

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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September 2024 – No. 30

Produced by volunteers and printed with union labour

SOCIALIST SOLUTION



TO CAPITALIST DISASTER

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and the environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Defend wages:** unions should demand cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **For fighting, democratic unions:** run by and for the members to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **Take into public ownership key sectors of the economy:** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

Join Socialist Alternative to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



International Socialist Alternative

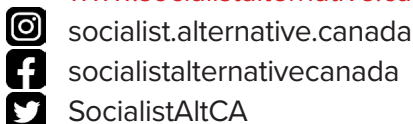
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SA in Action: Pride

The Editors

In the background of Pride this year is a disturbing rise of a far-right movement. Conservative politicians in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta have proposed laws attacking trans youth and there is pressure on provinces to block or roll back sexual orientation and gender identity curriculum in schools. Pierre Poilievre, federal conservative leader, is leaning in this direction. Disturbingly, a growing number of young men are being drawn into hateful anti-women ideas spread by online figures like Andrew Tate.

The growing far right in Canada is a real danger to the rights LGBTQ+ people have won. This is not only about trans kids, today's main target; if they get away with this, they will come after the rest of the LGBTQ+ community, women and racialized people.

These reactionary ideas and actions face resistance with community and union members organizing solidarity rallies across the country.

Socialist Alternative is part of this resistance. Over the summer we attended Pride events in Victoria, Metro Vancouver, Chilliwack, Saskatoon, and Toronto. We spoke to many young working-class LGBTQ+ people who want to take action to stop the right. Many wanted to find out about our politics, as shown by the 132 magazines sold and the \$1,330 raised. Pride began as a protest movement, not as the corporatized street party it has largely become. It took organization and struggle to win LGBTQ+ rights, and that will be needed to defend and extend those rights today.

Socialist Alternative understands that the roots of oppression lie in the capitalist system. Queer liberation means fighting capitalism with a multi-racial, multi-gender, working-class movement. If you agree, join Socialist Alternative! ★



Student Life: Expectations vs Reality

Ray Goerke

University life is supposed to be where bright young minds broaden their horizons, learning from experienced professors at the cutting edge of their field. It's a time when students can test out new ideas and try to make a positive impact in their communities. Graduates earn a degree that recognizes their accomplishments and is the key to starting a satisfying and lucrative career.

This idealized vision of university life was only ever partially achieved and was at best accessible only for a minority of the population. But today the reality of university life is further away from this ideal than it ever has been.

The quality of instruction has gone down while costs have increased. Most undergraduate students will spend little time making a personal connection with their professors; class sizes have ballooned while teaching duties are delegated to underpaid and overworked graduate students, or precariously employed sessional lecturers. Public funding for post-secondary education has dropped, replaced by rising tuition fees, with international students most outrageously gouged, to fill administration budgets bloated by large executive salaries.

In what is supposed to be a time of creative exploration, students are funnelled through increasingly regimented programs that discourage independent thinking. The burden of coursework has exploded in order to meet the needs of "evaluation," where students are sorted by numerical grades that supposedly measure their intellectual worth. What time is left over must be spent working a part- or full-time job in order to pay tuition and rent. The constant pressure to keep up, and measure up, to your peers has serious impacts on mental health. Many students will also have to deal with sexual harassment and violence, an endemic problem on many campuses that university administrations repeatedly fail to address.

More students today finish their post-secondary in debt than ever before, and it's taking them longer to pay it off. Partly this is because there is little connection between what students learn in university programs and the actual needs of the job market. University graduates are increasingly under-employed: doing low-paid work that doesn't take advantage of their education. In our society there is a need for more skilled tradespeople to do socially necessary work,

but young people are told to get a degree to get a well-paid job, even as the level of competition for those jobs make high salaries unattainable for most. Everyone should have the right to pursue higher education for its own sake, not just for the economic benefits, but somehow today's post-secondary education system fails on both counts.

Students Can Change the World

Despite the unhelpful and often hostile environment, students still manage to find the strength and will to fight for a better education and a better society. University campuses have been and continue to be hotbeds for radical activism and struggles against injustice. From the anti-war and revolutionary movements in the 1960s in the US and France, to Québec's Maple Spring protests against tuition hikes in 2012, and to today with the student encampments

against the genocidal slaughter in Gaza, students have been the driving force behind mass movements.

The critical lesson from historical movements is that while students have the radical and creative energy to raise powerful ideas into the consciousness of wider society, and have the power

to spark mass movements, those movements are most successful when they push the wider working class and the labour movement into action. When mobilized into collective action, the working class has the power to hit the rich and powerful in the only place it really hurts: their pocketbooks. At the nexus of students and workers is the youth, who live in the transition and intersection between both roles. Socialist Alternative Youth is an organization of youth socialists who see the key to fighting injustice as the power of the working class to overthrow capitalism and to build a socialist society free from all oppression and exploitation. Join us!★

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Whose Streets? Towards People-Friendly Cities

Harland Bird and Tim Heffernan

Cities are the world remade by society. So why are they so inhospitable? The high cost of living, air and noise pollution, the many barriers to accessibility, the scarcity of communal gathering places and green space, the high rate of traffic accidents, washrooms and drinking water for customers only, narrow or no sidewalks — all of this adds up and imbues cities, which are home to over 55 percent of humanity, with a hostility towards human well-being. Why are they like this?

Cities are not only the product of human imagination and ingenuity, but also of the present socio-economic system, capitalism. This undemocratic system puts decision-making powers almost entirely in the hands of capitalists. It is no surprise, therefore, that cities are designed primarily to serve the interests of the wealthy — interests that are usually opposed to poor and working people's needs.

Capitalists and their friends in government decided to design and build the urban landscape around the cars they sell us. Across the US, General Motors, Firestone Tire and some oil companies bought up electric streetcar companies only to rip up the lines and replace them with GM-made busses and cars. This was good for corporate profits, but bad for the poor and working people who actually have to live in these cities and navigate its traffic jams. In Canada, there are between three and five paved parking spots for every vehicle, and between 50 and 60 percent of the land in many downtowns are reserved for cars. Who would ever vote for that?

Profit-hungry property developers also imposed on poor and working people high-rise towers that blot out the sun, and suburban sprawl (with expensive infrastructure provided by the city government), which isolates people and increases their reliance on cars and other consumer goods. Both replaced small houses and low-rise apartments — a medium density and much more people-friendly landscape.

Capitalists have no desire to encourage community in cities as organized working-class communities are a threat to their economic and political power. There are myriad ways that urbanization has alienated workers from each other, creating a society of strangers and thereby suppressing workers' movements. This is not an accident. Nor was it inevitable. And it can be undone.



People-centric streets: pedestrians, cyclists, mass transit, no cars!

Socialist Cities

A socialist society would level class structures, ending both ghettoization and gentrification. Ending the rule of the capitalists would finally make true democracy possible, meaning that poor and working people could start transforming cities into places where they could thrive.

Public transit could be massively expanded, ending urbanites' reliance on cars and, in turn, reducing the need for parking spaces. This would free up room to build affordable housing, create green spaces and plant trees, install bike lanes, and widen sidewalks. Traffic congestion (and road rage) would be eliminated; children would be safe to play on residential streets; noise pollution would be greatly reduced; front porches would become desirable; social interactions between neighbours would be normal, fostering a sense of community; people's activity levels would increase, and social isolation would decrease, greatly improving their physical and mental health. Green cities would better cope with climate change, while reduced car use would cut CO₂ emissions.

Facilities — parks, schools, health, community, sport and cultural centres, and so on — could also be set up in each community to reduce travel times. Streets would be livelier. Spaces would be public, not privately owned.

Socialist cities would change humanity. Just as people shape cities, cities shape people as they dwell in them. Attitudes, beliefs, and customs would all change for the better. Cities would be safer; trust would increase.

These insights bring new meaning to the activist chant, *Whose Streets? Our Streets!* which is often heard when people assemble to express solidarity and protest capitalism's many oppressions on space normally reserved for cars. It is a declaration of poor and working people's right to the city; it is a demand for people to control not just where they live, but also who they are. ★

Imagine Education in a Socialist World

Martin LeBrun and Manny K

Our education system is so bound up with capitalism that it is hard to imagine what socialist education would be like. Education is meant to prepare young people to function in society. Under capitalism this means that they compete to get into specialized programs, institutions and careers to one day sell their labour in return for a comfortable life, or even run companies and buy workers' labour. Those with money can afford tutors, more prestigious training and take on less debt. Those who "fall short" are more likely to live paycheque to paycheque, land more physically punishing jobs, and rack up crippling debt.

Of course, there are educators and students who try to break the mold by going above and beyond to create meaningful learning, to build connections, to support peers and students. But more often than not, these are uphill battles that require personal sacrifice. Under capitalism education is often paraded around as an opportunity for social mobility and self-actualization. Without a doubt, quality education is important in improving health and a sense of personal development and accomplishment. But ultimately schools help reproduce a society divided by class and various oppression. Schools are limited by what funding capitalism is willing to provide and aim to prepare students for life in a capitalist society.

What would Socialist Education Look Like?

A socialist education system would be different because its purpose would be to prepare young people for a different kind of society.

Socialist economies are democratically planned, so students would need to learn how to plan for and run large organizations as well as participate in democratic decision-making. As such, schools would be co-managed by a committee of students, teachers, custodians and clerical workers. Students' input in decisions that affect them would be welcome. All students and school workers would have active roles in cleaning and looking after their school, opening up opportunities for learning and skill building.

However, student input would not be limited to utilitarian tasks, but also include participation on how to deal with social problems like racism, sexism, homophobia



and transphobia. Truly student-centred schools and classroom environments would be places where people are not just told what to do by the adults in the room. In self-regulating communities of learners, disruptions would be seen as detrimental to learning by the students themselves.

"A socialist education system would be different because its purpose would be to prepare young people for a different kind of society."

Smaller class sizes would allow teachers and educational assistants to provide more personalized teaching and learning environments for all students. Educators would not be chronically overstretched.

We could fully integrate trades, gardening, and arts programs in all schools. Equal value on working with your body and your mind would encourage more creativity and recognize that people learn in different ways. Taking the hierarchy out of the curriculum would erode the elitist ideas that some disciplines cultivate. A socialist society would still have experts, but less specialization. All workers would be engaged in all aspects of their community from sanitation and services, to leisure and art.

Access to fully funded mental health services would support struggling students and identify learning disabilities, neurological, and developmental conditions at an early age. This would ensure that students get the support they need rather than wait years to access expensive assessments.

By eliminating the financial hurdles in our education system, all students would have access to coaching and tutoring as needed. Any competition would then be based on talent, not finances, and would take the form of sportsmanship and recognition rather than a dog-eat-dog race to the top.

Such an education system would no longer work to produce and reproduce a class society, as capitalism would no longer exist. Such an education system would ask everyone to contribute according to their ability and teach everyone according to their needs. ★

Saskatchewan NDP Cedes Rural Vote to Sask Party

Simon Schweitzer

The conservative Saskatchewan Party is heading to its fifth election victory, even after 17 years of misrule. The Sask Party led by Brad Wall, “the demon barber of the prairies,” defeated the NDP in 2007. Over the years the government has carried out a fairly standard conservative austerity agenda of low corporate taxes, resistance to federal climate change measures, privatizing some of the province’s remaining public crown corporations and liquidating the Wheat Pool. While in recent years the Sask Party’s popularity has declined, the NDP seems unable to win unless there is a major scandal.

It may seem hard to understand how the political landscape has completely reversed, from the birthplace of public health care and a leader of social democracy, to home of one Canada’s strongest centre-right provincial parties. This shift is due to several trends in the province. Agriculture, historically the bedrock of the province, has declined as a share of the economy with the rise of resource extraction including potash, oil, coal and uranium. In farming, family farms are in decline; the number of farms dropped inexorably from nearly 140,000 in the early 1940s to just over 34,000 in 2021.

Bold CCF Program the Key to Its Success

When the forerunner to the NDP, the CCF, was first elected to government in Saskatchewan in 1944, the province was mostly small farms. The CCF’s roots were in the self-organized farmers who relied on cooperation, establishing the Wheat Pool co-operative in the 1920s. Between 1944 and 1964, the party implemented a bold program of modernization extending electricity and water access across the province, boosting education quality, and establishing public transport, utilities and insurance. It encouraged investment in resources, but although they were mostly private corporations, the strong royalties ensured a budget surplus. It had a strong social safety net including, of course, public health care.

The NDP enjoyed a return to government from 1971 until 1982. Their major focus was strengthening the government’s economic role, creating new crown corporations: SaskOil, Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation, and PotashCorp. However, all of these were privatized under the following conservative government, giving a huge gift to big business.

The NDP was re-elected in 1991, as financial mismanagement scandals rocked the conservative party. However, the province was deeply in debt and nearly bankrupt. The NDP embarked on austerity cutting and

“restructuring,” mainly rural health care and education programs. This alienated many in the already shrinking rural communities, and the NDP has done little in the decades since to repair the relationship. The erosion of the social base that brought them into existence and the defeat of their economic policy achievements has left the NDP directionless for decades.

NDP Neglects Struggling Rural Communities

Rural communities in Saskatchewan continue to face significant challenges. Since 2001 the price of farmland has increased around 400 percent, up 15 percent just last year, the highest in the country. Farmland ownership is in fewer and fewer hands, and investors play an increasing role. Close to 50 percent of Canada’s farmers now rent land and it is ever harder for new farmers to join the industry. Climate change is impacting farming with the drought in 2021 causing a historic 47 percent drop in production, the major reason why Saskatchewan was the only province where the economy shrunk that year. Droughts are becoming more common, with a threat of another 1930s Dust Bowl, alternating with periods of extreme flooding.

If the NDP has a program for agriculture and rural life in Saskatchewan, no one ever hears it. The NDP does not have a vision for the future of resource extraction in the province. Current Premier Scott Moe does not have the same high approval ratings as Brad Wall. The attacks on trans youth and the labour dispute with the teachers’ union have driven their support down. The NDP has made some gains recently in urban areas, but they remain a perpetual afterthought in rural ridings. The NDP needs a program that seriously addresses the challenges of rural communities if they ever hope to be a force in Saskatchewan again. ★



New Right on the Rise in BC Election

Violet Forrie

BC's politics is transformed with BC United (formerly BC Liberals, that ruled for 16 years until 2017) folding into the BC Conservatives, whose support and fundraising has soared.

Now, the governing NDP has a tough fight on its hands. The NDP has bet on its record as competent managers of capitalism. It will also try fearmongering about the Conservatives' extremism, but this may not be enough to stop them. NDP's record is a lacklustre list of half-measures and contradictory policies that fail to motivate people who are struggling and looking for change.

Across Canada, the "centre" is collapsing as people search for a way out of multiple crises, especially housing and cost of living. The BC Conservatives are calling for cuts to services, privatization of health care, and threatening the rights of women, queer people, and Indigenous communities. They won't make life better for working-class people, but the NDP's failure to put forward bold socialist policies has allowed the right wing to represent change.

Why This Election is the NDP's To Lose

The housing crisis has only worsened as the NDP maintains the status quo. They have refused to introduce real rent control that protects the rent between tenancies. This has fuelled landlords' drive to evict tenants for spurious reasons and then jack up the rents. Rents remain sky high, mortgages cost an arm and a leg. Developers and landlords have benefitted from the cost of housing, lining their own pockets.

New zoning laws have been pushed to "build supply." Often this means older buildings with affordable rents are demolished and more expensive rental units or private condos take their place. Most new construction will be "market price," i.e., unaffordable. Even if tenants have a "right to return" when new construction is finished, no one can afford to wait for years. It just means more demovictions and displacement of workers.

Many developers are scaling back on new housing construction to keep demand and prices high. BC needs a massive public housing campaign with a jobs program to ensure affordable housing for all.

The NDP reinstated 55 percent card check union certification, a win for workers. Union drives have increased in BC, but few of the newly unionized workplaces have won a decent contract. The NDP could help, but instead they leave workers to fend for themselves. They refused to grant a COLA to BCGEU, the largest public-sector union in BC, whose members have supported and campaigned for the NDP for years.



BC NDP Premier Eby refuses to stop destructive LNG fracking

Old Growth logging was partially regulated under the NDP, with so far two million hectares "deferred," but most is threatened by logging or forest fires. Pipelines and resource extraction have been greenlighted, even as forest fires get worse, supposedly for the purpose of "creating jobs." However, these industries are cutting jobs and scaling back, to boost profits.

Despite an earlier pledge, the government has violated the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The RCMP violently attacked and violated the right of protest of Indigenous land defenders on behalf of the BC government. The NDP supports the unpopular and ineffective carbon tax rather than strong action to produce renewable energy and upgrade buildings.

When Anjali Appadurai ran for the BC NDP leadership in 2022, thousands of young working-class people saw the opportunity to turn the party back into a party of struggle and action. Instead, the party bureaucracy squashed her candidacy.

How We Can Stop the Right

Without a challenge to capitalist crises, a surge in the far right becomes inevitable. The NDP is the least bad option on the ballot this election. But even if they win, the BC Conservatives' support will increase, and the next election could see a right-wing victory. Only a dynamic working-class party with a bold program can prevent this ascendancy.

Such a party must be actively built by thousands of working-class people, activists, and their unions. It needs democratic discussion, debates, and internal elections with right-of-recall of party leadership. The party should derive its strength from grassroots workers' campaigns in the streets and in workplaces and use our collective power for change. ★

Why Work Sucks!

Leslie Kemp

Work is an innate part of being human. Work not only provides the means for people to live, it fosters creativity: a job done well can be deeply satisfying. But under capitalism, work has become alienating and a source of drudgery for many.

Friedrich Engels's landmark book of 1845, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, details the horrific working and living conditions of the working class in industrial England. For example, miners had "complaints of want of oxygen, excessive dust, powder smoke, carbonic acid gas, and sulphur." Children in Cornwall began to work in mines at age 12, and other children as young as four, five, and seven years are employed transporting ore and coal, and opening and shutting doors to ventilate the mine for workers. The conditions were deplorable, working up to twelve hours a day and at times thirty-six hours at a stretch. There was little consideration for workers' safety or health, yet the wages were better than those of agricultural workers, who earned "starvation rates."

Engels asks: "Why does he work? For love of work? From a natural impulse? Not at all! He works for money, for a thing which has nothing whatsoever to do with the work itself; and he works so long, moreover, and in such unbroken monotony, that this alone must make his work a torture in the first weeks if he has the least human feeling left."

While working conditions today are in most cases not as harsh as in 19th century England, the reality of low wages, safety violations, and lack of autonomy are still part of working life under capitalism. Added to these woes, workers face sexual harassment, bureaucratic systems, malicious bosses and lack of recognition. The plight of temporary foreign workers is

even more dire with no job security, long hours and low pay. During the COVID pandemic, it was workers in long-term care and meatpacking plants that suffered the worse fate, many of them dying in the process of making a living. Even today children as young as six years old work in mines in Congo, extracting cobalt — dangerous work with significant health risks. Worldwide a million children work in mines.

Workers are alienated from what they produce and from the act of producing it. This is as true under today's capitalism as it was in industrial England. Those working in Amazon warehouses or in giant factories are mere cogs in the wheel to create mega profits for some of the wealthiest people on the planet. Their work's only meaning is to maximize profit for shareholders. Workers seldom see the fruits of their own labour; the endless disconnect of workers, factories, machinery, shipping and retail outlets separate the producer and consumer. Even workers who choose meaningful work, such as health care, teaching or social work, face unrelenting pressure to do more and work faster. The quality of care they provide is compromised by the pressure to deliver more and endless paperwork. This leads to a deeper form of alienation: an alienation from their own human nature, where caring for others is innate.

Capitalism creates silos and competition that pits workers against other workers for attention, resources, higher wages and better positions. This leads to hostility, bullying and displaced violence, and other useless antagonisms. Those who work in precarious self-employment — uber drivers, delivery workers — have few connections with co-workers.

The soullessness of much of work leads to a profound alienation that too often manifests in addictions of various kinds such as mindless consumption, substance abuse, gaming, and gambling. It also accentuates the mental health crisis.

We can take inspiration from workers involved in struggle, working collectively for better wages, benefits, safety and a better world. Canadian rail workers recently struck for better conditions, including safety. In 2023, Canada's port workers stood firm against contracting out to companies that compromise safety.

The very act of engaging in struggle and feeling the power of collective action is one of the best antidotes to the despair and alienation so many workers feel. ★



The Life of a Working Student

Anonymous



You wouldn't know it by the size of my student loan debt, but I worked all throughout my biology degree. It was tough, but it was the only way I could afford an education. And getting an education was the only way I could think of to escape a life of monotonous physical labour.

What kind of work did I do to get through university? Monotonous physical labour of course.

In the spring and summer, I travelled Western Canada tree planting, which was gruelling work, and which meant that I was not able to attend class or accumulate biology-related work experience during these months as many students who do not have to work to afford school do. And although it allowed me more time to concentrate on my studies in the fall and winter, my tree planting money usually ran out before the end of the school year, meaning I had to find other work, too. Usually this meant giving up studying time to do odd jobs for people who owned property, like trimming their hedges and painting their houses.

When things got really dire, I had to beg for supermarket gift cards that my school had available for students who were facing starvation. Looking back, I am grateful for this help, but also angry that it was necessary despite how hard I was working.

Neither did all this work save me from racking up tens of thousands of dollars of bankruptcy-proof student loan debt that will probably outlast most of those trees I planted.

It shouldn't have been so hard just to learn about the world I was born into. This knowledge is my heritage as a human being; it is not the university's to sell. ★

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What Makes Me Angry: So Who Fucked the Planet?

Larry Hyink

At a July 10 press conference, Green Party of Canada leader Elizabeth May said, “Baby Boomers have fucked the planet.”

Canadian news outlets reacted mainly to the obscenity, clutching their pearls like a pack of genteel grannies reared in a convent school.

Unfortunately, less time was spent talking about the content of the speech.

May, as she points out, is a Baby Boomer. So, does she remember any great referendum when she was a kid about killing the planet so she and her cohort could live the good life?

Of course she doesn't, because there wasn't one. Decisions being made when boomers were growing up were being made by older adults in charge of the world at that time.

There was plenty of evidence, even then, that burning fossil fuels was going to lead to catastrophic global warming ... but there were profits to be made and the people making the cash only cared about the bottom line.

The whole rant blaming an entire generation is B.S. While we're at it, why not blame the generation of James Watt (1736-1819) whose steam engine got the whole fossil fuel intensive industrial revolution going?

Most people in any “generation” are just trying to live a decent life. The fad of labelling “generations” started with Boomers and went on through Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, etc. It's an artificial structure used for marketing to different groups and, most importantly, to divide people, making it harder to see and act in our common interest.

All people — young, old and in between — are threatened by global warming and the disasters it brings. Unfortunately, decisions are still being made by a bunch of greedy sociopaths who will pass on their wealth and power to younger greedy sociopaths unless the rest of us stop them.

It's CAPITALISTS who've “fucked the planet.” They'll keep on doing it until the planet, or at least our species, is dead.

If May bears any responsibility for this mess, it isn't because she was born in 1954. It's because she sabotaged the eco-socialist movement in the Green Party and remains a supporter of the capitalist system screwing us all.

We need a system focused on everyone's welfare, not the bottom line.

Elizabeth, we need a Socialist Alternative! ★



Leslie Kemp

Many of us struggle to make sense of the world. We are on the precipice of a climate cataclysm, which will have catastrophic consequences for thousands of species, including our own. Humanity faces water shortages, hunger, desertification, agricultural collapse and other capitalism-caused climate calamities. Headlines blare at us about imperialism's never-ending military build-up and wars. There is danger of escalating inter-imperialist conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine and Asia. Refugees fleeing climate catastrophe and war linger in camps for years with many never finding safe refugee and new homes. Racism, sexism and ethnic tensions contribute to the lack of safety that many people of colour and women face in the streets or even in their homes. And the rich just keep on getting richer while many struggle to make ends meet as the cost of living creeps ever higher. And if you are lucky enough to have stable, affordable housing, you are among the few who don't worry about your next rent increase.

Given this picture, it is clear to an increasing number of us that capitalism has failed to deliver on its promise of economic prosperity. For a time, during the post second world war boom, things looked much better. The power of unions and threat of a different economic system (socialism and the Soviet Union's planned economy) forced the ruling class to increase benefits, provide stable housing, health care and other services for the majority working class. However, this post-war prosperity started to fade in the 1970s and 1980s and it has dwindled to the extent that current generations are less well off than their parents. They may never own a home and will struggle with student debts, while trying to find the well-paying jobs promised by their post-secondary education.

A socialist answer to this capitalist disaster is needed more than ever. Not only does socialism provide hope that a better world is possible, but it also offers an alternative to the unending crises and ongoing catastrophe of capitalism. It has positive solutions to the multiple crises of capitalism and points a way forward on many of the issues that capitalism has created.

Capitalism Offers a Grim Future

What has capitalism delivered to the vast majority of humanity — the working class — up to now? What are the prospects for a future under capitalism? Its promise of economic prosperity (rising tides lift all boats) claims to have lifted the majority of the world's population out of poverty. A 2022 *Science Direct* article debunks the narrative, promoted by the likes of Bill Gates and right-wing institutions, that the majority of the world's population lived in poverty

before the rise of capitalism in the 16th century. On the contrary, the rise of capitalism caused a *dramatic deterioration* of human welfare.

In the regions that were studied, "incorporation into the capitalist world-system was associated with a decline in wages to below subsistence, a deterioration in human stature, and an upturn in premature mortality. In parts of South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, key welfare metrics have still not recovered." Where progress has occurred, it has been through the pressure of political and social movements on governments to redistribute income and provide services. Unions fought for decent wages, working conditions and benefits. It is the balance of forces in society (working class versus capitalist class) that makes the crucial difference. In *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Marx and Engels urged workers to overthrow all existing social conditions, saying that workers have "nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

The reality is that capitalism's *modus operandi* is to create division among workers. In the US post-Civil War Reconstruction period, capitalism set out to deliberately create racial divisions among Black and white workers who previously worked together, by paying white workers more than Black workers. Women workers were needed during the second world war to keep the factories running but as soon as the war was over, they were ditched and relegated to be "homemakers." Women today are still fighting for pay equity and against workplace sexual harassment.

The colonization of Africa, Asia and North America robbed natural resources from poorer countries and peoples. Europeans settled in new continents, dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their homes and





territories. Across much of Europe, peasants were pushed off their lands by catastrophes such as the Irish famine and the highland clearances in Scotland. Other people migrated, hoping to find a better life. Today this exploitation continues as capitalist extractive industries mine minerals and fossil fuels, frequently displacing Indigenous populations from their homes and polluting their lands and waters.

While the industrial revolution caused smog and pollution from mining and burning coal, capitalism has continued to plunder lands and waters, polluting the air and water, and causing numerous other ecological disasters (e.g., deforestation, soil degradation, habitat destruction, and unprecedented glacier melt, among many other fiascos). The natural world upon which humanity and all life depends is on shaky ground.

Working Class Has Power to Change Society

Marx and Engels declared in *The Communist Manifesto*, “the [written] history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” It is imperative that we prepare for the overthrow of this system of decay and destruction to bring about a world where both humans and the natural environment flourish. This requires mobilization and struggle. But it also requires a vision of a hugely different kind of world than we have now.

Given the precariousness of the world created by capitalism, the enormity of the task of building a new world from the ashes of the old can seem daunting. Over a hundred years ago, the small but growing working class in Russia, guided by a relatively tiny group of revolutionaries, was able to do just that. Their experience suggests a path forward today. A clear vision of a socialist

society, combined with a determination to defeat the decaying and corrupt Tsarist regime, were two of the essential ingredients. Of course, the Russian Revolution would not have succeeded without a strong leadership and clarity on the task.

The working class, in fact, does have the power to change society. Their labour is the source of all profits. The working class is much bigger than it was in Tsarist Russia — most people today rely on their own labour to provide their livelihood. This includes people working in a variety of private- and public-sector positions, including those doing highly skilled work, those providing essential health, education and social services, and people engaged in productive work to create and build roads, transportation systems, housing, furniture, and those who sew, bake, cook, etc. It is only the tiny minority of wealthy people, who profit from the labour of others, that rely on profits to sustain their rich lifestyles.

Socialism or Barbarism?

A democratic socialist society would get rid of class and eliminate the divisions it creates such as gender oppression, racism, ableism and other isms. It would celebrate and acknowledge what makes each of us unique: our ethnicity, race, colour, gender and life experience. It would respect and enrich the diversity of languages and cultures. It would use skills and talents to benefit the majority. It would share the resources of the planet with all, not just for the profit of a few. It would engage the working class in planning for production and service provision, minimize waste and provide essential living standards for all. Work would be part of an enriching life that sustains both body and spirit and includes ample time for leisure, creating art and community-building. Agriculture would be aimed at revitalizing soil, water, and ecological systems so that all are fed well and harm to plants and animals are minimized. There would be no need for private property — land would be commonly owned and used, stewarded for the enhancement of current and future generations.

The challenge we face is to build this new society. In 1929, Antonio Gramsci said “The old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters.” Less than a hundred years later, this is truer than ever. If we want to see a future for our children and future generations that is not dominated by war, imperialism, and climate catastrophe, we must do away with capitalism and replace it with a new kind of society. Or, as Rosa Luxemburg warned over a hundred years ago, society “stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.” We fight for socialism. ★

Why Humanity Needs Socialism

R O'Brien and Bill Hopwood

Why do things keep failing and breaking? Boeing fails to make airplanes that are safe. A simple CrowdStrike “upgrade” caused millions of computers to crash. A Rogers telecommunications “upgrade” in 2022 meant 12 million Canadians could not contact 911. Trains derail due to broken tracks. Roads in most big cities are congested for hours.

For decades, capitalists have concentrated on maximizing profits and payouts to shareholders and directors. This meant neglecting long-term maintenance and investment. Capitalism’s logic on infrastructure is a race to the bottom. The market logic, “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it,” continues until it is “broke,” and then it must be fixed in a crisis.

Boeing focused on profits, not quality and safety. CrowdStrike didn’t thoroughly test the upgrade. Rogers did not have a backup to its network. Rail companies have cut the inspection and maintenance of tracks. Across many industries, backup systems and Plan Bs have been eradicated to save costs.

As a further boost to business’s profits over several decades, governments slashed taxes on corporations and the rich, leaving less money for infrastructure maintenance and investment. There are still 30 Indigenous communities in Canada without clean water, and many others experience short-term advisories. The International Institute for Sustainable Development estimates Canada’s infrastructure deficit at between \$150 billion and \$1 trillion. This includes roads and bridges, sewers and waterlines, and public transit in need of repairs or upgrades. With rising populations, most Canadian cities are years behind in developing rapid transit.

After Hurricane Beryl hit Houston, nearly 3 million people were without power. Some had to wait 10 days for its restoration. This was during a searing heat wave. The main electricity company in California, the privately owned Pacific Gas and Electric Company, dumped carcinogenic chemicals in a community’s water supply (see film *Erin Brockovich*). It was responsible for multiple forest fires. All to increase profits.

The Climate Disaster

Despite all the warnings about climate disasters including heat waves, wildfires and smoke, more powerful storms and flooding, action on climate disasters is woefully slow and utterly inadequate.

Oil companies are increasing production, chasing massive profits. Governments, including Canada’s, are ramping up the production of fossil fuels.

Corporations’ purpose is not to provide a service; their sole motivation is to make a profit. Profit is a curse to humanity. It comes from exploiting workers and robbing nature.

Workers’ Control

These are international patterns, not confined to one country or to particular political parties. Water crises are becoming more common in the US as are a host of other infrastructure failures across North America and Europe. As the failures are imbedded into the fabric of capitalism, they require more fundamental solutions.

Democratic planning, cooperatives, and unions where workers have control over production are all key to creating a society that encourages and rewards the maintenance and continual improvement of these publicly crucial resources. Vital services — whether water, the internet, or transport — should be publicly owned, not run for private profit.

Workers are aware of the problem and have the skill to fix them. Boeing workers blew the whistle on what was going on. Hydro-Quebec workers recently raised concerns that roughly 70 percent of the company’s strategic equipment has exceeded its “useful life.”

Socialism is where society owns the sectors necessary for life. Separate and competing private fire brigades were replaced by public fire departments in the 19th century, as they were much more effective. The same logic would be applied to many facets of life.

Tackling the climate disaster needs international planning and cooperation, both things that capitalism will not do.

Humanity has the wealth, knowledge and skills to build an internet that is reliable, develop safe transport systems, provide clean water everywhere in the world and tackle the climate catastrophe.

The key is to take control from the tiny minority of the capitalist class, who are dragging the world to disaster. A socialist revolution would liberate humanity from the chains of capitalism and start the transition to a healthy world. ★



English banner from ~1890, influenced by William Morris

Drums of War

Chris Fofonoff

For decades after World War II, humanity dreaded the prospect of a third, nuclear, war. After the fall of the USSR in the early 1990s, triumphant capitalism proclaimed that this prospect was buried. But unless world capitalism is ended, the threat of a decimation of humanity will not be “whether,” but “when.”

For decades US imperialism dominated the world in the era of growing world trade and neoliberalism. That era is over. Wars are spreading across the globe. The central dominant conflict is between the two largest economies, the US and China.

The Rise of Chinese Capitalism

Between 1980 and 2000 China moved decisively to a capitalist economy. Then, for 30 years the capitalists in the West and China mutually benefited. Western corporations gained access to cheap labour in relocated factories, yielding higher profits. The cheap Chinese goods masked the stagnant wages of workers in the west. China imported vast quantities of raw materials, machine tools and luxury goods. The massive foreign investment dramatically increased China’s productive capacity and urban jobs.

Things have turned into their opposite. Chinese factories have the capacity to make more goods than the world can buy. Chinese capitalism is moving from mainly making cheap, low-tech goods to high quality products in communications, computers, renewable energy and electric vehicles, automobiles and airplanes.

The changing Chinese economy is a direct challenge to US capitalism. Western governments are slapping tariffs on many Chinese products.

Inter-Imperialist Conflict

Modern capitalist imperialism is driven by the need to gain new markets. Imperialism is not a policy choice, but an imperative as capitalist corporations and countries fight for markets and power.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative threatens the markets and influence of Western capitalists, pulling nearly 150 countries into China’s orbit. It absorbs some of China’s over-production.

The conflict between the US and China includes technology, with the US blocking China’s access to the most powerful computer chips.

While none of the major world leaders “want” war, the logic of imperialism drives towards wars. Both the US and China are countries in crisis. Both regimes are increasingly relying on nationalism to mask the growing economic woes.



Ongoing War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine shows no sign of ending. Ukraine is supplied with NATO weapons, as part of the wider US-China conflict. Russia is supported by China, as part of the “no limits” partnership, as well as Iran and North Korea. The Ukraine regime is riddled with corruption and the population increasingly weary of war.

US rulers used Russia’s invasion to strengthen NATO. Sweden and Finland joined NATO, and it strengthened ties with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.

Global military spending jumped to US\$2.44 trillion in 2023. Canada’s military spending will reach 2 percent of gross domestic product by 2032, double the level when Trudeau took office. Germany and Japan have stated they will double arms spending. German generals talk openly about preparing for war with Russia this decade.

Danger of Wider Wars

China and Russia are exploiting the US’s backing of Israel to gain support in the Middle East and Global South. However, neither will act in the interests of the Palestinians. There is a risk of a regional war that could draw in the US, Britain, Turkey, Iran, Russia and China.

The mounting tensions over Taiwan and China’s desire to control the South China Sea is a major danger point. A conflict over Taiwan would directly involve the two superpowers with the risk of unimaginable horror.

For an International Anti-War Movement

Governments around the world can find money for war, but not to fund housing, action on the environment or to tackle poverty.

Workers around the world can have no confidence in any of the imperialist powers; none act in the interests of the working class and poor, either at home or abroad.

International working-class action is needed to stop the insanity of war. Imperialist states will have to be disarmed and dethroned, or they will unleash horrors without end on humanity. International Socialist Alternative is part of the global anti-war movement, from start to victorious finish. ★

Chinese Capitalism's Impasse

Maurice Li

China is the world's second-largest economy. Since Xi Jinping came to power, the number of billionaires in China has risen to 814 (according to the Hurun Global Rich List) compared to 800 in the US.

China moved towards capitalism under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. The Chinese dictatorship's crushing of the growing revolution of 1989, centred on Tiananmen Square but reaching far beyond, opened the door to China's capitalist transformation. China's joining the World Trade Organization in 2000 completed the transformation.

Recently, the geopolitical tensions between the US and China have escalated. This conflict is not a struggle between "democracy" and "dictatorship" as the bourgeois media often claims but is a struggle between the two largest imperialist powers for control over markets and resources. Neither the Chinese or US regimes are friends of the working class and oppressed.

China's Crises

China is mired in a property crisis, with an estimated 60 million unsold homes. This has crashed house prices and values (a major form of savings in China), bankrupted several large housing corporations and devastated local governments' finances. It could take a decade or more to clear these unsold units. Without real estate driving the economy, China faces long-term economic stagnation and a debt crisis, which will put increasing pressure on the ruling class. Urban consumer spending continues to be weak, further undermining the economy. Amid this economic downturn, capitalists are seeking new economic drivers by exporting electric vehicles, batteries, and solar power, but they are being hit by tariffs from the US, Europe and now Canada.

China's population is falling, down 7 million since 2020. Despite various measures and exhortations, China's fertility rate is 1.16 children per woman; a stable population needs

a birth rate of 2.1. This decline will reduce the labour force and create an aging population; both will have negative impacts on China's global ambitions.

China is hit hard by climate disaster and pollution even as it continues to expand coal-burning power stations.

The Regression of Capitalism

The sharpening conflict between China and the US signifies a regression for both countries' capitalism. Xi Jinping's abandonment of Deng Xiaoping's era of collective leadership in favor of concentrating power in one person reveals the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime's instability. Unable to resolve social contradictions, the regime resorts to authoritarian rule to suppress dissent.

China has seen various social phenomena in response to the bleak economic outlook and centralized repression. Young people talk of "lying flat," trying to avoid the burnout of long working hours from 9am to 9pm, six days a week. Others talk of "45-degree lying flat," where people can only semi-lie flat due to intense social competition and deteriorating labour conditions.

While encouraging marriage and having children, the CCP cannot solve the persistently high costs of living and child-rearing. Its promotion of "traditional family virtues" and suppressing women's rights are leading more women to reject conservative ideas such as "being a good wife and mother."

Chinese Nationalism and Future

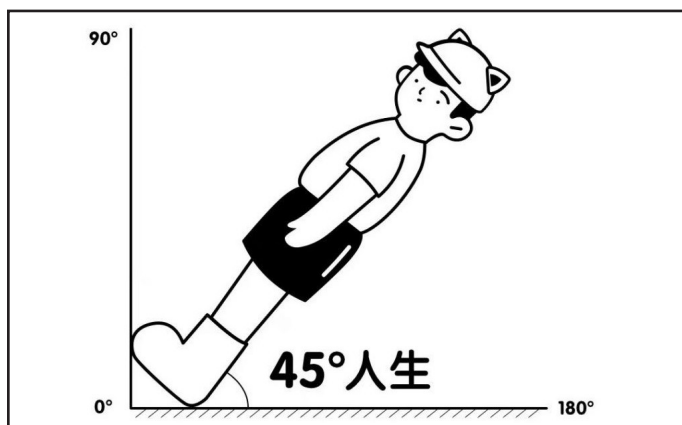
The CCP regime has long used nationalist propaganda as a tool to resist the "foreign forces" of Europe and the US. However, in recent years, with the real estate collapse, economic downturn, declining living standards, rising unemployment (youth unemployment is around 20 percent), COVID-19 lockdowns and the growing strength of women's rights awareness, the effectiveness of CCP nationalism has waned.

Class consciousness is shifting. Strikes and protests reached a new high in 2023 with 1,794 worker protests — up 216 percent from 2022.

To protect its own stability and interests, the CCP will seek to suppress the working class. It will use intensified tensions around Taiwan and the South China Sea Strait to try to divert attention from the internal social contradictions. There is a real risk of war in the region. International Socialist Alternative (ISA) opposes all and any imperialist war and will not support any warring imperialist power.

The Chinese working class urgently needs to organize and overthrow the entire dictatorial capitalist system of the CCP, replacing it with a democratic socialist society. ★

For more on China: chinaworker.info



"Lying flat" has become "45-degree lying flat"

US: A Country Divided

Bill Hopwood

US Ramps Up Conflict with China

US imperialism, long *the* dominant world power, will not willingly give up its supremacy to China. The US has the world's largest military and military spending was \$916 billion in 2024, 37 percent of the world's total.

The US-China conflict includes technology and trade. The US imposed 100 percent tariffs on electric vehicles and steep tariffs on steel, aluminum, semi-conductors, solar panels, and other goods. Other US allies have done the same. The US has blocked the export to China of the most advanced microchips and the machines that make them.

This direction will continue whoever wins the presidential election in November. Governments in the US, as elsewhere, have shifted to economic nationalism and protectionism. Economic patriotism is no substitute for a good job and strong public services.

Deep Fissures and Weaknesses

Until recently, US voters faced an unpalatable choice between two old and deeply unpopular candidates. Over half have an unfavourable view of Trump (52 percent) and even more were negative about Biden (56 percent).

After the Democratic Party's machine persuaded Biden to step down, the Democrats had a few giddy weeks with Kamala Harris as their new candidate. However, every expectation is that the election will be tight as US society is deeply divided.

Harris will not break with Biden's policies and actions that have left millions of Americans angry and alienated. The failures of the Democrats give Trump a real possibility of being re-elected as president.

The "American dream" has turned into nightmare for millions. While economic output has grown since COVID, most Americans do not feel better off due to rising prices. A recent CNBC survey found that 65 percent of them are living paycheck to paycheck. Child poverty more than doubled in 2022 to 9 million kids, as the Child Tax Credit ended. Student debt totals \$1.75 trillion. The average student debt, including private debt, is over \$40,000.

The political system is in crisis. The Republican Party has been taken over by Trump supporters. Despite the temporary energy around Harris, the Democrats are divided. The entire system is deeply disliked. A 2023 Pew study found that only 4 percent of adults say the political system is working extremely or very well and only 16 percent trust the federal government always or most of the time, nearly the lowest level in 70 years.

Money dominates US politics (most Senators of both parties are millionaires), so the rich have inordinate power to ensure they get tax cuts.

Biden has attempted to rebuild some manufacturing, linked to the conflict with China. The federal government is handing out \$1 trillion to encourage investment.

Rather than tax the corporations and the rich, federal debt has piled up to a staggering \$35.2 trillion, the highest per person of any major country in the world. Unlike other countries with massive debts, the US can get away with this for some time as the dollar is the world's major currency. However, a future recession or geopolitical shifts could trigger financial turmoil that would reveal many of the weaknesses of the US economy and society.

Another Road

Most Americans want fundamental changes, with a Gallup poll showing that in 2023, 63 percent of Americans wanted a new party. Sanders in his presidential runs in 2016 and 2020 gave a glimpse of a different path. Since then, he and the other "left" Democrats have loyally supported Biden, casting aside their calls for public health for all, a \$25 an hour minimum wage and other widely popular demands. US workers, hit by the cost-of-living crisis, have gone on a union offensive. They have gone on strike and organized new workplaces, including Autoworkers in the US south.

The campus protests against the US's steadfast support of the Israeli regime's genocidal assault on Gaza are the largest in decades.

A new party that represents working people would gain support and point a way out of the present failures. ★

For more on the US: socialistalternative.org



UAW workers demanding a ceasefire in Gaza

Right's False Promises

Uros Novakovic

Anticipating a victory of the far-right National Rally in recent French elections, the *Financial Times* calmed its readers' nerves. The French bosses, it noted, are already "building ties" with the National Rally. The investors and high-net worth individuals need not worry. The true outlook of the rich is shown that when the BJP did worse in the Indian elections than expected, the stock market took a sharp dive, and the net worth of the richest Indians fell by billions in a few hours.

The nationalist far right has always been aligned with the ruling class. It was the wealthy industrialists who funded the fascists in the 1920s and 30s. It was the nationalists who facilitated the transfer of public property into the hands of the oligarchs in the 1990s in Eastern Europe and protected them from workers' resentment. The so-called "America-first" Donald Trump lowered taxes on the richest few.

Ruling-class media and politicians paint a picture of a world, as the ruling class would like it to be — a world in which the workers' politics, concerns and beliefs are in fact the ruling class's own. The ruling-class propaganda misrepresents nationalism and the far right as a working-class phenomenon. They accuse the workers of far-right ideas to smear the workers as bigoted, ignorant, and racist. Far-right nationalism has never had its basis in the working class. Working people have, through their experience in the workplace and in their daily life, understood the falsehood of nationalist identity politics. Working people, especially when in struggle, practise solidarity across ethnic, racial, or gender categories.

Nationalist Myths

The ruling class offers workers nationalism, because it does not want to offer them any possibility of real political power. It offers the workers made-up myths about national identities in place of reasonable discourse or good jobs. It tells them, to quote Viktor Orban, Hungary's nationalist far-right leader, "you must dedicate yourself to serving those greater things. You have your God, your country and your family." Like any ruling-class politician, Orban omits the real "greater thing" the working people have been dedicated to — the struggle for their democratic self-organization, independent political power, and freedom from the rule of tyrants and capitalists such as himself.

The ruling class uses all its power to exploit and divide working people. It is dismantling the welfare state, privatizing housing and health care, and endlessly lowering the taxes on the rich and corporations. It uses immigration for this purpose. After WWII, the Canadian ruling class



Thousands mobilize to counter far-right protesters in the UK

allowed the immigration of right-wing sympathizers and Nazi collaborators, using them to attack unions and the left-wing Ukrainian organization. In the 21st century, it transformed Canada's immigration policy to favour so-called temporary workers and working students to create a class of workers without rights, whose status depends entirely on their bosses. The Canadian ruling class created a condition of extreme exploitation, while encouraging workers to blame the migrants themselves rather than their exploiters.

As long as the ruling class controls immigration policy, just as it controls taxes, housing, and health care, it will use this against workers. The nationalist far right that is created and allied to the ruling class will not change this. It can offer the working people nothing but xenophobic myths, racism, violence against the weak, and, in the last resort, even extermination of fellow human beings. None of this will protect workers from ruthless exploitation, and all the horrors of capitalism.

Now and throughout history, the populist and far right exploit the failures of left parties to give any solutions to the real anger that many feel at the status quo. A weak left leaves space for the far right to grow.

In order to achieve any of its goals, of dignity, decent life, freedom, and democracy, the working class must take political power into its own hands. Working people should decide on what kind of housing, health care, and immigration policies they want. To do that they must free themselves from ruling-class myths, build class solidarity, and organize. ★

The Israeli Government is the Most Dangerous Force in the Middle East

Ray Goerke

The Israeli regime's nearly year-long genocidal assault on Gaza and the West Bank is an unbearable horror — over 40,000 Palestinians killed and most of the buildings destroyed. Starvation and disease are rampant in Gaza as the Israeli military deliberately targets basic infrastructure and health services.

Whatever the Israeli regime claims, this devastation has nothing to do with ensuring the safety of the Israeli people or returning the hostages.

The state of Israel was created by western imperialist powers to provide a militarized state in the Middle East to defend its interests against fears of Arab revolutions. It still serves western imperialism's regional interests, and its continued existence relies on the ongoing material and military support of these powers, including Canada. Imperialism supported Zionism to provide an ideological basis of support for the state, even among poor and working-class Israelis. The logic of Zionism is the constant expansion into Palestinian territories, violent displacement of Palestinian people, and their replacement with Israeli settlers.

Heading Towards a Regional Conflagration

The Netanyahu-Gallant government cannot survive without achieving its stated aim to destroy Hamas. They have consistently resisted a ceasefire and a release of both Israelis and Palestinians held as hostages.

In a deliberate provocation, Israel carried out two assassinations: Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas in Tehran, and Fuad Shukur of Hezbollah in Beirut. The aim was to drag Iran and Hezbollah into an even deadlier conflict that could engulf the entire region. The Israeli regime hopes that this would force the US and other western powers such as Canada to come to its aid. So far, the Iranian regime and Hezbollah have shown some restraint in not retaliating but this could end any day.



Socialist Struggle Movement (ISA in Israel-Palestine) protests the war and Israeli government

Western imperialism has lost control of the reactionary government that they helped to create. Now Israeli's reactionary leaders are a liability, threatening regional war that could pull in Turkey, Iran, China and Russia and threaten the rulers of several Arab countries.

While western imperialist governments do not want the war to expand across the Middle East, they will not end support for Israel. Thus, they urge restraint and call for a “humanitarian ceasefire” while continuing to supply weapons.

Global Protests Against War and Occupation

People around the world, especially in the Arab world, have protested against Israel's genocidal war, demanding a ceasefire and condemning the assassinations. Protests naturally oppose Israel's military aggression and national oppression of Palestinians. There exists among some a tolerance for Hamas and/or Iran, but socialists know that these forces do not represent the interests of the Palestinian masses nor the interests of the international working class for peace. They do not offer a way to end the repression and killings. The Iranian regime repressed in blood the “Woman, Life, Freedom” mass movement. It is the working class and poor of the region acting on their own behalf, with the support and solidarity of the international working class, which hold the key to peace, not repressive governments nor politically reactionary guerrilla forces.

The international working class has a responsibility to aid the Palestinian masses. They have the power to stop military supplies to Israel and help take down the highly unpopular Netanyahu-Gallant government. Several Canadian unions have passed resolutions demanding a ceasefire and the end of military aid to Israel. In the US, seven major unions signed a letter demanding the US stop arming Israel. These first steps need to escalate, including coordinated strikes, to stop production and shipping of arms.

Socialist Alternative stands in solidarity with the Palestinian masses' struggle for survival. We work for international action to force a ceasefire and prevent further escalation of war. Withdraw all military forces from Gaza, return all prisoners, rebuild Gaza under the democratic control of the residents. For an independent, democratic, socialist, and equal-rights Palestinian state, and for democracy and socialist change in Israel and the region, ensuring equal rights for all nations and all minorities. ★

For more on Israel-Palestine: socialism.org.il

Book Review: Braiding Sweetgrass

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Reviewed by Bill Hopwood

Braiding Sweetgrass is a joy to read. With gentle storytelling, Robin Wall Kimmerer critiques present society's treatment of nature. She combines Indigenous knowledge, gathered by listening to elders, with her scientific training as a botanist. Both forms of knowledge share detailed observations of the world, which are then generalized. She explains how both outlooks are useful to understand the world.

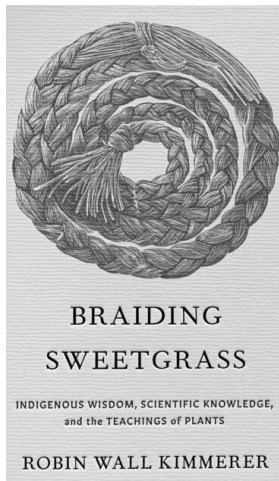
Kimmerer discusses that sweetgrass, long harvested by Indigenous people to make baskets and for medicine and smudging, was becoming less common. Indigenous knowledge keepers held that harvesting sweetgrass, respectfully never taking more than half, increases its abundance. This view was scoffed at by other scientists, so Kimmerer and her student designed an experiment. The result showed harvesting increases its abundance.

Kimmerer skewers "reductionist, mechanistic" science, hoping that "the intellectual monoculture of science will be replaced with a polyculture of complementary knowledges." Good science sees connections, "forming intimacy and respect with other species" and is filled with wonder at the world.

Braiding Sweetgrass starts with the origin tale of Skywoman, falling until she lands on a giant turtle's back, which becomes the earth – Turtle Island. She brings plant seeds and is the mother of all humans. "The original woman was herself an immigrant," leaving "behind all who knew her and who held her dear." Kimmerer's ancestors are from both Skywoman and Europe. "We all are, on Turtle Island, trying to make a home."

Core to Kimmerer's worldview is sharing and reciprocity, between humans and between humans and nature. All humanity's needs are originally met from nature, Mother Earth. Nature is abundant, but if robbed then over time it is poorer. Before capitalism, most cultures around the world had similar values of sharing and profound connection with and reliance on nature.

The Windigo is human that became a monster, endlessly selfish. Capitalism, with its alienation from nature and between people, insatiable greed and rapacious assaults on land, is a Windigo economy. She calls for a "renewal of the world." ★



Asbestos Strike of 1949: A Quebec Turning Point

Martin LeBrun



Seventy-five years ago, a miners' strike in the town of Asbestos became a major foreshock of Quebec's 1960s Quiet Revolution. This Revolution massively secularized and modernized Quebec society and was buoyed by a militant labour movement fighting for better conditions.

Caught between their American corporate employer and the rabidly anti-union government of Maurice Duplessis, five thousand miners sought wage increases, health insurance, and safety measures against the mine's toxic asbestos dust.

The miners voted to strike, rejecting the anti-union government mediators. The government immediately declared the strike illegal, derecognized the miners' catholic labour union (CTCC), approved an anti-picketing injunction and deployed the provincial police. Tensions rose rapidly as scabs were brought in, strikers dynamited the employer's rail line, and police repression and arrests became commonplace.

For the first time in Quebec history, sections of the Catholic Church broke from Quebec's conservative government. For once the CTCC backed class struggle, not just workers' education. Duplessis said strike leaders were "revolutionaries" leading a union with "communist sympathies." Archbishop Charbonneau of Montreal preached that "the working class is the victim of a conspiracy to crush it," and that the Church had a duty to protect the working class. The Church and the CTCC raised almost a million dollars in funds, food and clothing to save the miners!

Having cracked down violently on a picket line, the police blocked off all access to the town. Meanwhile, the miners occupied Asbestos. The police brutally reoccupied the town with a savagery that shocked Quebecers.

Ultimately, another archbishop mediated an end to the 5-month strike. Defeated, the workers did not win any health protections, many faced criminal charges and scab workers stayed on. Yet, they did get their wages tied to inflation, so that in subsequent years their wages were often higher than those of other mine workers.

The Asbestos strike marked a turning point, with society largely backing the miners and the now combative CTCC turning away from the Duplessis government and towards a labour movement with a fighting approach to improving workers' lives. ★

Defend and Extend Public Ownership

Josh Wigmore and Ray Goerke

Creeping privatization is taking place across Canada. Conservative politicians are trying to sell valuable public assets out from under working-class people, so that their rich friends can get richer while the working class will be left holding the bag.

This summer in Ontario, the Ford government fought against the unionized workers of the LCBO (publicly owned liquor stores). The workers were defending permanent full-time positions from replacement by casual jobs. They also understood that the Ford government and the LCBO bosses wanted to increase privatization of liquor sales, which would result in LCBO locations closing, and the loss of those high-quality union jobs. It would also cut public services' revenue by hundreds of millions of dollars. This while public health, education, and transit have had funding cut.

Conservative politicians, including Ford in Ontario and Smith in Alberta, are pushing privatization of health care in Canada. In most provinces, the public health system is woefully underfunded and understaffed, which is cynically used to justify introducing private health providers. But private health care is always either more expensive or of poorer quality than a public system because owners and investors need to make a profit from an essential service. Private health steals trained workers from the public service. Most Canadians know of the horrors of the US for-profit health care system. The horrors are also clear in Canada; during COVID, privately owned long-term care centres had far higher death rates than public centres.

Working-class people and the labour movement need to fight not only to defend, but to extend, public ownership. The recently introduced programs on Dental Care and Pharmacare were unfortunately both missed opportunities. These plans fall far short of what a universal and comprehensive dental and pharmacare system should be. They leave a central role for private insurance companies, who skim off profits from the rest of society. Canada's universal health care system was won by an organized struggle against private doctors, big business and insurance companies. Organized campaigns are needed to stop creeping privatization in Canada.

Public ownership should be expanded to all other essential parts of our society, including telecommunications, transport and banking. Many of these were publicly owned, until privatized in the 1980s and 1990s.

To ensure high quality services, public institutions should be democratically run by industry workers who know best how to organize their work, and by the wider public. Public ownership ensures that service provision is not driven to maximize profits. It is the way to improve services in the interests of everyone. ★



The Working Class Can Stop Climate Disaster (continued from p.20)

The world is awash with energy. The sun powers photosynthesis, its energy drives the winds, waves and rainfall. The moon's gravity powers the tides. Metres below the earth's surface is heat. These sources can be harnessed for power with today's technology.

Harnessing these, and other actions such as making cities livable (page 4), retrofitting buildings and building good public transit, would provide millions of good paying, rewarding jobs.

The barrier to this transformation is not technology or the lack of jobs. The barrier is capitalism.

A Socialist Program for Change

Stopping climate disaster will not be done by politicians, big business and the rich. The working class, Indigenous land defenders and environmentalists have a common cause. Capitalism exploits them all.

Throughout history all changes that benefited humanity came through mass action — the right to vote, public health, building unions and much more. Building a powerful movement is helped by having a clear understanding that

the root cause of many problems is capitalism. One of the most powerful ways to build a movement and pressure is with strike action — this hits the bosses' profits.

Today, the climate movement is debating the way forward and what program and actions are needed. Socialist Alternative's program to tackle the climate disaster includes:

- Health and safety protections for workers to defend against extreme heat and other climate disasters.
- No new taxes on working-class people — tax record corporate profits and wealth instead.
- Invest in publicly-owned, free, high-speed transit networks within cities and between urban and rural areas.
- Public ownership of the energy industries, under democratic control and oversight by workers, for a planned energy transition including:
 - Rapid phasing down of fossil fuel production, replacing it with renewable energy production and storage.
 - Guaranteed jobs and re-training for displaced workers.
 - End planned obsolescence — make quality goods that last. ★

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

September 2024 - No. 30

Suggested donation \$3 / Solidarity donation \$10



Bill Hopwood

The world seems to be heading to a climate apocalypse. Many people feel desperation and despair. But humanity is not doomed.

Climate change is driven by a small minority of humanity — the capitalist class and the super-rich. They make the decisions about what to produce and how. It is in company boardrooms that plans for new oil fields are decided. The ruling class decides to go to wars that cause mass deaths and devastate the environment and climate.

The entire capitalist class is wedded to fossil fuels. Humanity cannot rely or wait on big business and politicians to act. While a minority decides things now, we can change to a world where the majority decides.

Workers' Power

The working class is the vast majority of humanity. Workers live by going to work and getting paid. They sell their time to the bosses and with their wages they buy the necessities of life. Children and students are future workers. Older people contributed to their pensions during their working lives. Small farmers and peasants also work to live.

The working class produces all the goods that are made and transport them around the world. They are the nurses, teachers and care workers that look after people. They produce

electricity, ensure safe water, clean the garbage, run the internet and everything else needed for life. Culture — movies, music and books — all comes because of workers.

Without workers nothing gets done. The power of workers was shown by the rail workers. A few hours on strike and the capitalist class was in a panic.

With all this power, why are bosses still ruling? Much of the media, the law and police back them. They spend a great deal of time and money pumping out propaganda claiming how important they are to society, claiming that without them there would be chaos. They constantly tell the working class the lie that workers can't run society.

The working class, well organized and united, has the power to overthrow capitalism and build a society that protects the environment and provides a decent standard of living for all.

Tackling Climate Change is Realistic

Climate disaster is caused by burning fossil fuels that increase carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This acts like a blanket holding in more heat and energy. Methane also acts like a blanket and most of it comes from fossil fuels and harmful agriculture. The answer to climate disaster is to stop producing and burning fossil fuels.

Politicians and the oil industry claim this would be the end of civilization. A lie! (continued on p. 19)

