating. Brian Champ looks at the report's findings and points the way forward for the movement to save the planet.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has declared a red alert. Their recent State of the Global Climate 2023 report confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record with a global average temperature of 1.45 ± 0.12 °C above the pre-industrial baseline (PIB - 30 year average for 1850-1900). This is even more worrying because it reaches the 1.5 °C threshold that was the red line agreed to in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreements.

The last 9 years are the warmest on record and the oceans are the hottest since monitoring began 65 years ago. Oceans are more acidic than at any time in the last 26,000 years. Antarctic sea ice extent is the lowest ever recorded. Ice sheets and glaciers continue to melt at an alarming rate.

Sea levels are the highest ever recorded and rising at more than twice the rate as a few decades ago.

Precipitation patterns are chaotic, with some regions experiencing above normal precipitation leading to catastrophic floods while others marked by a rainfall deficit and drought conditions.

Human costs

Extreme weather is driving severe socio-economic impacts worldwide. Extreme heat affected wide areas of the globe, driving wildfires that have led to loss of life, home destruction and air pollution. Canada's record wildfires dominated headlines here, but the world's single deadliest wildfire last year occurred in Hawaii on the west side of Maui. Caused by existing drought conditions interacting with strong, dry winds influenced by Hurricane Dora well to the south, it killed 100 people, destroying the town of Lahaina. 2,200 structures were lost and 7,500 people evacuated.

Tropical cyclone Freddy formed off the coast of Australia in early February and traveled over 8,000 km in just over five weeks, impacting Mauritius and Reunion in the Indian ocean before making landfall in Madagascar, Mozambique and

Malawi on the east coast of Africa. More than 1,400 people were killed, over 2,000 injured and close to 2 million displaced with Malawi, in the midst of a cholera epidemic, being the worst hit with the storm undermining clean water supplies and food production. Public infrastructure and housing had hardly been rebuilt after the death and devastation of tropical

body concludes that "increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activities have been the major driver of climate change since the industrial revolution."

Climate emergencies occur everywhere but the most vulnerable people, especially in the Global South are also the least responsible

their dominance, even as climate policies are championed that rely on ineffective market mechanisms that allow fossil fuel production and consumption to continue indefinitely when more drastic measures are needed.

Canadian political response

In Canada, this manifests itself in

budget. And the BC NDP government is a major enabler of these policies, calling in the RCMP to ensure that pipelines are built without the "free, prior and informed consent" of Indigenous peoples.

And both Tory and Liberal parties support carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) though it is unproven technology. Two days after the WMO report the Pathways Alliance, a consortium of tar sands producers, filed their first major regulatory application to pursue a \$16 Billion CCUS project in Alberta. They've pursued this project, taking advantage of tax credits and subsidies made available in the Liberal government climate plan.

According to the Pembina Institute in a report published last November, 85 kg CO₂e are emitted for every barrel of oil produced in Canada. If CCUS works these "upstream" emissions would be kept out of the atmosphere. But there are the over 400 kg CO₂-equivalent per barrel emitted "downstream" when the fuel is consumed. Therefore, over 80% of the greenhouse gases from the tar sands would end up in the atmosphere, and these "climate" tax incentives and subsidies for CCUS guarantee further emissions.

Liberal and NDP climate plans do not confront the climate crisis in any real way – rather, they are a screen for continuing Harper era "energy superpower" policies. And there is a real danger of a Tory government in the future under Polievre that would see even worse climate policies enacted. These dangers are made evident by the climate denial politics of Danielle Smith in Alberta and Doug Ford in Ontario.

There is hope. It is in a resurgence of movements for climate justice from below that can bring together Indigenous sovereignty struggles, grassroots environmental movements and continuing strikes by workers against inflation. This mass movement can challenge the bosses who would rather burn the planet than give up their oil and blood soaked profit.



Capitalism has to be smashed to save the planet.

cyclone Idai in March, 2019.

The Mediterranean cyclone, or Medicane, Daniel wreaked havoc in Greece, Bulgaria and Türkiye but hit Libya particularly hard – catastrophic floods in the city of Derna caused by the rains and the failure of two Dams killed at least 4,700 people, with 8,000 still missing and over 40,000 displaced.

Once again an international scien-

tific body concludes that "increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activities have been the major driver of climate change since the industrial revolution."

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The pull and push of US-Israel relations

There's a convergence of interests between the United States and Israel. But their interests aren't identical.

by: Alex Callinicos

The tensions between the United States and Israel have become very visible since Joe Biden's administration failed to veto the latest United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu canceled a delegation that was due to fly to Washington.

He was set to discuss another sore point—how his armed forces can mount their planned offensive in Gaza without causing yet more carnage.

The conflict seems puzzling to many who see the two states as essentially identical—either because Israel is a US puppet or because the powerful Israel lobby dominates US foreign policy.

But neither explanation is true. What we have is a convergence of interests between two states, one much more powerful than the other. But their interests aren't identical.

Israel is a settler colonial state, the product of the Zionist political

project.

Its founding figures were quite clear that establishing an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine would mean dispossessing and expelling the local population.

And they knew that achieving this required the support of the dominant power in the region.

The Ottoman Empire ruling Palestine until 1917 wasn't interested. But Britain, which grabbed it and other parts of the Arab East at the end of the First World War, decided to back the Zionists.

Ronald Storrs, the British governor of Jerusalem, cynically explained that “the enterprise was one which blessed him that gave as well as him that took, by forming for England ‘a little loyal Jewish Ulster’ in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.”

This didn't stop Zionist armed groups from waging terrorist campaigns to force Britain to pull out of Palestine after the Second World War.

In 1951 the editor of the “liberal” Zionist daily Ha'aretz

wrote, “Strengthening Israel helps the Western powers to maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East Israel is to become the



watchdog ... if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied on to punish one or several neighbouring states whose discourtesy toward the West went

beyond the bounds of the permissible.”

This was the basis on which Israel attacked Egypt in October 1956 in cahoots with the declining British and French colonial empires.

But the emergence of the US as the new dominant imperial power in the Middle East was announced when president Dwight Eisenhower forced them to withdraw for fear “we lose the whole Arab world”.

Nevertheless, in the June 1967 war between Israel, Egypt, and Syria, Washington became Israel's main supplier of arms, allowing it to consolidate its position as the biggest military power in the region.

This didn't stop clashes. In August 1982 president Ronald Reagan rang Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin to express his “outrage” at Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of Beirut in Lebanon.

He called the slaughter of civilians a “holocaust”. Begin rang back half an hour later to say that he'd ordered a complete ceasefire.

Reagan was worried Israel's siege of Beirut was destabilising the

entire region. But the genocide in Gaza is worse.

The magazine Foreign Policy has run an article headlined “Israel is a Strategic Liability for the United States.” But all Biden's rebukes have been symbolic.

He's just approved yet another arms package for Israel including more than 1,800 of the MK84 2,000-pound bombs that have caused such carnage in Gaza.

Probably the main factor is the relative weakening of US imperialism, Israel—thanks to US aid—has a much stronger economy now.

Netanyahu feels confident enough publicly to defy Washington—intervening in US politics to appeal for the support of the Christian right.

US imperialism is on the defensive. Its managers seem to feel that they have no choice but to shore up their exposed bridgeheads—Ukraine in Europe, Taiwan in the Pacific, and Israel in the Middle East. More disasters lie ahead.

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Why is the media so biased against the Palestinians?

The mainstream media is biased against Palestinians. That bias isn't just in the headlines but in the language it uses when talking about Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The bias flows from the fact that most of the mainstream media won't admit one simple truth—that the state of Israel oppresses the Palestinian people.

A recent, detailed report from the Centre for Media Monitoring showed the extent of this bias. The report's lead author, Faisal Hanif, spoke to Socialist Worker's Thomas Foster.

He said, “We can all cite individual examples, but the report shows broad macro-level facts. “The media, especially within the West, is heavily on the side of Israel.”

“From the statistics we can see the bias and it has been happening for a very long time,” he explained.

“We did a study of language. The terms ‘atrocities’, ‘massacre’ and ‘slaughter’ are heavily used about the deaths of Israelis rather than Palestinians.”

The report found that broadcast channels promoted Israel's right to

defend itself five times more than the Palestinian's right to resist.

And there is a bias towards Israeli sources and against Palestinian sources. Israelis “confirm” events whilst Palestinians “claim” events.

The media describes Israelis as having been “killed” while Palestinians have “died” or “lost their lives” with no mention of the killers.

This language deliberately underplays Israel's murders of Palestinians. “Why is the media saying that Palestinians are just dying? Why have they used the passive tone? The reality is that the Israeli military killed the Palestinians,” says Faisal.

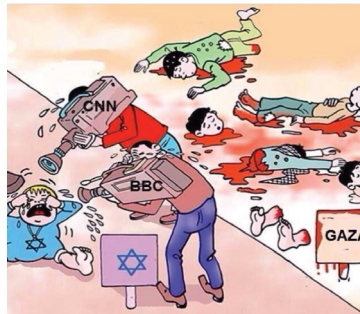
He pointed out that “there's been evidence even within left-leaning media, such as The Guardian, of pro-Israel bias”.

And he added that the newspaper “stays in line with the rest of Western media”. Faisal cites an example where “The Guardian did a story on antisemitic attacks against Jews, and the image it used was of pro-Palestinian protesters holding Palestinian flags”.

Faisal explained there is a dangerous “linking of antisemitism to

the support for Palestine,” with the image creating an “automatic linking of the two that's problematic.”

“People may think better of newspapers like . . . “But from the examples



we cite, they fall into the same trap of pro-Israel bias,” he explained.

The media uses language selectively, with the standard of selection being Israelis or Palestinians.

The implicit statement is that the lives of Israelis matter more than the lives of Palestinians. It also has a part in dehumanising Palestinians.

Even the bosses' press can't only pump out lies

An array of ideas exists in the main-

stream media and sometimes reporting of events can be contradictory.

There are mainstream news outlets that have shown some sympathy for the Palestinians. These outlets can no longer deny Israel's brutality completely, especially when millions have been out on the streets raging against it.

Media bosses know that if they completely ignored Israel's genocide, they would lose paper sales, credibility and viewers.

Mainstream media outlets balance between trying to stay in business and backing up ruling class ideas.

The mainstream media is part of the ruling class apparatus used to try to shape people's ideas. Western ruling classes defend Israel because it furthers their interests in the Middle East.

This means that the media bias towards Israel isn't by chance, but because the media's coverage backs up the ruling classes' imperialist interests.

The reason for the support for the capitalist system is quite simple.

The vast majority of the media is

owned by bosses who make profits and wealth within capitalism and so support it.

The owners of media corporations are part of the ruling class and ensure that the line their editors follow aligns mainly with what they want.

As Karl Marx wrote, “The class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.” The class that owns production “has control at the same time over the means of mental production”, while those “who lack the means of mental production are subject to it”.

The media operates by circulating and repeating the ruling class's ideas to try and make them seem like common sense.

The constant repetition means that dominant ideas appear as the natural order of things. The ruling class creates the illusion that there is a free press. Many mainstream outlets will say they aren't biased. The mainstream media's role as a part of the capitalist set-up shapes the reporting.

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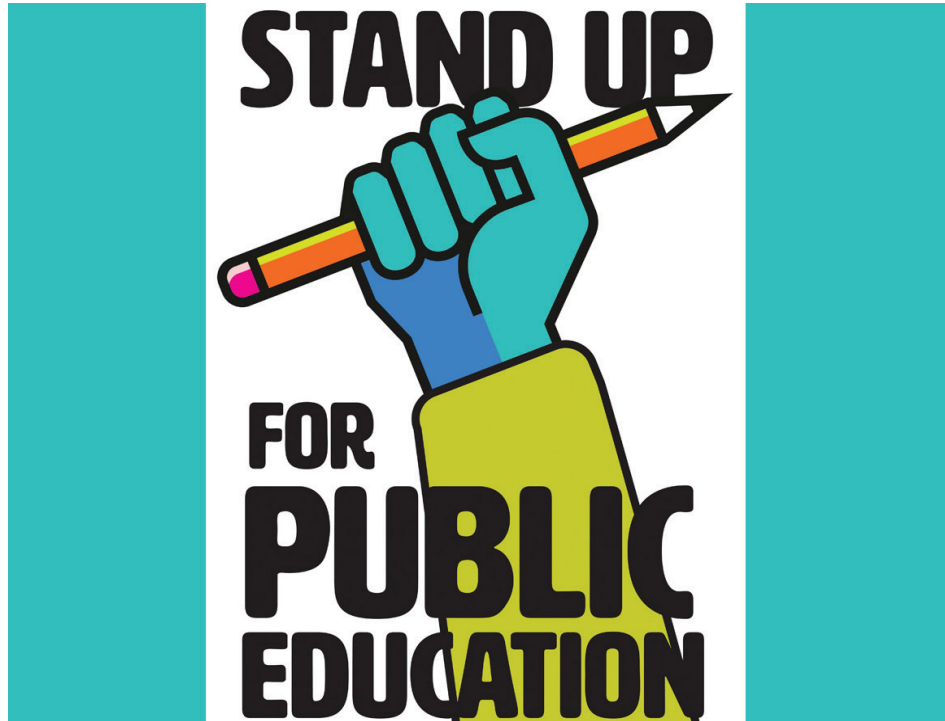
Saskatchewan teachers keep fighting to save public education

by: **Christine Wiercinski**

The Saskatchewan teachers continue rotating days of action as well as withholding supervision at noon hours or at extracurricular activities. They have organized “Tell Them Tuesday” events resulting in 40,000 emails sent to Jeremy Cockrill, Minister of Education; Donna Harpauer, Finance Minister, and premier Scott Moe. During the recent reading of the budget, thousands of teachers had a day long strike and congregated at the Saskatchewan legislature.

The Moe government is feeling the pressure and have added more money for education but the teachers are standing strong. Samantha Becotte, President of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF) remarked that the funding was a good start but if it is not tied to the teachers contract the money can be canceled the next year as this government has done in the past. The teachers are working in a chaotic, even dangerous, conditions with the cancellation of supports such as teacher assistants, school psychologists and speech pathologists.

This budget was obviously an election budget for this fall and the finance minister



had the nerve to call it Classrooms, Care, and Communities. It was an obvious tactic to keep healthcare workers from striking—namely nurses—and get the teachers back to the bargaining table.

The government also talked about the extra curricular province wide basketball tournament—Hoopla—possibly being cancelled due to teachers withdrawal from extracurricular activities.

However after discussing and listening to the students, a compromise was reached and a day long tournament in Moose Jaw went ahead. The students stated they understood why the teachers are taking action and they sided with the teachers.

Even after the government constantly accused the teachers of not being willing to come to the bargaining table and lying about their demands for wage increases, the teachers did meet them to resume bargaining; however it did not last because the government refuses to add terms and clauses in the contract to address classroom size and complexity. The teachers know without this public education is doomed.

Follow the STF for more info and send your letters of solidarity.

LCBO workers fight Ford’s privatization

by: **Pam Johnson**

On March 12, Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) workers, members of Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) held a province-wide day of action to fight for their jobs and against the Ford governments attempt to privatize the LCBO.

LCBO workers had just finished an arbitration that resulted in a retroactive 6.5% wage increase when Ford’s wage freeze Bill 124 was declared unconstitutional. They have immediately entered into the next round of collective bargaining with the Ford government. The March 12 day of action was a kick-off to bargaining and message that they are ready to fight.

They are not just fighting for decent working conditions; they are fighting Ford’s attempt to privatize the LCBO by selling it piecemeal to his corporate friends. The Ford government has already privatized the filling of online orders and have begun shifting distribution to private third-party warehouses. Special orders, printing and information services have also been contracted out.

“It’s pretty clear that Doug Ford can’t be trusted to tell the truth about LCBO privatization,” said JP Hornick, President of OPSEU. This is the same government that was trying to sell off the Greenbelt to make their developer buddies even richer.

It is the same sell off that is going on in

health care. The recently passed Bill 60 will funnel billions from public hospitals into private, for-profit clinics and hospitals. Publicly owned Ontario Place has been leased to a private developer for a luxury spa for the rich.

The LCBO annually generates \$2.5 billion in revenue that goes directly into public services like health care and education. Privatization will gut this funding and it will also lead to the loss of good, unionized jobs with benefits, pensions and sick days.

LCBO workers are fighting to keep those revenues invested in public services and to fight for good jobs. Public sector workers can stop Ford in his tracks, as the CUPE education workers did when they struck illegally and won. These workers deserve our support and solidarity as they ramp up this struggle.



Ford is in for a fight. photo: OPSEU

AGO strike: “Shiny Building, Shabby Wages”

by: **Michelle Robidoux**

On March 26th, 400 workers at the Art Gallery of Ontario walked out after rejecting management’s latest offer which failed to address key issues such as low wages and protection against contracting out.

The strikers, members of OPSEU Local 535, are food and hospitality workers, assistant curators, archivists, visitor service staff, electricians, carpenters and more. Over 60% of these workers are precarious, part-time workers.

Paul Ayers, president of Local 535, said: “Last time we checked, part-time workers still pay full-time rent. We need a deal that makes it possible to earn a living and secure your future while working at the AGO.”

While many AGO workers struggle to make ends meet, CEO Stephan Jost raked in over \$390,000 in ‘consulting fees’ between 2020 and 2021, on top of his salary of over \$400,000. AGO execs are reported to have received salary bonuses of up to 59.6%.

And while AGO nickels-and-dimes its workers, it is building a huge \$100 million expansion to showcase contemporary art. Strikers have highlighted these glaring contradictions with placards that read “Modern Art, Medieval Wages” and “Shiny Building, Shabby Wages”.

At Queen’s Park, NDP MPP Jill Andrew spoke about the strikers: “They helped raise funds for the AGO’s new building, they clean the gallery but are struggling to pay rent and buy

food.” She also linked the issues in the strike to the Ontario government’s underfunding of the AGO: “Because of their hard work the AGO has become a world class destination. And yet this government hasn’t increased the AGO’s budget in over ten years.”

The secret of the AGO’s success is the labour of the workers who design, install and maintain its exhibitions. Instead of pouring millions into exec bonuses and glitzy new construction, the AGO needs to invest in these workers who are struggling to make ends meet.

The lively picket lines have showcased the determination and creativity of AGO workers, many of whom are artists. Join the line at 317 Dundas Street West, and email CEO Stephan Jost and demand a fair deal for workers: stephan.yost@ago.ca.



Holding the line! photo: OPSEU local 503

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The Jewish Labour Bund

by: Peter Votsch

The Zionist movement has presented the Jewish people as a monolith, united behind Israel as the political expression of Jewishness. Thus criticism of Israel is criticism of Jewishness, as put forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in its definition of anti-semitism. There has been an explosion of Jewish dissent from this view since the invasion of Gaza, ie. Independent Jewish Voices, Not in My Name, and has seen a revival of older Jewish Left voices, such as the United Jewish People's Order. This revival is not outside the Jewish tradition- but an important part of it.

'The Pale of Settlement'

In the Middle Ages, Poland was seen as the most liberal of European countries, and thus became the country with the largest Jewish population, due to their expulsion from other European countries (it became home to 3/4 of all European Jews). In the early 19th century, the partition of Poland by the Russia and the Hapsburg Empire, meant that Russia seized most of East Poland, where most Jews lived, thereby inheriting the largest Jewish population in Europe. 'The Pale of Settlement' was formed by the Russian Tsar Nicholas 1, where the majority of Jews were forced to live, in his quest to 'de-Judaize' Russia. The Pale covered a large portion of the West of the Russian empire, including large portions of what is now Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus, though its territory would be further restricted towards the end of the 19th century. The language of the Pale was Yiddish, though Russian was spoken by the upper classes.

Jews were restricted from turning to agriculture by the Tsarist government and the size of the Pale. They were also not allowed to touch machines outside the Pale, and relatively few were accepted into higher education – leaving few occupations open to Jews, hence the stereotype of the Jewish artisan/trader, and in particular, the Jewish money-lender.

Frequent pogroms were a reality of Jewish life – they could last for days, and involved Christian populations, with police and soldiers, egged on by the Tsarist media, entering Jewish areas, beating or killing at random.

The concentration of the Jewish population in the Pale, and its exclusion from Russian life, led to a wave of construction of workshops - early forms of industrialization, inside the Pale, making it one of the most advanced parts of the Russian empire.

Jewish workers were at once forced to defend themselves, and proletarianized, confronting both the anti-semitic Russian State, and their own bosses. This led to the development of radical political traditions.

Birth of the General Jewish Labour Bund

Those radical politics took hold particularly among those Jews able to get an education. They came back into the workshops of the Pale, spreading the ideas of Karl Marx. This foreshadowed the birth of the General Jewish Labour Bund (known as the Bund). It was formed in 1897, by Jewish workers, the same year as the formation of the first Zionist movement, by middle- and upper-class

Jews.

In total contrast to the Zionists, the Bund saw the main contradiction in society as class, particularly the antagonism between Jewish worker and Jewish boss. Bund members spoke of "doykayt" ("hereness"), which explicitly rejected the Zionists call to move to Palestine, pointing out that the struggle was at home, where Jews were at the time. The Bund also saw itself as part of a larger revolutionary workers' movement whose goal was to defeat capitalism everywhere.

The RSDLP and the Bund

The Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) was formed in 1898 as a revolutionary Marxist party, with a third of its members Jewish, and Jews having a firm place in its leadership. It adopted many

leave the RSDLP. Lenin argued that the whole party had to take on the issue of Jewish oppression, not just its Jewish members; that the fight against exploitation could not be won without a fight against racism and other forms of oppression. The fight to overthrow capitalism necessitated maximum unity, not the sum of separate 'federations'. He did not win his argument at this time, and the Bund left the RSDLP.

The 1905 Revolution

In 1905, after Russia lost its war with Japan, demands for reform quickly escalated to a revolutionary situation, when Russian workers, in a demonstration led by a priest, were attacked in the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Revolt broke out everywhere, including in the Pale.



practices from the Bund: a model of the interventionist revolutionary workers' party, the workers' press, the importance of professional revolutionaries.

However at the 1903 conference of the RSDLP, when a split took place between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks (broadly those arguing for a revolutionary road to socialism from below, as against those arguing for a parliamentary strategy), the Bund argued that only they, not the RSDLP, could represent Jews, and that they would simply be 'federated' with the RSDLP.

Lenin argued against this. He did not accept the Bund as the sole representative of Jewish workers, nor did he demand they

The Bund played a crucial role in the revolution, fighting alongside the Bolsheviks, organizing strikes and demonstrations, and agitating for the overthrow of capitalism.

Split in the Bund, the 1917 October Revolution, and beyond

The repression of the 1905 revolution by the Tsarist regime led to a long period of defeats for the working class in Russia, until the advent of World War 1 in 1914. During the war, the Pale, and thus the Bund, was split in two, with part now in Poland, leading to the creation of separate Russian and Polish sections for the first time.

The Bund, particularly in Poland, began to

focus on Jewish cultural organization, rather than building a revolutionary organization. In Russia, while many Bundists found themselves in the leadership of the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks attracted many other Bundists with their determined fight against anti-semitism, which was particularly the case in Ukraine. Those Jews formed the Communist Bund, or Kombund, leading to the dissolution of the Russian section of the Bund. This also occurred in Poland, particularly in industrial centres like Lodz and Bialystok, where over half the Bund joined the Kombund, which in 1922 became part of the newly formed KPP (Communist Party of Poland).

After the ebb of the revolutionary wave of 1919, which swept Europe and the rest of the industrialized world, the Bund in Poland turned towards electoral work, in which it experienced major success within the Jewish community, soundly defeating middle class Zionists in local elections time and again.

However the post 1919 period of revolt would pose a new, much greater challenge to European Jews: the rise of fascism, and secondarily, the rise of Stalinism in Russia.

Stalinism, World War 2 and extermination

By the 1930's, in Stalin's Russia, the many Jews who had been in the leadership of the Bolshevik party, had been driven out (as was Leon Trotsky), executed in the purges, or put on trial at the Moscow Trials of 1936, then executed.

In Poland during the 1930's, the Bund joined with the KPP, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and the trade union movement, in building resistance to the rise of fascism, and grew massively, especially when it came out of its 'shell' in the Jewish community to work with others in the workers' movement.

The Bund led a brave resistance to the Nazis, including the heroic resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto. However most of its fighters were ultimately wiped out.

Thereafter, the Bund stopped being a force in Jewish community in Poland, now a shadow of its former size. Those remaining Bundists who gathered after the war, while accepting the creation of the state of Israel, questioned its establishment on Palestinian land. Many Jews turned to Poale Zion, a left-wing Zionist organization, later to become labour Zionism, which formed the early basis of the Zionist state. However, counter to the intention of Bundists, it was indeed based on Palestinian exclusion.

The legacy of the Bund

The Bund was born out of class struggle. As such, it always focused on the differing class interest of Jewish workers from that of the Jewish middle and upper classes, in complete contrast to the Zionists. It emphasized proletarian internationalism, and the fight to overthrow the capitalist system.

It's weakness is to be found in its insistence on separate organization of Jewish workers within the revolutionary party, mirroring the divisions sown by the capitalist class.

For socialists today, and especially young Jews, it is a living, breathing tradition of Jewish radicalism. In the current context, the Bundist tradition stands in stark contrast to the Zionist myth peddled by middle class 'leaders' in the Jewish community. Thus it can serve as an inspiration to all those who strive for a Free Palestine.



Save public healthcare Join the campaign to stop privatization

by: **Faline Bobier**

Last spring saw an incredible mobilization by the Ontario Health Coalition, a network of local health coalitions in cities and towns across the province. Currently the Ontario Health Coalition represents more than 500 member organizations and a network of local Health coalitions and individual members. OHC members include: seniors' groups; patients' organizations; unions; nurses and health professionals' organizations; physicians and physician organizations that support the public health system; non-profit community agencies; student groups; cultural organizations; residents' and family councils; retirees; poverty and equality-seeking groups; women's organizations, and others.

Member organizations held a public citizen's referendum asking whether or not people in Ontario support the privatization of public hospital services into for profit clinics, currently being pushed by Doug Ford's Tory government.

Polling stations were set up across the province for a two-day vote – on street corners, in workplaces, in front of public libraries, in housing co-ops, etc. The results affirmed what poll after poll tells us – that people want to defend their public health care system and don't want to see the healthcare for profit model that exists south of the border. More than 400,000 ballots from this community-run referendum found 99 per cent of those who voted are against publicly funded hospital services being privatized.

Mounting the referendum was a Herculean effort which involved several months of outreach by members of OHC, recruiting new volunteers in order to get the word out about the vote and the dangers of Ford's privatization by stealth of public healthcare.

In spite of the evidence of last spring's poll, the Ford government is pushing ahead with this wrecking operation. In the most recent budget Ford tried to pretend his government was doing something to address the chronic underfunding of public hospitals, which his government has been spearheading.

As CUPE's Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU-CUPE) pointed out "the increase in hospital funding announced [by the Ford government] is not enough to ease the hospital crisis and will actually cause further deterioration.

"It doesn't keep up with hospital inflationary pressures (of 5.6 per cent) let alone the pressures of an aging and growing population, even as we witness an unprecedented crisis in our hospitals. It's not enough money to improve the staffing and capacity we desperately need. It's not enough to halt ER closures, reduce surgical waitlists, or seriously address hallway healthcare. It's just enough

funding to maintain a perpetual crisis of care," said Michael Hurley, president of OCHU-CUPE.

Ford is copying his Tory predecessor and former premier of Ontario, Mike Harris. Harris laid out the blueprint for privatization: starve public hospitals of funds to pave the way for for-profit clinics that bill patients for "extras" that used to be covered in the public system.

Under the Mike Harris government there was a deliberate strategy of privatizing long-term care facilities so that today over two-thirds of LTCs are privately owned. And of course this benefited Harris and his Tory buddies who sat on the boards of these LTCs and profited personally from the deteriorating conditions for both staff and patients.

We saw the results of this cash grab on the part of Harris and his wealthy buddies during the Covid outbreak, when thousands of people died in LTCs where standards of care had been

steadily declining because the bottom line was the amount of profit that could be squeezed out of the LTCs, not the quality of life and work for staff and patients.

The Ontario Health Coalition, led by tireless fighter and OHC Executive Director Natalie Mehra, is launching a new front in the ongoing campaign to save public healthcare. OHC has begun campaigning and leafleting for a mass mobilization against the privatization of our public hospitals to be held on Thursday May 30 at 12 noon at Queen's Park.

They want to hand out two million leaflets in the lead-up to May 30th and to build the largest mobilization yet against the Ford government's privatization plans but more than that, to build a network of individuals and organizations who understand what's at stake in this fight.

We are fighting for a health care system where people come before profit. The devastation that is already being caused by Emergency departments shutting down in unprecedented numbers, by people being extra-billed for procedures that used to be provided for free in public hospitals, by public money and staff being siphoned into for-profit clinics must be halted if we are to preserve public health care for future generations.

You can take action in several ways:

- Hand out leaflets in your neighbourhood, at work, in community groups.
- Join your local Health Coalition ontariohealthcoalition.ca.
- Join the May 30 protest-and bring friends, family and co-workers.
- Tell your MPP to stop the privatization of our health care.

We know Ford and the Tories won't voluntarily end their attacks on public healthcare. But they can be stopped when healthcare workers and people who depend on healthcare unite.



Thousands rally for public healthcare at Queen's Park

photo: OHC

STOP FORD: No new gas plants

by: **Brian Champ**

When the Ford government first came to office they immediately canceled 750 renewable energy projects at a cost of \$231 million. Under their rule, Ontario has more than doubled the role of gas-fired electricity from 4% to more than 10% moving in the wrong direction on both counts in terms of carbon emissions and air pollution.

Ford plans to expand gas fired electricity even further. His government proposes to build new plants and put money into extending the life of existing plants, like Toronto's Portlands Energy Centre, to extend their life into the future. Opposition to these plans is growing. Town councils in Kingston, Thorold and Halton Hills have voted down proposed new plants, although the Greater Napanee Town Council accepted the bribe of \$400,000 annually to approve a new plant.

This flies in the face of climate science that is clear that emissions must be curbed, not expanded - hardly surprising given the Ford governments climate denial.

But the real beneficiary of this is Enbridge that will continue to rake in profits from supplying the gas for these plants.

And the Ford government has come to the aid of Enbridge again through Bill 165.

Last Fall, Enbridge applied to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to increase rates for

their gas customers to subsidize new hookups to the gas system in new developments - effectively having existing Enbridge customers pay to expand their customer base. In a good

decision, the OEB rejected this proposal arguing that electric heat exchangers were the cheaper alternative for new customers, and that developers could pay for gas hookups themselves.

By bringing forward Bill 165 (the suitably Orwellian "Keeping Energy Costs Down Act") the Tories have gone to bat for Enbridge - increasing costs for existing gas consumers to keep down the costs for developers and subsidizing Enbridge. This Bill has passed second reading, but there will be a hearing on April 8th and 9th at Queen's Park.

Activists from Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!) are mobilizing to oppose Bill 165 outside the Ontario legislature at 10:30 am on April 8 on the theme of Total Solar Eclipse.

By expanding gas fired electricity and bringing forward Bill 165, the Ford government is making energy less affordable now, and undermining prospects for a livable future.

Send an email to your MPP opposing this plan: <https://act.leadnow.ca/oeb-mpp/>

Join the "Energy for People Not Profit" webinar organized by Environmental Defence on April 10th to learn more and to get involved in your community:

<https://act.environmentaldefence.ca/>



Rally at city hall in Toronto against Ford's new gas plants