

- ★ Taylor Swift p. 3
- ★ Confronting Violence Against Women p. 10
- ★ Shortchanging Transit p. 11
- ★ Stop Trump's Attacks p. 13



FIGHT

THE

RIGHT!

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

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. ★

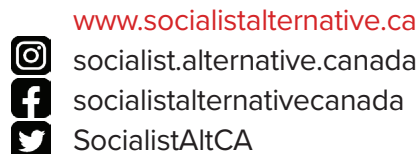


International Socialist Alternative

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The Transit Revolution

Harland Bird

Socialist Alternative members in Victoria, BC are active in the Victoria Transit Riders Union (VTRU), which stands for “fare-free and excellent transit for all!” We understand that a massive expansion of public transit is necessary to address the environmental crisis and improve public safety, health, affordability, and accessibility. Capitalists say service improvements and fare elimination are mutually exclusive; the VTRU demands both.

The VTRU is less than a year old, but its uncompromising approach is already yielding results. After meeting with the VTRU, the BC Green Party made universal fare-free transit part of its election platform. The VTRU successfully lobbied local BC governments to collectively ask the provincial government to make transit free for teens up to grade 12. And the VTRU has won the endorsement of Unifor Local 333-BC, representing transit workers and bus drivers. Socialist Alternative understands that since workers hold the power to change society, the active support of transit workers will be critical in winning free transit.

Capitalists will never willingly build the kind of massive, free, and high-quality transit system we need, because it isn't profitable. To win lasting victories the fight for free transit must become part of the fight against capitalism. In Chile in 2019, a mass movement sparked by students against fare hikes transformed into a general struggle against corrupt Chilean capitalism and overthrew the constitution of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Socialist Alternative fights for a socialist society in which public ownership and democratic control over resources could be used to rapidly build a massive expansion of free and rapid transit within and between cities. Join us, and fight for socialism today! ★



Victoria Transit Riders Union ready to petition

A Working-Class Perspective on Taylor Swift

Grace Bodie and Abram Mardan

Taylor Swift has risen to fame as this generation's pop queen. The richest female musician and highest-grossing female touring act, she's a billionaire with millions of fans — Swifties — willing to spend entire pay cheques for a few hours of viewing Taylor from afar.

Young women, especially, find inspiration and belonging in her message of feminism. Her concerts are a safe space for girls to dance freely, find solidarity in their romantic struggles and celebrate a woman's success. Her concerts provide a sense of community in an alienating world and an opportunity to meet real people, rather than online "friends."

Taylor Swift defines herself as an activist and a feminist. She has suffered misogynist attacks and has spoken out about her position as a woman in the music industry.



Taylor Swift's White-Washed Feminism

Swift's sway is such that she convinces people into believing she is "one of us." However, her feminism is safe. Her tremendous fame gives Swift a platform to speak about women in the most difficult positions like women in Gaza and Lebanon, women in the Congo forced to perform slave labour and single mothers in her own country living on the cusp of homelessness. Yet she is silent on these "hard" issues.

"A feminism that doesn't critique capitalism's extreme wealth is a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Taylor Swift's empire is a clear example of white-washed feminism and girl bossism that dominates the media. A feminism that doesn't critique capitalism's extreme wealth is a wolf in sheep's clothing. This is in sharp contrast to socialist feminism, which understands that class and the capitalist system is intrinsically interwoven with women's oppression.

Capitalism forces women to do unpaid labour in the home so that men have more time and energy to work to generate wealth for the bosses and the bourgeoisie. Along with this economic reality comes a social and ideological justification that has framed women as weaker, dumber, less capable, untrustworthy and as objects.

Although this is shifting with more women rising in the corporate world (which allows them time and money to go to multiple Taylor Swift concerts around the world), breaking the glass ceiling poses the danger that women, under the banner of "feminism," join the capitalist class and perpetuate exploitation and economic disparity.

Reject Liberal Feminism's Idealism

While working-class people continue to grind away, being paid too little for their labour, getting sick and struggling to live a decent life, Taylor can fly on her private jet to France on a whim.

Taylor Swift's feminism ignores that her carbon emissions (which are some of the highest of any individual at 8,293 tonnes in 2022 alone) are going to have

catastrophic effects on women who are hit the hardest by climate change in the "Global South." She ignores right-wing rhetoric occurring in her circle that silences many of her fans.

While workers are stuck trying to survive, Swift perpetuates the status quo by not addressing problems that people face day to day. Socialist Alternative strives to replace liberal idealism with a socialism that acknowledges these struggles and works to create a better future for all.

We'll be damned if we let feminism degenerate into a cozy place for mainly white women in the "Global North" to indulge themselves and pat each other on the backs. To achieve real equality, feminism must be tied to a mass movement for socialism, with the perspectives and demands of the most exploited and oppressed at the forefront — a movement that ensures all women are safe from ethnic cleansing, war, and dangerous resource extraction and that secures fair wages, public housing, child care and free education.

We cannot expect people like Taylor Swift to spearhead this. It's up to regular working women and men to band together to dismantle imperialism and capitalism. While Swift highlights the plights of certain groups, we will fight for the entire working class. While her life is embedded in the current system and liberalism, we must stand against this system. We must move towards socialist feminism and socialist freedom. This is what Socialist Alternative is fighting for. ★

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Voters Shun Incumbents

Simon Schweitzer and Violet Forrie

October's elections in BC, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick were all bad news for the governing parties. In each case, the incumbent party was either defeated or only survived in a weaker position.

After one of the closest elections in BC's history, the NDP will form government with the barest majority. BC's pro-business party dramatically changed. The BC Liberals (the misnamed former right-wing party) collapsed and were replaced by the BC Conservatives. The Conservatives' surge, part of the polarization in society, forced the NDP on the defensive with its lacklustre record. The NDP's campaign focussed on the more extreme views of the Conservatives and appealed to former Liberal voters — neither were a success. They also promised to “do better,” but without any radical policies. Rustad, the BC Conservatives' leader, campaigned hard on a message of change and economic issues. Despite their dangerous platform, they uncharacteristically outperformed among youth, women and workers generally. They flipped several ridings with NDP ministers and made big gains in Surrey, BC's second-largest city.

In New Brunswick, the Liberals won a massive majority against the Conservatives with voters angry over the cost of living, and attacks on Francophone communities and queer youth. Premier Higgs lost his own seat. He alienated voters most with his alignment with Anglophone Christians and social conservatives. NB Liberals campaigned on language rights, opposed attacks on transgender youth, and supported some rent controls and ending the tax on gasoline — out of step with the federal Liberals. However, their win is more down to dissatisfaction than enthusiasm.



Socialist Alternative on a rally to defend Trans youth

The election in Saskatchewan played out almost as a mirror image of BC, with the entrenched conservative government of the Saskatchewan Party holding onto government. It suffered a major setback with several cabinet ministers losing their seats. An energized NDP nearly doubled its share of seats.

Anger over Rent and Prices

Voters' anxiety over the rising cost of living damaged the incumbent parties. Saskatchewan's NDP and New Brunswick's Liberals both ran on cancelling the PST. In New Brunswick, where the cost of housing has doubled in the last five years, the Liberals promised some limited rent controls, as well as increased social assistance rates. Rents in BC have skyrocketed, yet the NDP has not taken any serious action on housing, causing widespread disenchantment.

Voters Reject Anti-Trans Politics

In all elections, the right-wing parties pushed anti-queer and anti-trans policies focused on schools. The Sask Party said its “number one priority” would be following up on last year's unpopular Bill 137 (pronouns in schools), with a new bill to enforce gendered bathrooms in schools. The BC Conservatives promised to end the SOGI 123 program that the BC Liberals had started! New Brunswick's Conservatives introduced anti-trans youth policies in 2023, which led a third of the Conservative caucus to either resign or not run again. Overall, these reactionary policies are not big vote winners, only motivating a narrow core.

Urban-Rural Divide

The urban-rural divide increased. The foundation of Saskatchewan's NDP was farmers, yet it only won the two rural seats in the province's north. On the other hand, the Sask Party lost all but one seat in Regina and Saskatoon. The NDP's decline, outside of BC's south-west corner, continued. Twenty years ago, it had 18 working-class seats in the north and interior, now it has just three. While the NDP lost seats overall it gained seats in Vancouver and the older suburbs.

Right-wing populism is a useful tool for attaining power, exploiting people's anger over austerity and worsening living standards. It attacks the status quo and blames “elites.” Once it wins government, it faces major challenges in holding together its coalition. As right populism sides with bosses over workers, it cannot deliver on its promises. However, failure does not automatically mean defeat at the polls.

Socialist Alternative has warned that campaigning on moderate policies and claiming to be sensible compared to right-wing extremism is not enough to win elections. We argue for a bold, socialist alternative that can provide good jobs, affordable housing and protect human rights. ★

Reconciliation: The Haida Way

Bill Hopwood

The Haida Nation has reached a historic agreement with the BC government — Gaayhllxid/Gíihlagalgang “Rising Tide” Haida Title Lands Agreement — covering all of Haida Gwaii. This is the first negotiated settlement in Canada to recognize an Indigenous nation’s jurisdiction and Aboriginal title over all its traditional territory.

In most of BC, treaties were never signed between First Nations and the government (the “Crown”). Instead, the land was simply taken. Through years of struggle and many court cases, First Nations have established that they have a right to the land that was established before the arrival of settlers and, as these rights have never been “extinguished,” they still exist.

Governments, both federal and in BC, have sought clarity of land ownership and control so that resource extraction industries can exploit the land without long legal battles. The government’s preferred path has been to sign treaties.

The Haida were wary of treaties as the result may be to give up much of their land; they stated a treaty may only give them “five to 15% of our lands and a bit of cash.” This echoes Arthur Manuel’s understanding outlined in *Unsettling Canada* that the role of treaties is to get First Nations to give up their traditional lands and rights for very little in return.

There are still many details of the agreement to resolve. One key issue is the waters around Haida Gwaii that are regulated by the federal government, which is not part of this agreement.

Reactionary Rustad

Not surprisingly, Rustad and the BC Conservatives opposed the agreement, outrageously claiming that it is “a direct assault on private property rights,” even though it states clearly that it does not impact private property.

Rustad, speaking for the resource extraction companies, wants to focus on what he calls economic reconciliation. This is where First Nations get some economic benefits from resource extraction such as mining, fracking, logging and pipelines, but do not control their territory. Some First Nations have signed extraction agreements, partly driven by their communities’ desperate poverty due to decades of government failures. Also, they understand that a project will go ahead whether they agree or not, so they might as well get some benefits.

Most logging or mining operations last around 20 years (a generation) and then the company moves on, leaving



Raising the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole in 2013

behind small new trees, poisoned land and water, or massive toxic tailing ponds. This is hardly thinking for seven generations.

A Pathway for the Province?

There are features of Haida Gwaii that would make rolling out similar agreements across much of BC more challenging. The Haida are the sole claimant to all of Haida Gwaii. In much of the rest of BC there are overlapping territorial claims. However, one could envisage, with good will from the federal and provincial governments, that First Nations could negotiate land agreements where each Nation has a core territory with shared territories co-managed. This was the reality of shared land use prior to European arrival.

Another advantage the Haida have is their lands have not been totally ravaged over decades of resource extraction. Historically there was not a lot of mining, only a few small coal mines. There is a proposed gold mine owned by JDS Energy & Mining, which was involved in a Yukon mine that spilled toxic cyanide into the environment.

While there has been significant logging, about one-third of the old growth forest remains, with the majority in protected areas. The core of the Haida’s success is years of campaigning to protect their lands and waters with protests starting in the 1970s. In 1985 Haida elders blocked logging trucks and 72 people were arrested. Their pressure stopped logging in the south of Haida Gwaii in 1987 and in 1993 Gwaii Haanas became a National Park.

This is a remarkable journey of recovery for the Haida, given that 140 years ago smallpox devastated their population, which fell to 600 from tens of thousands. Over decades they have rebuilt their pride, culture and population and now have a real say about their land. ★

Migrant Workers: Modern Day Slavery

Uros Novakovic

Most newcomers to Canada now arrive as temporary foreign workers and international students, a significant portion of whom enter Canada via what a UN Special Rapporteur described as “a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery:” the low wage stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Temporary foreign worker (TFW) programs are characterized by making workers dependent on employers for both their jobs and status in Canada. In some cases, TFWs are required to reside in employer-provided housing. By making it nearly impossible for workers to report abuse, these programs have led to a proliferation of illegal activity, the vast majority of which will never be reported, let alone prosecuted. They have created fraudulent job postings (as employers are often required to pretend they sought Canadian workers for the job), a black market for work permits (going rate is apparently \$30,000 to \$40,000 per permit), proliferation of debt bondage among migrant workers (who pay brokers for their permits), unregulated working conditions (excessive working hours, below minimum wages, dangerous and illegal tasks), and countless other abuse (including physical violence and sexual abuse).

International students, despite the name of their visa, are often also migrant workers, who in addition to enduring many of the same conditions as temporary migrant workers, also pay “tuition” to institutions with questionable academic credentials. Many international student workers hope to become temporary foreign workers.

Immigration Policy Serves Capitalism

The Canadian state’s immigration policy has, like all its policies, historically reflected the shifting priorities of Canada’s ruling class. In the late 19th century, settlers were granted 160 acres of land in exchange for clearing it, building a cabin, and maintaining roadways in front of their homesteads. European settlers were offered land stolen from Indigenous people and encouraged to settle in the west to prevent American expansion. Access to essentially free land meant European settlers were unwilling to accept low wages, which caused problems for the Canadian capitalist class. The solution was to encourage Chinese (and later Indian) immigration and take advantage of anti-Asian racism to justify paying these workers less.

In 1967 Canada introduced the infamous point-based immigration system to encourage migrants of professional, technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial classes from around the world. In addition to economic growth, the state priority at that time was to fight strong and

determined unions, other workers’ organizations and the idea of socialism.

Canada’s ruling class now feels less restrained after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where capitalism had been abolished, and decades of pushing back the labour movement. Yet, the crises of global capitalism have also made it desperate. The TFW program reflects its current imperative to maximize the exploitation of labour.



Rally in Victoria for Migrants' Rights

Stand with Migrant Workers, Not Bosses

Through temporary worker programs, the Canadian state has been undermining labour and human rights laws to please the bosses. The programs have, understandably, been very popular with the latter. The ruling class and its politicians will pretend to be solving problems they themselves are causing. They will try to shift the blame by stoking racism — the one consistent feature of Canadian immigration policies — and blame the migrants themselves for their illegal exploitation. In the guise of reform, they may even replace current policies with something worse. A requirement for workers to demonstrate allegiance to so-called western values — a euphemism for the unspeakable nightmare of western imperialism — has already been suggested.

No policies made by and for the ruling class are ever in the interests of the working class. By creating new categories of super-exploited migrant workers, the Canadian ruling class has, in fact, intensified exploitation of all Canadian workers. Depriving any workers of rights hurts the rights of all.

The Canadian working class and labour movement must fight for equal rights for all workers. No to modern day slavery! All workers in Canada must be equal. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program must end. The only way for immigration policy to reflect the interests of the working class is for the workers to take political power into their own hands and fight for a workers’ state. ★

The Life of a Factory Worker

Anonymous

It's 5am, I get up and immediately notice the soreness. My neck feels pinched, my right shoulder and hip never seem to feel right. My hands don't exactly hurt but every morning I wake up to them numb — that's carpal tunnel for you.

Most of the year I'm working before the sun's up — in the winter I'm out just before it sets. The company I work for had the genius idea of using an old cold storage warehouse as a manufacturing facility filled with welding, ovens and hot oil. Suffice to say, it gets hot.

I do a lot of welding for my work, and I've gotten my fair share of burns and scars. I still count myself lucky remembering when one of my co-workers got his hand stuck in a press — he'll never have full use of his fingers after that.

"the company... [has] a bright future ahead, not bright enough for a raise though."

Noon hits, we gather in the lunchroom so our HR person can tell us that we won't be seeing any bonus money as our efficiencies did not hit the target. It's a shame, as we were only a half percent short, and some of my co-workers rely on that money. We're then told how the company is in a great place and there's a bright future ahead, not bright enough for a raise though.

Back at my station I can focus on my work again. I don't mind my job. It's nice being able to work with my hands and there's plenty of problem solving.

The bell sounds, it's time to clean up and set up for the next day. After that, I finally clock out. I walk out the door, get in my car and take a moment to decompress before I drive home and get ready to do it all over again. ★



What Makes Me Angry: Gross Inequality and Misleading Politicians

Larry Hyink

Statistics Canada reported that in the second quarter of 2024 income inequality was at its highest level ever. The top 40 percent of Canadians' income was 47 percentage points higher than the bottom 40 percent. The same report said that the top 20 percent held over two-thirds of the country's wealth (the top 1 percent held about 26 percent) while the bottom 40 percent held only 2.8 percent.

Naturally both major parties are blathering about how they will fix things, but the fact remains that income and wealth inequality in Canada has been rising since the 1990s when capitalist governments around the world fell in love with neoliberal economics, which holds that making rich folks even richer, will improve life for everybody else.

The metaphor at that time was "A rising tide lifts all boats." This would undoubtedly be true, unless, of course, you're too poor to fix the leaks or your vessel was chained to the dock. In reality, a way more descriptive metaphor of the real outcome of the policies would have been, "a rising tide lifts all yachts."

Oddly, while the policy succeeded for the rich, the everybody else part of the equation didn't work out so well. We shouldn't kid ourselves. We've had long periods of both Liberal and Conservative governments since the '90s and despite one "having our backs" and the other "putting more money in our pockets," the only group doing better have been those with the means to buy bi-partisan support.

Neither party can bring themselves to levy an adequate wealth tax or do more than offer indignant bleating when confronted with price gouging, wage theft and other examples of corporate malfeasance. Serious attempts to create a more equal society are off the table for fear of killing the goose that lays the golden campaign contributions for capitalist politicians.

Only a party representing the interests of working people in this country can reverse the "trickle down" (or rather, "gush up") economic policies of neoliberalism.

We need a genuine socialist movement and government where those we elect and appoint only make an average worker's wage and are committed to representing the interests of the 99 percent. We need a socialist alternative. ★

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Bill Hopwood and Chris Fofonoff

Trump's shocking victory confirms that a smile, nice words and middle-of-the-road policies are no answer to inequality, falling living standards, anger and alienation. Yet increasingly that is all that Trudeau has for Canadians.

Pierre Poilievre, the Conservative's leader, will be Prime Minister, possibly with the biggest parliamentary majority in a decade, some time in the next 12 months. Only a political earthquake will stop this. Tragically, the NDP, rather than providing a strong pro-worker opposition to the Liberals over the last four years, has been a weak tail to the Liberal dog.

Justin Trudeau was elected in 2015 on a wave of "change," powered especially by young people. During his nine years in government, rents have soared, the Trans Mountain pipeline was bailed out and completed at a cost of \$34 billion, and the hope that millions placed in him, after nine years of Stephen Harper, has completely evaporated. Several recent opinion polls show that more young people support the Conservatives than the other parties.

The disappointment with Trudeau is so great that Poilievre, one of Harper's most reviled cabinet ministers, is now playing to standing room only cheers in halls across the country, while the prime minister sinks deeper into his rut.

The Rent's Too Damn High

When Trudeau was elected in 2015, the average monthly rent across Canada's 35 major centres was \$966. In 2023 it was \$2,193. Over the same time the average weekly wage increased from \$956 to \$1,270. Clearly, landlords are making a killing.

It is the same story for groceries and other essentials. Prices have risen far faster than income for workers. Yet when workers strike for higher pay, as they are increasingly forced to do, the media and big business scream about holding the country to ransom.

It is not workers who are ransoming the country — it is the super-rich and corporations. In 2015, Forbes estimated, there were 39 billionaires in Canada with a total wealth of \$147 billion. By 2024, there were 67 billionaires in Canada with a total wealth of \$315 billion, more than double that of nine years earlier. Corporate profits in 2015 were \$759 billion; by 2023 they were \$1,238 billion. The growth of profits and billionaires' wealth comes from the pockets of workers. No wonder people are angry.

Poilievre has No Answers

Poilievre is good at appearing to be angry. His core electoral program is scrapping the carbon tax. It sounds attractive — pay less for gas. However, doing this will mainly help the rich. Most middle- and low-income people receive more in the rebate than they pay in tax. Those with high fuel uses — doing a lot of long-distance driving or with high heating bills — may also benefit.

Fight th



Locked out ILWU 514 members were on the picket line in Vancouver, until th

Poilievre is successfully riding an international wave of anger against the party in government. In BC and Saskatchewan (page 4) the governing parties suffered major setbacks and New Brunswick's conservatives were booted out of office.

Like many right-wing populists (Trump, Marine LePen in France, etc.), Poilievre is good at appearing to be what he is not. While he echoes the feeling of millions of Canadians struggling to get by and claims to be outside the elite, he has lived the comfortable life of an MP for the last 20 years, since he was 25. He claims to be a friend of working people, and a defender of unions and their right to strike. Yet, while in Harper's government, he attacked unions' rights many times and voted to break strikes with back-to-work legislation eight times. He has consistently opposed raising the federal minimum wage to \$15.

Also, like other right-wing populists, once elected he will not deliver jobs, but will cut public services and rule Canada for the rich and corporations.

Liberals also have No Answers

With the election of Trump in the US, Trudeau will campaign on trying to paint Poilievre as Canada's Trump. Such a campaign will fail just as it failed against Trump or Rustad in BC. The Liberals will be judged and condemned on their record.

Trudeau claims to tackle climate change, yet Canada is miles off its targets. The carbon tax exemption for heating oil blew a hole in any serious policies as it was a naked grab for future votes in Atlantic Canada. Canada's export of fossil

e Right!



Liberal government forced them back to work with compulsory arbitration

fuels is increasing, aided by federal subsidies worth at least \$18.6 billion in 2023. Every year Canadians experience more climate disasters — fires, heat domes, atmospheric rivers, tropical storms, floods and more — all driven by burning fossil fuels, whether in Canada or around the world. Of course, the Conservatives have even less of a strategy to tackle climate change, relying on the unproven carbon capture technology.

The Liberals now echo the Conservatives' claim that reducing immigration will make homes more affordable. It will not, as both the Liberals and Conservatives leave housing to the market, which does not build affordable housing. No party will implement what is needed — a plan to build hundreds of thousands of publicly owned and affordable housing units across the country — which Socialist Alternative supports.

Unfortunately, the NDP tied their future to the Liberals when they agreed to support the minority government in 2022. Socialist Alternative warned at the time: "The NDP is playing a dangerous game by trying to work too closely with the Liberal Party." Their support has flatlined around 20 percent since then.

Productivity Crisis?

Over recent years the business section of Canadian media has been filled with gloom about the slow growth of Canada's productivity of labour. The reason for the slow growth is the lack of investment by big business, even while making record profits. The profits are going to share buybacks, dividends and huge payouts to the top executives.

Back in 2012, head of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, criticized corporations for not investing, instead sitting on piles of "dead money." At that time non-financial corporations had hoarded \$526 billion.

The answer from business writers to slow productivity growth is to cut corporate taxes. Harper cut corporate taxes from 21 percent (already down from 28 percent in 2000) to 15 percent. The result? Canadian firms' investment per worker declined by 20 percent! The capitalists invest in what is profitable, preferring speculative bubbles and especially housing.

But no doubt, the conservatives will respond to the cries about productivity by cutting corporate taxes. The election of Trump will add to Canada's instability. Will he impose tariffs on all Canada's exports to the US? He will push for higher defence spending. All these factors will increase the cuts to much-needed public services and infrastructure investment.

Fighting the Right

Overwhelmingly, Canadians support a wealth tax on the super-rich (around 80 percent), think housing is unaffordable (89 percent) and home ownership is unattainable for most (81 percent), and are worried about climate change (around 75 percent). Hardly the battle cries of right-wing politics.

In Canada and around the world, politics is becoming more polarized and the centre ground, with moderate policies, is collapsing. People are desperate for change; for millions, the present is intolerable. The conservatives are winning because they talk about change.

In the past, the NDP and union leaders knew that to raise workers' living standards and deliver good public services, the rich had to get less. Now the NDP thinks there is place of compromise between workers and big business.

We cannot rely on the NDP to stop Poilievre. But history is made not only in elections. Most important and positive changes come through organizing and mobilizing. Demonstrations, rallies and strikes make change. These won union rights, the right to vote, pensions, and public health.

The last few years has seen an increase in strikes as workers fight against inflation and greedy bosses. Union members are demanding better pay and conditions. They are rejecting sub-par tentative agreements, telling union leaders to fight for better deals. It is this power that can stop Poilievre's inevitable attacks on public services, jobs, the environment and human rights.

Union, community and environmental activists should stand united and organized, first to defeat Poilievre, Trump and others and then to end the system, capitalism, which breeds the despair and anger they feed on. The fight against the right should lead to the fight for socialism. ★

Confronting the Brutal Reality of Violence Against Women

Leslie Kemp

December 6, 1989 is etched in the memories of many Canadians — the date of a horrific anti-feminist mass shooting. A 25-year-old man singled out female engineering students at École Polytechnique in Montréal, murdering 14 women and injuring 10 women and 4 men. Each year, rituals are held across Canada to remember these women and to acknowledge the misogyny and brutal reality of violence that women face merely because of their gender. In 1991, Canada's Parliament declared December 6 a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.



Protest in India over rape and murder of a woman doctor

Misogyny Behind Femicides

In the 35 years since the Montréal Massacre, misogyny was a key factor in at least two other mass murders — in 2018 a man intentionally drove a van into pedestrians in Toronto, killing 10 people (8 of them women) and Canada's deadliest mass shooting, in April 2020, when 22 people were killed in Nova Scotia, after the gunman assaulted his partner.

While special days declared by governments or the UN provide heightened recognition of this reality, incidents, such as the brutal rape and murder of a doctor on duty at a hospital in Kolkata in August, are a reminder that women everywhere and anywhere face violent misogyny. This femicide sparked mass protests against gender-based violence across India and in the Indian diaspora internationally.

Billionaire Predators Shielded from Scrutiny

Serial sexual abusers, many of whom are very wealthy men, pose another threat to women. These billionaire predators include founder of Magna International, Frank Stronach, charged with 18 criminal offenses, including rape, sexual assault and forcible confinement for offences from 1977 to 2024. Peter Nygård, founder of clothing manufacturer Nygård International, was convicted of 4 counts of sexual assault and sentenced to 11 years in prison; charged with 9 counts in New York, he also faces criminal charges in Québec and Manitoba for multiple counts of sexual assault and forcible confinement between the mid-1980s and mid-2000s. Billionaire Robert Miller, former owner of Future Electronics, was arrested for alleged sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors, between 1994 and 2016. One of his alleged victims was 14 years old. Over 400 women have come forward with allegations of rape and sexual abuse against Mohamed Al-Fayed, former owner of Harrods luxury department store in London. These recent

cases — as well as others — raise questions about why rich men are pathological abusers. Money holds power. Does this power imbue them with a sense of entitlement to carry out such despicable behaviour?

While recognizing the perversion of capitalism, a socialist feminist analysis looks squarely at the whole system that both sanctions such deplorable abuse and protects the abuser rather than the abused. Those with obscene wealth are shielded from suspicion and accusations, with the legal system providing further cover for their repulsive conduct. In many of the cases mentioned, there were people in their companies who were aware of the abusive behaviour, but none stood up to their powerful bosses. Harrods' employees, for example, describe Al-Fayed's constant abuse of young women as "an open secret." Yet, it is only after he died that this abuse came to wider attention.

Fighting Misogyny Means Fighting Capitalism

The protection of abusers is built into class society, where women play a subordinate role in society. It takes courage for women to stand up to men who exercise power and domination over them. This is the courage of women like Gisèle Pelicot in France, who publicly came forward to raise awareness of the type of abuse she endured when she was drugged and raped by over 50 men, arranged by her then-husband.

Fighting femicide and sexual abuse means fighting the misogyny that is woven into the fabric of society — it means fighting capitalism, which depends on the exploitation and oppression of many in order to benefit a few. As socialist feminists, we stand up to abuse and applaud the courage of women who resist and speak out. Yet, we must not stop there. We must work towards challenging and dismantling capitalism and replacing it with socialism and a world where women and men are equally valued. ★

Canadian Capitalism Shortchanging Transit



Harland Bird

Japan's "bullet train" (Shinkansen)

An obvious way to address climate change is to transition away from fossil fuel vehicles. In Canada, transport is the second largest source of CO₂ after the production of fossil fuels. Most of the emissions come from passenger vehicles and heavy-duty trucks moving freight. These are the places to start.

In cities, a comprehensive network of reliable and frequent buses and, on the main corridors, light rail or streetcars should be the primary way to get around, along with good facilities for walking and bikes. This would free up space from cars for greenery, wide sidewalks, and more homes.

Canada's extensive rail network connects almost every city and town but is owned and controlled by the private, for-profit Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways that have no interest in passengers. Calgary, Canada's fourth largest city, has no passenger rail connections. A publicly owned network would be electrified and upgraded to shift freight off the roads and vastly improve passenger transit. High-speed trains like Japan's "bullet train" (Shinkansen), which travel up to 320 kilometres an hour, would get people from Calgary to Winnipeg in 4.5 hours!

Personal electric vehicles are not the answer. They will always be an expensive luxury. They consume vast resources in their manufacture and road space in their use. They do nothing to reduce tire dust — a leading source of microplastics, which are harmful to health and the environment. Public transit is the way to go; governments should invest accordingly.

Highway Robbery

Instead, governments across the country are starving transit of funding. Vancouver's Translink is warning of a 50 percent service reduction due to lack of funds, despite increased fares. Work on Calgary's Green Line LRT (light rail transit) halted mid-construction after the Alberta government withdrew \$1.5 billion of funding. The Toronto Transit Commission raised fares and cut services to address a \$366 million budget shortfall. These cuts risk creating

a downward "death spiral" as higher fares and reduced services push people out of transit, thus further reducing fare revenue and leading to more cuts.

But perhaps the clearest failure of the capitalist fares-based system are Canada's rural transit deserts, where service ranges from inadequate to nonexistent.

The money for transit is there, but it is going to roads instead. The BC government is spending \$162 million to widen just 1.5 kilometers of highway that links Victoria with Duncan — brushing aside objections from Indigenous WSÁNEĆ protesters and the risk to a nearby salmon spawning stream. Meanwhile, there are only four bus trips a day between these cities. Alberta's government has dedicated \$76.5 million to widen 29 kilometres of highway between Canmore and Cochrane — a route that has no good transit options. Doug Ford in Ontario wants to build a 55-kilometre tunnel to "widen" part of Highway 401. This madcap plan would cost at least \$60 billion (but probably more like \$200 billion). Meanwhile, transit expansions in the area — such as the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, or the proposed Windsor-Québec City high-speed rail line — have been painfully slow.

All this money would be better invested in transit. This would reduce congestion more effectively than widening highways, as buses and rail lines take up far less space than cars, and it would avoid the environmental damage of highway widening projects. Transit also reduces air and noise pollution and is the most climate-friendly way to travel — not to mention the safest and most accessible. Building and maintaining transit infrastructure like busses and trains would create lots of good jobs, and the products of this labour would benefit everyone, not just car drivers.

But with capitalism in the driver's seat, common sense will always go out the window. Why? Because of the enormous profits from fossil fuels, auto manufacture, and associated industries. Only when capitalism is in the rear-view, and transit systems are publicly owned and democratically run, can reason prevail. A socialist society is required to stop climate disaster. ★

Mass Revolts Rock Africa and South Asia

Ray Goerke

2024 is a year of elections, with nearly half the world's population voting. Incumbents faced uphill battles and major losses, as the global crises makes life intolerable for most of humanity. Many "left" parties continue to defend the status quo, consequently populist and far-right forces have made gains as they are the loudest voice for change, albeit reactionary change.

However, there are other processes for change in the world. Across Africa and parts of South Asia, the working class and youth have demanded change through mass street protests, storming parliaments, and overthrowing their corrupt and authoritarian governments.

Youth Led an Anti-Government Protest Wave

In Kenya in June, protesters occupied parliament to oppose President Ruto's plan to dramatically raise taxes on working people. A day later, Ruto retreated. The Kenyan youth inspired protesters across the continent. When Nigeria's President Tinubu tripled the price of fuel, it sparked ten consecutive days of national protest. In Uganda in July, youth organized demonstrations against government corruption.

These protests, part of a wave lasting all summer, were organized by young people with no connections to official opposition parties or NGOs. Remarkable was the gender and ethnic diversity of the protesters, in regions where religious and ethnic violence has long been the bloody legacy of colonial imperialism.

Protesters faced violent state repression. In Nigeria, hundreds were imprisoned and some tortured. Now eleven activists, including Daniel Akande, member of International Socialist Alternative, face trial for treason and a possible death penalty.

In Bangladesh, students sparked a movement that toppled the repressive dictatorship of Sheikh Hasina. Protests started over the "quota system," a scheme of government nepotism and corruption. The massacre of over a hundred students on August 4 provoked a mass response, forcing Hasina to flee the country. The military appointed a provisional government, which was immediately confronted with a strike wave as textile workers demanded better than the horrible conditions of the old regime.

Attempts to Derail the Movement

In repressive regimes, when movements for reform are successful, the initial victory tends not to satisfy the masses but to raise their appetites further. As the working class feels its own strength, it naturally begins to turn its sights on the whole corrupt and repressive system. But the so-called

"leaders of civil society" and the official opposition do not want these movements to continue, preferring that the masses be content with a few small reforms and a return to "order." The Bangladesh provisional government, although it included a few token student leaders, immediately turned state repression against the striking textile workers.

This is an important lesson for socialists and working-class activists everywhere: there is no longer a "progressive" capitalist class that workers can ally with to win democratic reform. The capitalists everywhere fear the strength of the working class. They will seek to co-opt mass movements and betray them at the first opportunity. Throughout the neocolonial world, capitalism cannot provide a way forward.

Why the Working Class Needs to Take Power

The working class needs to rely on its own strength. The Resistance Committees in Sudan, formed in 2013, are democratically elected neighbourhood committees independent of the government. In spite of the horrific violence and genocide in Sudan, these Committees organize doctors, nurses, and engineers to provide for their communities, they distribute fuel and supplies and coordinate the evacuation of civilians.

In almost every mass struggle and general strike, the working class builds independent democratic bodies. The Resistance Committees echo the soviets, or councils, that the Russian working class formed and used to overthrow Tsarism and establish a workers' state in 1917.

Mass movements overthrow governments, as in Bangladesh, and before that in Sri Lanka. But to defend its gains, the working class needs to form its own government, linking the local committees nationally. Otherwise, it will be "meet the new boss, same as the old boss." The working class and poor peasants in every country share a common interest to defeat imperialism, including their colonial lackies, by the overthrow of their own ruling class. Workers of the world unite! ★



Mass protests in Bangladesh brought down the Hasina regime

Protest Needed to Stop Trump's Attacks

R O'Brien

Trump's victory is a disaster for the working class and represents a further ratcheting up of violence and repression against queer people, women, and immigrants across the US. The Democratic Party's strategy of shifting further to the right and appealing to "reasonable" Republican voters has once again failed to defeat Trump. The need for a new workers' party, independent of the Democrats, has never been clearer.

A bold left-wing program that appealed to the concerns of the working class would have won this election. Even when the Democrats had a majority in the Senate and House, as well as the Presidency, they didn't codify and expand abortion rights, increase the minimum wage as Biden had promised, and introduce Medicare (public health) for All. These policies are wildly popular among both Democrats and Republicans. Voters passed measures to enshrine abortion rights and increase the minimum wage in multiple states that Trump won.

Instead, the Democrats spent the last four years tacking to the right: on immigration, on military expansionist policy, on pro-corporate anti-union interventions, and their "ironclad" support for the Israeli military in the face of a massive outcry of workers and youth.

The sole appeal to the "left" was a "lesser-evil" claim that Trump is a unique threat to US democracy, scolding everyone to "get in line" and subordinate every other concern. But even this argument was exposed as pure cynicism when they courted the endorsement of Dick Cheney, a war hawk who was instrumental in stealing the 2000 presidential election for George W Bush. This clearly indicates that the Democratic Party's allegiance is not to democracy, but to corporate power.

Two Parties for the Bosses, None for Workers

The Democratic Party elite are not stupid. They understand that a bold left-wing program could have won them the election. But the Democratic Party is fundamentally a pro-corporate party. They would rather let Trump win then adopt a popular left-wing pro-worker program. They blocked Bernie Sanders in 2016 and 2020, as his pro-worker policies were too popular. The Democrats have consistently refused to fight on any issue that voters care about.

The Republican Party is of course even worse. Now that they control all three branches of the federal government, they will increase the repression of women and queer people and attempt a mass deportation of migrants. Economically, they will serve the interests of their billionaire backers like



Elon Musk who is fiercely anti-union and eager to smash labour rights even further. They will dismantle any Federal agency, such as the Environment Protection Agency, which is the slightest obstacle to corporate profits. An "America-first" agenda may keep some jobs in the US, but the purpose is to turn the military industrial complex towards sharper competition with China and increase support for Israel, pushing the world further towards the brink of war. Nothing the Republicans do will solve the ongoing crises that drove the working class away from Democrats. They are benefiting from the anti-establishment mood present worldwide.

Resist Trump and Build a New Workers' Party

The second Trump era must be an era of resistance. Just because Trump and the Republicans can make the laws, it doesn't mean the working class and oppressed people have to lie down and take it. Unions are more popular in the US than they have been in generations. They must become working-class organs of resistance to the Trump administration, taking a militant approach to fighting for workers' interests in the workplace, but also in defending all oppressed people who will come under attack.

The working class also needs to draw the lessons from the Democrats' repeated refusal to adopt a popular, winning, pro-worker program. A new workers' party, independent of the Democrats, is needed to openly contest for political power. This is the only way that Medicare for All, abortion rights, higher wages, and affordable housing will ever get on the ballot in the US; but once it does, such a program, backed by mass movements of the working class, will blow both Democrats and Republicans out of the water.

The resistance has already started! ★

More on the US: socialistalternative.org

Book Review: *Doppelgänger* A Trip into the Mirror World

by Naomi Klein

Reviewed by Leslie Kemp

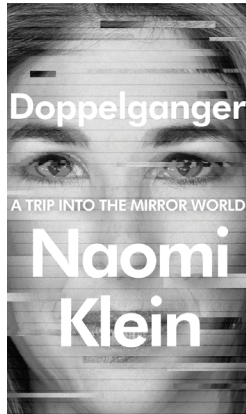
Doppelgänger claims that the Western world has fractured along political and ideological lines to such an extent that each side feels the other exists in a "mirror world." This book maps Naomi Klein's exploration of the double lives of brands, mirror worlds of the far right and far-out, and shadow lands of capitalism and conspiracy, to finally face reality.

Naomi Klein's doppelgänger is Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth* — someone she has been long confused with. The other Naomi's worldview and identity as a strong feminist unraveled during the pandemic and she turned into an ardent anti-vaxxer and conspiracy theorist. Klein obsessively "cringe-followed" Wolf's social media posts and interviews with right-wing hosts.

The book explores how shocking events like the pandemic change reality. COVID drew some "progressives," including New Age wellness adherents, into conspiracy black holes and they moved politically from the left to the right. Many progressive professionals in "Red Vienna," a laboratory for socialist and humanist policies in the 1930s — with 200,000 working-class people in elegant socialist housing, universal welfare programs, and a child-centred society — succumbed to Nazi ideology.

Klein discusses how the right has deliberately and successfully appropriated and distorted the language of the left for its own purposes. She writes, "When entire categories of people are reduced to their race and gender, and labeled 'privileged,' there is little room to confront the myriad ways that working-class white men and women are abused under our predatory capitalist order, with left-wing movements losing many opportunities for alliances that would make us stronger and more powerful."

The mirror world is also about what we choose to see or not to see. As Marxists, we strive to face reality. This means getting rid of the crumbling edifices "stitched together with denial and disavowal," and making a new world without these distortions. She suggests that we choose, not the doppelgänger's path that legitimizes capitalism that is "failing us on every front," but "socialism that Rosa Luxemburg saw as the only alternative to barbarism." ★



Working-Class History: 1949: Smashing a Democratic Union

Bill Hopwood

In 1949, the Liberal government joined shipowners, criminals and a rotten US union to smash the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU).

CSU, founded in 1937, dramatically improved the pay and conditions on the Great Lakes and the Atlantic through determined struggle. Communists helped build the union. Key to its success was onboard delegates: the members needed to resolve issues while sailing. The union had an active membership and a strong democratic structure.

In World War II, Canadian workers built 791 merchant and naval ships. The seafarers were heroes, carrying supplies past killer U-boats. The onboard delegates, libraries and discussion groups created an educated workforce, making the union strong.

After the war, the ruling class returned to their pre-war enemies; internationally, the Soviet Union where capitalism was abolished; at home, the organized working class.

In 1945 Canada had the world's third largest deep-sea merchant fleet. The capitalists got rid of the fleet with the government selling the ships cheaply to international owners, who hired non-union, low-wage crews.

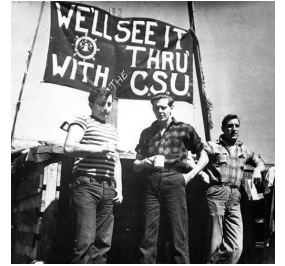
In 1949 the employers, out to smash the union, demanded huge concessions. They signed an agreement with the Seafarers' International Union, a gangster-ridden US union, which had no Canadian deep-sea members. Hal Banks, a well-known criminal, was sent to lead the SIU in Canada. Although illegal for a convicted felon to enter Canada, the government happily broke the law.

This was an all-out battle with odds against the CSU. However, it is better to fight and lose than accept defeat with a whimper.

The RCMP and local police helped thugs and scabs physically break the picket lines. The courts banned picketing during a legal strike. Right-wing union leaders ordered longshore workers to cross picket lines, although many locals resisted for weeks.

Seafarers struck on six continents. Everywhere the courts and police overcame union solidarity. Britain's Labour government joined the witch hunt against working-class militancy, declaring a State of Emergency.

The strike ended in October 1949 and the union folded in 1951. The Liberal government, aided by pro-bosses' unions, had destroyed the union, to the detriment of all workers. ★



Stop War! *(continued from p.16)*

It is becoming ever more apparent that Netanyahu is using war to keep his job. Before the escalation in Lebanon there was a partial general strike and mass protests demanding a ceasefire and the return of the hostages. These have temporarily subsided, but as war weariness increases, opposition to Netanyahu and his policies will increase.

Drums and Dogs of War

The war in the Middle East is being drawn into the global inter-imperialist conflict, led by the US and China, driven by competition for markets, resources and technological domination. Trump will continue sending US arms to Israel. Meanwhile, China and Russia are supporting Iran, which in turn backs Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis. Both sides cynically speak of peace and human rights, while violating both.

Globally, there are currently 56 conflicts, the most since World War II. 92 countries are involved in conflicts beyond their borders. The Russia-Ukraine war is nearing its third year of bloody stalemate with more than 200,000 dead, overwhelmingly soldiers. Now that North Korean troops are fighting alongside the Russians, this is increasingly a conflict between the blocks led by the US and China.

German and Japanese capitalism are ramping up militarism, reversing their post-World War II anti-militarism. Germany is moving towards reintroducing military service and maybe conscription, and announced it should be ready for war with Russia by 2029. Japan's military budget is set to double in the next few years.

And there's the ignored wars, including in Sudan, with a death toll anywhere between 20,000 and 150,000 and another 7 million driven into the desert to face starvation.

The storm clouds of war are gathering in the Western Pacific. According to US Intelligence, China's Xi Jinping has asked the Chinese Navy to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027, prompting the US Navy to prepare for war with China by 2027.

Of course, preparing for war is different than going to war. Generals and arms manufacturers always want more military spending. Most capitalists and their politicians do not want war lest it upsets economic stability. But the risk of armed conflict grows as military expenditure skyrockets. World military expenditure increased for the ninth consecutive year in 2023, reaching a total of US\$2.44 trillion, the highest ever recorded. Canada has announced it will nearly double arms spending by 2032, from the current \$41.1 billion a year.

Workers Can Stop War

Genuine socialists are internationalists and oppose capitalism's wars. The working class should not back one side or the other. The enemy of my enemy is often not the working class's friend. Socialists build international

working-class solidarity in opposition to the warmongers and the war profiteers.

The movement against the war in Gaza and the Middle East shows the beginning of what is possible. Massive anti-war protests across the world have brought people together against the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon. Port workers have refused to ship weapons to Israel. These protests have forced governments to change course, as in Canada where Trudeau agreed to no new arms shipments to Israel. However, this struggle is not over as Canada continues to export previously agreed shipments and components for weapons.



March of Vietnam War veterans against the war

The international anti-war movement needs to be strengthened, linking with workers and unions to take action to stop the export of weapons to Israel.

In Canada, Socialist Alternative has raised over \$5,000 to support our comrades in the Israeli-Palestinian Socialist Struggle Movement, who are fighting to build a working-class, anti-war movement in the region.

The US\$2.44 trillion spent on arms would make a huge difference in providing health care, education and housing, and in tackling climate change! It will take mass movements and social change to realize this.

Edwin Starr's 1970 classic song "War" stated that war was good for "Absolutely nothing!" The lyrics go on to say that war is "nothing but a heartbreaker, friend only to the undertaker," and it shatters young men's dreams by making them "disabled, bitter and mean." Before the final refrain, the song ends with: "They say we must fight to keep our freedom, but Lord knows there's got to be a better way."

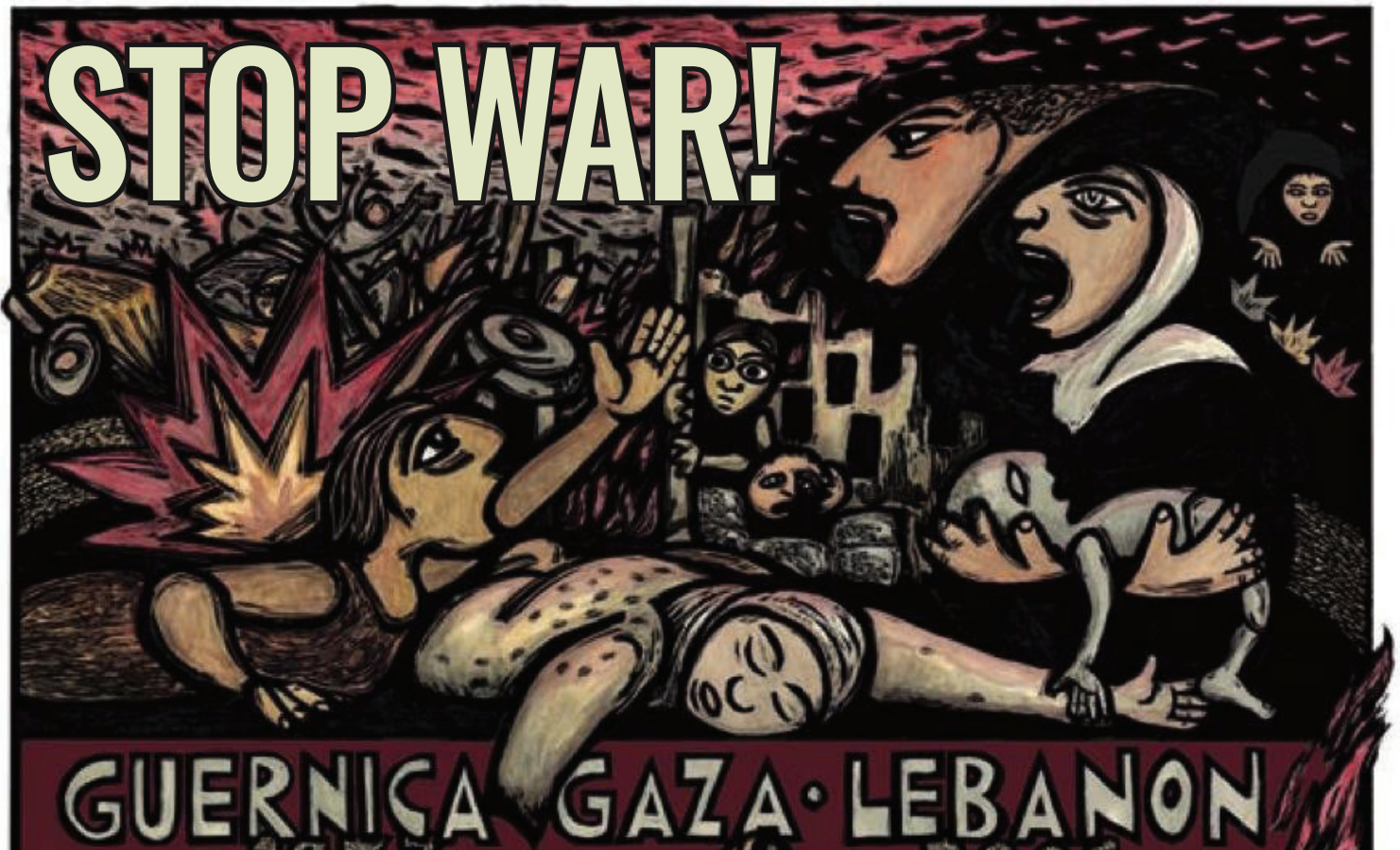
Starr's song was part of the anti-Vietnam war movement, which along with the resistance of the US troops, ended the war. World War I was ended by the Russian Revolution and the mutiny of the German navy and army.

The capitalist class won't end war, as it is used to defend its interests and is good for war profiteers. It is the working class that can end war and then move on to the socialist transformation of society. ★

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Martin LeBrun

part of a poster by Ricardo Levins Morales

The Israeli regime's genocidal slaughter in Gaza seems never ending. Now Netanyahu's regime is trying to provoke a wider regional war. Following the terrorist attacks of exploding pagers and walkie-talkies that killed many innocent people, the war on Lebanon has increased. Bombs on September 23 killed 558 people. At the start of October, Israel invaded Lebanon. Israel claims it is targeting Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, but it is killing thousands of innocent civilians. Over 1.2 million Lebanese people have fled the death and destruction.

Israeli forces have attacked Iran and Syria, while Iran has launched drones and missiles at Israel. US and British forces bombed the Houthis in Yemen, who have fired rockets at Israel and ships in the Red Sea.

Trump's election will further embolden Netanyahu as he knows that the might of US imperialism will continue to protect the Israeli state. Recently, the US sent Israel its advanced missile system, THAAD, and operating troops.

The official death toll in Gaza is 44,000, while a *Lancet* report estimated total deaths due to the Israeli devastation at 186,000, 7.9 percent of the population. Most schools, hospitals and homes have been destroyed or damaged. Northern Gaza is again under total siege as famine stalks the desperate population. The Israeli parliament voted to ban

UNRWA from Gaza and the West Bank, although it is the main provider of aid and relief to these areas. If this action goes ahead, hunger and disease will explode.

Israel's military might, including nuclear weapons, cannot destroy the anger that fuels Hamas's terrorist tactics. Netanyahu's genocidal assault on Gaza and mounting repression and killings in the West Bank will recruit new fighters against Zionism.

Despite Zionism's claim of creating a peaceful homeland for all Jews, it is a political dead end because it is based on the brutal expropriation of Palestinians, and this leads to conflict. The Israeli government cynically exploits working-class Jews' desire for safety to justify its war crimes and to continue its policies of displacement. Additionally, a capitalist Israel requires an exploited Israeli and Palestinian working class, so there will always be inequality and discrimination.

There are huge contradictions in Israeli society. While Israelis overwhelmingly supported Netanyahu's retaliation and massacres in Gaza after Hamas's attack, there were mass protests before October 7, 2023, against Netanyahu's slashing of democratic rights.



(continued on p. 15)