

PEOPLE'S VOICE

CANADA'S LEADING SOCIALIST PUBLICATION

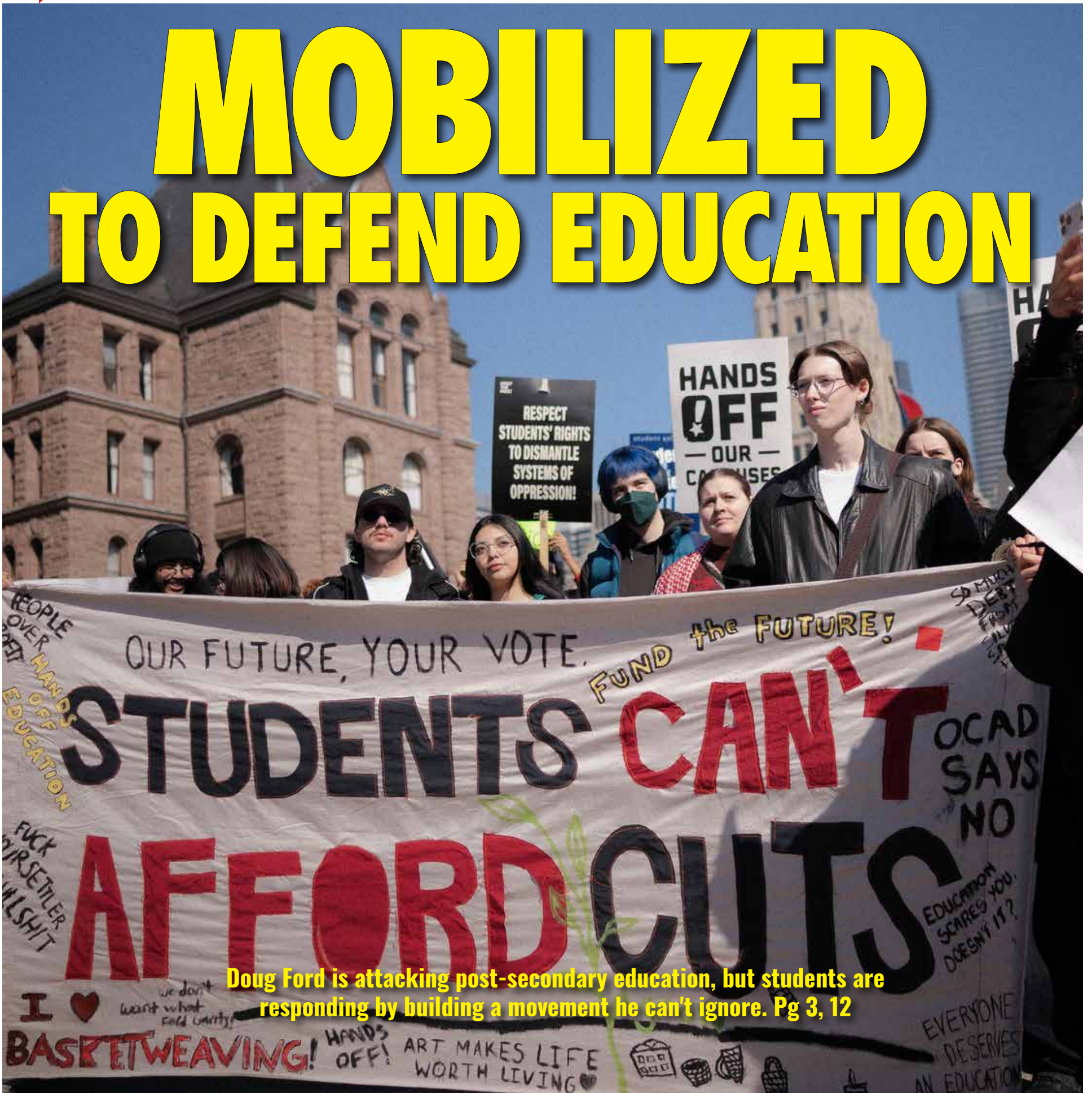
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MOBILIZED TO DEFEND EDUCATION



Doug Ford is attacking post-secondary education, but students are responding by building a movement he can't ignore. Pg 3, 12

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QUEBEC'S BILL 21 WON'T BE RESOLVED BY COURTS

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Pages from our past...

Canadian Tribune Vol 17 No 872 ~ April 12, 1954

Canadian uranium triggers Hell-bomb

The US hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific, the effects of which were felt in Canada as far east as Hamilton, Ontario in radioactive snow, was triggered by uranium sold to the US by the federal government.

Every ounce of uranium mined in Canada today goes to the Eldorado Mining and Refining Corp., a crown company which, through interlocking directors, is controlled by such giants as International Nickel and Ventures Ltd., through the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, member of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Eldorado sells all uranium to the US where it is refined. Only the small quantity required for Chalk River operations is brought back here. The remainder goes into US atomic and hydrogen bombs.

In the House of Commons April 1, External Affairs Minister Pearson, commenting on the hydrogen bomb blasts in the Pacific and its terrible destructive power, said all governments "must approach this problem with a greater sense of urgency than possibly we have been showing in recent months." He said: "I would agree that all governments concerned – and that includes the Canadian government – should take a new look at UN international efforts in this field of the prevention of the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes."

Then the minister added these words: "It may mean that we should re-examine our own attitude towards the question of international ownership of fissionable material as essential to a solution."

Mr. Pearson called again for "deeds, not words" in referring to the new Soviet proposal to outlaw nuclear weapons, for US participation in a European collective security pact and USSR participation in NATO.

A deed by his government to stop the export of Canadian uranium for other than peaceful purposes – as has been called for the Labor-Progressive Party – could be a move that would bring the three big powers in possession of the means of making hydrogen bombs – the US, Britain and the USSR, together with Canada and perhaps Belgium, providers of the main sources of fissionable material – to a conference to outlaw the bombs forever and harness uranium and its derivatives to the production of power for life, not death. ■

No progressive case for war spending



DREW GARVIE

There is a dangerous illusion being sold to progressive-minded people in Canada today: the idea that massively increasing the military budget is somehow a progressive cause, a necessary step to defend Canadian sovereignty against threats from the south.

This is the line being pushed by Prime Minister Mark Carney, and unfortunately, it is being echoed – albeit sometimes with hesitation – by figures within the NDP and the broader left. From a class perspective, this is not just wrong but a trap.

Take the words of Charlie Angus, the former NDP MP now touring Canada with a left-nationalist message. At the end of last year, after the government announced plans for a new militia, he wrote, "This is an unprecedented moment in our nation's history. A people's army is a nonviolent demonstration of resolve. By building networks of grassroots resistance, Canadians are showing our determination to defy the MAGA pressure. But should an increasingly erratic or desperate Donald Trump choose to cross the line, we need to be ready."

On the surface this sounds like a principled grassroots defence against a bully. But what does it mean in practice? The idea that a citizen militia could resist the most powerful military in human history, a force with which our own military is deeply integrated, is simply out of touch with reality.

The Canadian Armed Forces share command structures, early warning systems and supply chains with the US military. A "people's army" cannot be conjured within a state apparatus that is being streamlined for corporate profit and imperialist integration. At best, proposals like Angus's provide political cover for the drive to a war economy by giving progressive-minded people a false sense that militarization can serve defensive ends.

Angus isn't the only one. The contradictions in the House of Commons' "left opposition" are hard to ignore. When Carney announced last June that Canada would raise military spending to 5 percent of GDP, interim NDP leader Don Davies expressed "extreme concern." Yet the NDP's objection was to the scale, not the principle. They had already supported meeting the 2 percent NATO target and to militarizing the Arctic, and during the election campaign proposed cancelling the F-35 contract only to build jets in Canada instead.

The NDP's position reflects a desire to appear responsible on defence while trying to distinguish itself from the Liberals, but it ends up legitimizing the very logic of militarization. Last summer, when they objected to the military spending increase to 5 percent, the NDP stated they "reject any move toward joining an offensive war machine" – but this ignores that NATO is exactly that. It is the US-led offensive war machine, as seen in the bombing of Yugoslavia and Libya. Yet the NDP, like the Green Party and the Bloc, does not call for leaving NATO.

However, the main threat to working people right now is not in the loyal opposition in Ottawa but with the soon-to-be majority government. Mark Carney is the main marketer of the bogus "militarization as a defence of sovereignty" theory. He campaigned on a vague nationalism in response to Trump's threats, but in practice, this has translated into harsh austerity, privatization, deregulation and militarization.

Carney's newly announced Defence Industrial Strategy tries to put a progressive veneer on this process, claiming it will add 125,000 jobs and

featuring "buy Canadian" rhetoric. But this is exposed as a sham by the deep integration of Canadian and US military supply chains. More than 30 Canadian companies currently produce parts for the F-35 program. Magellan Aerospace manufactures the entire tail assembly for the F-35A at its Winnipeg factory. This means that even as Ottawa postures, public money flows to the US defence industry, locking us further into a US-dominated military complex.

The strategy's goal of increasing defence exports by 50 percent reveals its real purpose: not defending Canada, but opening new markets for arms manufacturers.

You cannot square the circle of claiming to defend sovereignty while tripling the military budget to meet demands made by Donald Trump and deepen integration with NATO, which is under direct US military command. In his first Oval Office meeting, Carney himself thanked Trump for being "transformative" in pushing NATO members to increase defence spending.

The idea that we can build a defensive barrier against the US military, with money they demanded we spend and using equipment they control, is a fantasy. In reality, the Carney government is acting on behalf of the banks of Bay Street. This is all about shifting massive public funds to private arms manufacturers, creating far fewer jobs per dollar than investments in healthcare or education, and opening new markets for Canadian arms dealers.

It is true that Carney has also pursued new trade deals with China, Qatar and the UAE, as well as talks of a broader free trade zone with Europe and the Pacific. On the surface this looks like a turn toward genuine independence. But these moves should not be overstated. There has been no major rupture in the US-NATO camp. The transatlantic imperialist alliance remains intact and most of its member states have agreed to the largest militarization drive in generations.

The hypocrisy of Carney's position goes deeper than just military procurement. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, he spoke grandly about the need for middle powers to uphold the UN Charter and defend the principle of sovereignty. Yet his government's actions tell a different story.

When the United States launched its military attack on Venezuela in January, kidnapping President Maduro and murdering over 100 people, Carney's response was not to condemn the aggression but to immediately reiterate Canada's non-recognition of the elected government, providing political cover for the assault. When the US and Israel launched their bombing campaign against Iran, a flagrant act of aggression that has set the entire region ablaze, Carney issued a shameful statement of support, making Canada complicit in what will be regarded as one of the major war crimes of this decade.

On the surface this looks like rank hypocrisy. But it has a clear capitalist logic. Carney is not concerned with the sovereignty of working people in Canada to defend their democracy and living standards. He is concerned with the sovereignty of Canadian monopoly capital to make new deals with US corporate interests as well as corporate interests from other countries, while opening up markets and securing access to resources from underdeveloped countries that are overexploited by imperialism.

The austerity, deregulation and privatization agenda he is imposing at home serves the same

"You cannot square the circle of claiming to defend sovereignty while tripling the military budget to meet demands made by Donald Trump and deepen integration with NATO, which is under direct US military command."



Our annual May Day issue, celebrating International Workers' Day, is a great opportunity to express solidarity with the struggles of working people across the globe for peace in the face of war, aggression and genocide; for jobs and incomes in the face of unemployment, poverty and income disparity; for socialism in the face of rising reaction.

As we've done for many years, PV is inviting unions and progressive organizations to take out May Day greeting ads to express working-class internationalism. These greetings form a rich display that tells the story of working-class culture, struggle and solidarity.

We have a range of sizes and prices available. The deadline for camera-ready ads is April 20; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 17.

This is such a critical time for solidarity. Make sure your movement purchases a greeting, by emailing peoplesvoiceditor@gmail.com.

1 inch x 2 inches	\$25	4 inches x 4 inches	\$120
2 inches x 2 inches	\$40	4 inches x 5 inches	\$150
2 inches x 3 inches	\$55	6 inches x 4 inches	\$175
4 inches x 2 inches	\$70	4 inches x 7 inches	\$200
4 inches x 3 inches	\$90	6 inches x 7 inches	\$300

Eyewitness report from Havana: Nuestra América Convoy challenges US blockade, builds solidarity with defiant Cuban people



ROB CROOKS AND CAM SCOTT

From March 19 to 23, members of the Canadian Network on Cuba were in Havana for meetings and activities convened around the Nuestra América Convoy. The Convoy is an international humanitarian escort bringing both material aid and an influx of eyewitnesses to Cuba during an increasingly desperate chapter in the history of US aggression in the region.

This was a difficult but necessary time for us to return – not only have Canadian airlines conspired to cancel all flights to Cuba until June, but the island's life systems are beginning to show signs of collapse under imperialist pressure.

Since Donald Trump's January 29 announcement of a total blockade of fuel to the island, the Cuban people have been plunged into a state of life-threatening privation, facing frequent blackouts, food shortages and spoilage, lack of sanitation and every kind of uncertainty. Even Cuba's world-renowned healthcare and education systems have been pushed to the brink. Important surgeries are paused and many universities and secondary schools have reduced and cancelled classes. Public transportation is all but halted.

These shortages are the culmination of more than six decades of economic warfare by the United States, and by all accounts today's conditions are the worst that Cubans have yet faced in the course of their movement for independence and socialism.

By their own account, Marco Rubio and Donald Trump intend to replace the leadership. But as the US escalates its maximum pressure campaign against the Cuban government, all Cubans suffer. This is an unambiguous instance of collective punishment, prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and within view of the whole world.

That said, mass media coverage has long failed Cuba, distorting the multi-pronged blockade and blaming its outcomes on the revolutionary government. Even amid a present surge of interest in Cuban reality, lurid photojournalism and unsubstantiated rumour predominate across all major outlets. Under these circumstances, the urge to see for oneself is powerful – but the many contradictory effects of the blockade are not simply disclosed to sensory experience. These outcomes require greater investigation and yes, politics, on the part of every well-intentioned interloper.

Many such onlookers appeared in Cuba this past weekend alongside the solidarity movements, and a quick survey of the stories filed from Havana by professional journalists reveals a persistent anti-government narrative that's perfectly in keeping with the emphasis of right-wing outlets who encourage the blockade. While Kate Linthicum, writing for the LA Times, spent her visit to Havana seeking out pro-Trump voices from a small and disaffected stratum, Nathan Robinson's Current Affairs eloquently condemns the US blockade but only as a counterproductively cruel means of a regime change that he eventually endorses.

Cuba's bustling tourist industry has always risked exposing the task of socialist construction to uncharitable observation, and any influx of large personalities from social media cannot but hazard the same. However well-intentioned, self-motivated and sensationalized interviews with passersby cannot distill the essence of the present disruptions, even if they help to apprehend an anxious mood and to catalogue the extreme behaviours to which many Cubans have been pushed.

The correct interpretation of this US-instigated crisis requires not only solidarity, but organization.

Friendship with the peoples

Crucially, the international guests associated with the Nuestra América Convoy were hosted by El Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP, Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples) who guided more than 600 delegates from over 30 countries through dozens of events with magnanimity amid strained conditions.

These activities began with a meeting at the Palacio de las Convenciones, where attendees from the United States, Colombia, Chile, Italy, the São Paulo Forum and the European Parliament gave solidarity greetings before President Miguel Díaz-Canel addressed the Convoy directly. In his remarks, Díaz-Canel prosecuted the US blockade at length, extolling the strength of the Cuban people and the continuity of their revolution.

At separate events spanning multiple days, both Díaz-Canel and ICAP Director Fernando González Llorca highlighted Cuba's gratitude before this wave of international support. Notably, the gathering was only the social accompaniment to a flotilla from southeastern Mexico carrying more than 20 tons of essential supplies, as well as a chartered plane with 3,000 kilograms of medical aid.

Organized by Progressive International, CODEPINK and others, the humanitarian portion of the Nuestra América Convoy should not be underestimated, nor the political clarity of many participants within an urgent broad front formation.

At a welcoming event, Progressive International co-coordinator David Adler spoke of the Nuestra América Convoy as defending the idea of Cuba – one of egalitarianism and social welfare, principles lacking from those societies organized chiefly for profit. This broad appeal helps to combat a sense of hopelessness that pervades these same societies, where almost all Convoy participants live and work. In such circumstances, an idea can flare as a light in the darkness, guiding one toward a righteous stand.

In a crisis such as Cuba faces today, it becomes a tactical necessity to build a broad humanitarian movement. This is particularly true given the instigating role of a deeply unpopular figure such as Donald Trump and the significance of Cuba to his administration's plans. People of conscience from all sectors of society must stand up and defend the right of a small island nation to live free of collective punishment by sanctions, blockades and

■ VIEW FROM HAVANA, PG 7



Education is a right! Full public funding and free tuition now!

PV ONTARIO BUREAU

Doug Ford's February 12 announcement that Ontario is ending the years-long tuition freeze and reducing OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program) grants to a maximum of 25 percent of student assistance is a deliberate step that accelerates the drive to privatization in post-secondary education.

In response, tens of thousands of post-secondary students and education workers have mobilized against these latest attacks. Their demand is that education is a right, not a privilege, and that it should be fully funded by the government and provided free of tuition. Student debt should be cancelled, and students should be provided with a stipend to cover their living expenses.

Over 70 percent of post-secondary students graduate with devastating debt, averaging nearly \$30,000 per student. Ford's decision to allow colleges and universities to increase tuition by 2 percent each year, combined with drastic changes to OSAP which replace grants with loans, mean that student debt will skyrocket even further.

It also means that an ever-greater proportion of post-secondary funding is privatized – primarily in the form of tuition payments, but also through increased corporate intrusion. This is part of a decades-long attack on public education: in 1980, Ontario universities received 80 percent of their operating revenue from public funding and 15 percent from tuition, but by 2017 the amounts had shifted to 38 percent and 56 percent respectively.

The government is trumpeting its increase in post-secondary funding by \$6.4 billion over the next four years. In fact, when adjusted for inflation and student population, that still leaves Ontario colleges and universities at least \$1.5 billion behind where they were in 2018. Furthermore, it does nothing to fix the damage from years of chronic underfunding. Even after Ford's \$6.4 billion announcement, a number of colleges announced more job and program cuts, adding to the 10,000 academic and non-academic workers who have already lost their jobs.

These attacks on accessible public education are complemented by the Ford government's accompanying assault on the democratic organizations that defend it. Last year, Bill 33 imposed "right-to-work" style policies aimed at bankrupting student

unions, student media and vital services like campus food banks. This is a direct attack on student organizing, designed to fracture the organizational capacity of the student movement.

Drop fees, not bombs!

It isn't as if governments can't afford to fund education. Federally, the Carney government's decision to more than triple military spending to over \$150 billion by 2035 shows that the capacity for increased funding exists – the estimated cost of eliminating tuition fees across the country is \$14 billion, less than one-tenth of what Ottawa is dedicating to the arms budget.

But funding post-secondary education and eliminating tuition requires a massive shift in government priorities. Federally, for example, that means forcing Ottawa to fund education rather than the military – to drop fees, not bombs. Provincially, it includes forcing Queen's Park to reverse its decades-long privatization of college and university funding – to increase public grants and decrease student debt which fills the coffers of the banks. In both cases, it means putting people's needs ahead of corporate greed.

The student movement mobilized!

Ford's sharply escalated attacks have awakened the student movement in Ontario. More than 4,000 students and post-secondary workers rallied at Queens Park on March 4, condemning the OSAP cuts and tuition hikes, and more rallied again on March 24 – this is the basis for building a mass movement that can fight Ford's attacks and win real gains.

Among the demands around which students and post-secondary workers are building a movement are:

- Increased funding to public post-secondary education, and an end to corporate funding and privatization.
- Elimination of tuition fees for post-secondary education – grants not loans!
- Cancellation of student debt and a living stipend to all post-secondary students.
- An end to all credit-recognition schemes for corporate training programs.
- Expanded Indigenous and French-language post-secondary education.
- Free, democratic, accessible quality education for all! ■

LET CUBA LIVE!

Sign the parliamentary
petition calling on
Canada to oppose the
US blockade of Cuba
and to send aid now!

Petition is open for
signatures until April 20.
Please sign today!



EDITORIAL

BOYCOTT ISRAEL: HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD

You've probably seen "boycott Israel" and "BDS" (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) a million times. If you think about it at all, after all that repetition, you might wonder why you should boycott Israel, or how you should do it.

You might think something like "Okay, Israel is bad, but how do I boycott it? Will it do any good? Should I bother?"

The "why" goes back a long way, to 1948 when the state of Israel was set up on other people's land with a violent act of dispossession Palestinians still call the Nakba or "catastrophe." The dispossession and violence continued, with massive encroachments onto more Palestinian land with Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza.

Illegal Israeli settlements are growing in the West Bank and Israeli politicians are talking about taking over all of Gaza in their quest for a "Greater Israel," an ethno-state that they see as occupying all the land of "historic Israel."

Meanwhile Israel runs an apartheid state, with Arab Israelis treated as second-class citizens. There are roads in the West Bank that can only be used by Israeli settlers or soldiers.

So that's the "why" settled, but will boycotting change anything?

Before 1994 there was another apartheid settler state called South Africa. A white minority ruled over a Black majority, restricting where Black South Africans could live and work, who they could marry, and denying them the vote.

Boycotts and support actions went on for decades. People taking part in the boycotts were scolded for being utopian and impractical and mocked for choosing not to buy South African products. They were accused of being spoil sports for protesting against visiting (white) South African sports teams.

After apartheid ended, South Africa's first Black president, Nelson Mandela did a world tour. He made a point of addressing labour-only functions to thank union members for keeping up the pressure on the apartheid regime for all those years when the cause seemed hopeless. Mandela didn't think the support efforts were a waste.

Alright, so boycotts of apartheid regimes aren't a waste, but I'm just one person, you might think. How can I make a difference? If I don't buy a Soda Stream will that bother Israel? It's true that you're just one person. The solution to this is to find other persons and work together.

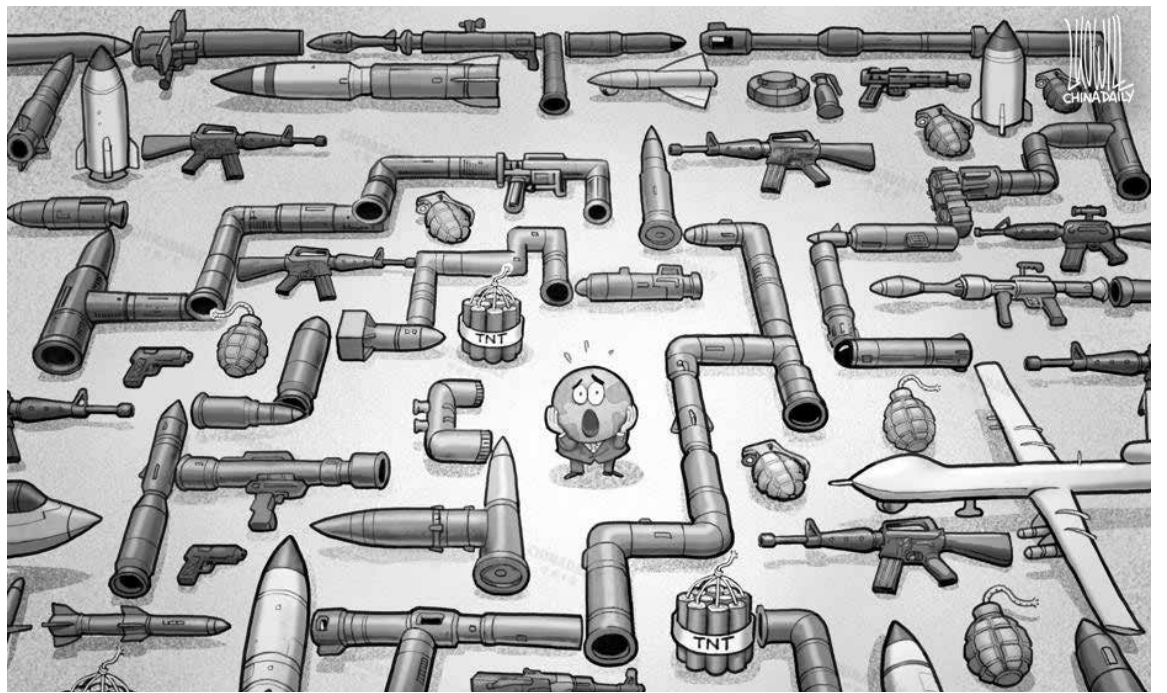
Your union should be joining in. Many unions do. Other unions have a Palestine support group. Find it and join it. March with them when there's a demo on!

Speaking of other people, your government should be boycotting Israel. Making them do it is the work of many people. Call your MP or at least send an email.

These calls and emails are monitored and do have an effect. After months of weekly marches in support of Palestine and against genocide, and despite the mass media playing down unprecedented weekly protests, the government finally supported recognition of a Palestinian state.

Mass action has an effect. Dismissing the effectiveness of boycotts plays into the Western illusion that we are all isolated individuals who can't achieve anything outside our own lives. Yes, you are just one person, but we are millions of people. Start boycotting Israel today and make your boycott more effective by getting together with others in your union and in your community. ♦

(Guest editorial from The Guardian, published by the Communist Party of Australia)



IN BRIEF

PEOPLE'S VOICE welcomes your contributions. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and to refuse to print articles or letters which may be libellous or which contain personal attacks.

China-Vietnam hold "3+3" strategic dialogue aimed at revitalizing world socialist cause

The first ministerial meeting of the China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue on diplomacy, defense and public security was held in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi on March 16.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong and Minister of National Defense Dong Jun chaired the meeting, together with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung, Defense Minister Phan Van Giang and Minister of Public Security Luong Tam Quang.

The two sides held in-depth exchanges on developments and changes in the international landscape, safeguarding political security, and advancing defense and law enforcement cooperation, and reached broad consensus.

Wang Yi said the "3+3" strategic dialogue on diplomacy, defense and public security between the two countries at the ministerial level represents the first strategic communication platform of its kind globally, established by both sides as a vital initiative to safeguard political system security and deepen strategic coordination.

The mechanism is both an inherent requirement for advancing the building of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future and a necessary step for revitalizing the world socialist cause, fully demonstrating the high level and strategic nature of the relations between the two parties and countries, Wang Yi noted.

The stability and development of both China and Vietnam will demonstrate to the world the significant advantages of the socialist system, the vigorous vitality of the socialist cause, and the bright prospects for human development and

progress, he added.

Wang Yi emphasized that as friendly socialist neighbors, China and Vietnam should not only focus on the fundamental wellbeing of their peoples, coordinate development and security, and firmly follow their own development paths, but also embrace the common interests of all humanity, grasp the correct direction of historical progress, and jointly promote an equal and orderly multi-polar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization through the building of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future with strategic significance.

Wang Xiaohong noted that the public security ministries of the two countries should prioritize political security and enhance efforts to prevent and resist "colour revolutions." He added that the two sides should also focus on improving law enforcement and security cooperation mechanisms in areas such as cybersecurity, combating online gambling and telecom fraud, drug control, and fugitive repatriation and asset recovery.

Dong stated that China is willing to work with Vietnam to continuously enhance mutual trust in military security, further expand cooperation areas, improve the quality and effectiveness of cooperation, jointly safeguard maritime security and stability through positive interaction, and push bilateral defense exchanges and cooperation to a new level, setting an example of unity and self-reliance for the armed forces of socialist countries.

The Vietnamese side stated that, given the rapidly evolving and increasingly unpredictable regional and international landscape, it has become particularly urgent for the two parties and countries to strengthen solidarity and cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

Vietnam is willing to work hand in hand with China to prepare for

high-level exchanges, promote cooperation in various fields, and strengthen multilateral coordination to jointly elevate the Vietnam-China comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership to a higher level, according to the Vietnamese side.

Both sides agreed to hold the second ministerial meeting of the "3+3" strategic dialogue in China, and to deepen counterpart exchanges in diplomacy, defense and public security by fully leveraging the role of routine liaison between senior officials under the mechanism. ■

Nearly 10,000 Palestinians held in Israeli detention facilities

Israel is holding approximately 9,446 Palestinians in detention facilities. More than half of them, 4,691 detainees, are held through administrative orders without any legal process: no indictment, trial or conviction and without any possibility of defense.

Israel continues to operate a network of 16 torture camps for Palestinian prisoners where systematic abuse takes place. This includes physical violence and mental abuse, inhuman conditions, starvation and denial of medical care.

Eighty-four Palestinians whose identities are known, including one minor, have died in Israeli torture camps in the past two years, and there is serious concern that the number of prisoners who have died in Israeli custody is even higher.

The Prison Service and the Minister of National Security publicly boast about the harsh conditions in which Palestinian prisoners are held, according to human rights organization B'Tselem. "The torture camps are part of the planned and extensive attack that Israel is leading against Palestinian society, and which aims to dismantle and destroy the Palestinians as a group." ■

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RALLY AGAINST WAR ON IRAN [CREDIT: TORONTO ASSOCIATION FOR PEACE AND SOLIDARITY]

Stronger peace movement needed to oppose war, expose Ottawa's deceit and collusion

MANDEN MURPHY

It's patently obvious that Prime Minister Mark Carney and the Liberal government need a little help understanding what's going on in Iran – they have shamefully struggled to explain their position and whether this US and Israeli war on Iran contradicts international law.

They need to acknowledge, as so many already do, that this war on Iran is in flagrant violation of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Instead, while the government attempts to get its story straight on this war, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand has been posting and deleting statements on social media and Prime Minister Carney has been speaking out of both sides of his mouth.

One minute we are told that Canada "cannot categorically rule out participation" in this conflict, and the next that Canada "will not participate militarily" but that Carney supports the strikes on Iran – "with some regrets."

This is a cowardly evasion, and one that provides political cover for an illegal war that has already taken over 1,500 lives including 160 school children in a single strike on an elementary school. This political support is exactly the diplomatic cover that enables US war crimes to continue the world over – with zero accountability.

The Carney government must categorically and in no uncertain terms:

- Condemn this illegal war.
- Demand an immediate ceasefire.
- Commit to absolutely no Canadian participation, militarily or otherwise.

This war is being waged on lies and false pretenses. The United States and Israel claim

Iran is seeking to manufacture nuclear weapons. This is the exact same lie we heard to justify the US attacks on Iraq in 2003 that cost the lives of over 200,000 people.

Another justification we hear is that the United States and Israel are doing this out of compassion for the Iranian people. Let us be perfectly clear: This aggression has nothing to do with the just struggles of the Iranian people, but rather with the desire to control energy resources, strategic trade routes and spheres of influence for global commerce.

This same logic is playing out in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the recent attacks on Venezuela and the kidnapping of president Nicolás Maduro and the illegal and immoral oil blockade placed on Cuba by the United States.

History has shown that US military intervention does not lead to an increase in human rights or an increase in quality of life. The track record is clear:

Is Afghanistan better off for being attacked by the United States? Is Iraq better off for being attacked by the United States? Is Libya better off for being attacked by the United States? Is Syria better off for being attacked by the United States?

At a moment of escalating international tensions, we must do everything we can to prevent the Carney government from contributing to further escalations that could broaden the conflict more than it already has.

Thanks to the recent illegal wars of aggression perpetrated by the United States and Israel, to date a staggering 6 million people have been displaced in the region. This includes 3.2 million in Iran's capital of Tehran, 800,000 across Lebanon and 2 million in Gaza.

This cannot be allowed to continue. ■

The issue of Quebec's Bill 21 will not be resolved through the courts



Democratic solution to the national question is the only path forward

ADRIEN WELSH

For the past several days, the Supreme Court of Canada has been seized with a crucial debate over the future of rights and freedoms in Quebec: the constitutionality of *Bill 21, the Act respecting the laicity of the State*, informally known as the secularism law.

Adopted in June 2019 under parliamentary closure, the legislation is being challenged by half a dozen organizations including such well-established Quebec groups as the Fédération autonome de l'enseignement (FAE, Independent Teachers' Federation). The presence of such bodies contradicts the rhetoric of François Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government, which has tried to portray opponents of the law as marginal groups that are disconnected from Quebec reality.

From the start, the Parti communiste du Québec (PCQ) has clearly and consistently iterated that this law is unacceptable. By invoking the defense of secularism and the religious neutrality of the state, Bill 21 seriously undermines fundamental democratic rights and forces certain public employees to choose between their faith and their job. Far from uniting people around an inclusive conception of secularism, Bill 21 manipulates this principle to sow division and fuel identity-based withdrawal.

The CAQ government has not stopped there. With *Bill 94, the Expansion of Secularism Law* it proposes to further strengthen the provisions of Bill 21, at the risk of causing the layoffs of hundreds of employees, primarily veiled women, in sectors facing severe labour shortages, such as school service centers and daycare facilities.

Faced with this situation, the PCQ does not view the recourse to the Supreme Court as federal interference. Denouncing Bill 21 cannot mean giving up on asserting democratic rights before the courts, and it would be wrong to discredit the citizens, unions and grassroots movements that choose this path.

Nevertheless, this kind of legal battle tends to turn into a simple tug-of-war between Ottawa and Quebec. The confrontation between the "two solitudes" distracts attention from the real issue: the defense of workers' fundamental rights. It would have been preferable for this legalistic approach to be accompanied by a broad popular mo-

bilization in Quebec, rather than reducing the debate to an institutional quarrel.

It's laughable to see conservative figures, who have never exactly distinguished themselves by their commitment to democratic rights, suddenly discovering a rebellious streak. These reactionary commentators, who called for Stephen Harper's reelection in 2015 – the same Harper who was then promoting a law on "barbaric cultural practices" – now support those challenging Bill 21.

This tactic, which has less to do with a sincere defense of liberties than with political posturing, has been soundly denounced by the PCQ and the Communist Party of Canada.

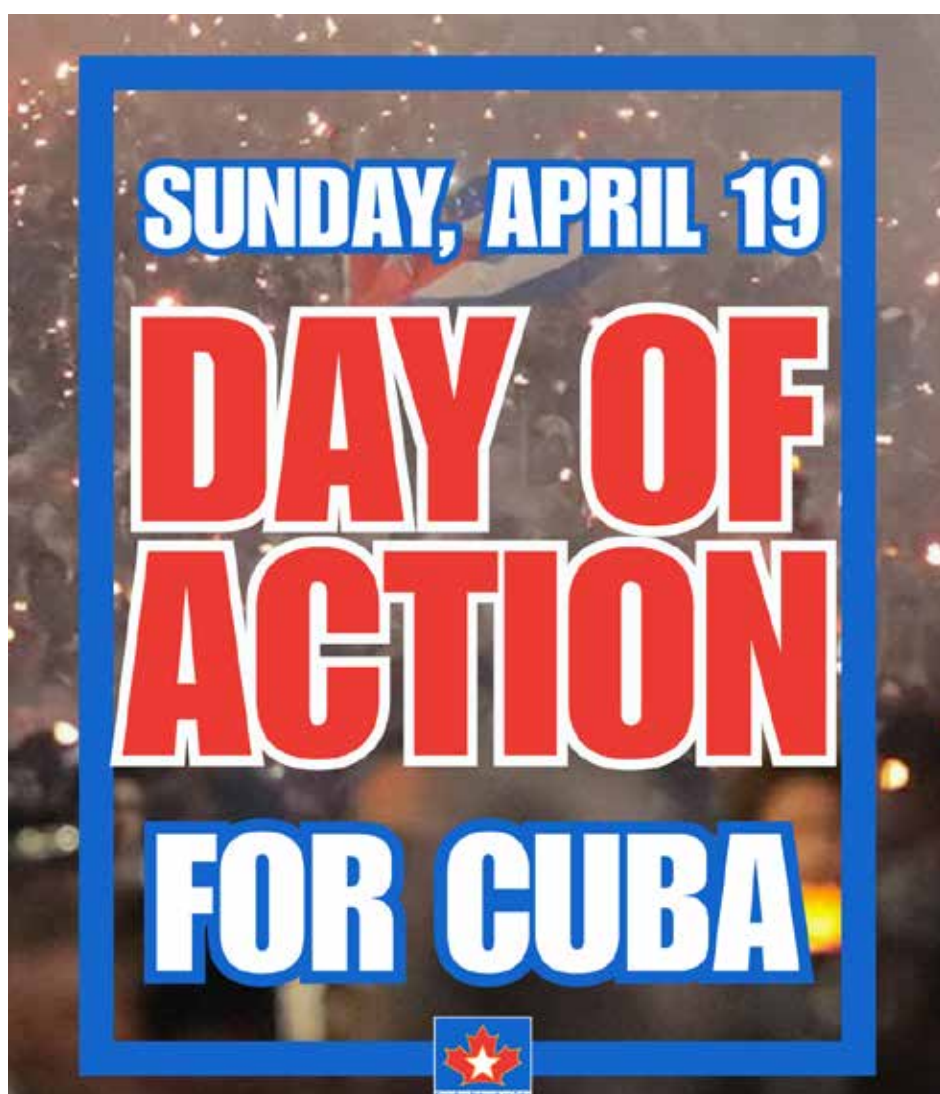
The issue of the notwithstanding clause adds further complexity to the case. Often used by provincial governments to impose reactionary policies by circumventing the Constitution, it holds a particular significance in Quebec. Historically, the notwithstanding clause was introduced to appease Quebec by offering it a substitute parliamentary sovereignty; yet while it was aimed at encouraging Quebec to sign the Constitution, that never happened.

This historical context, combined with the unresolved constitutional crisis, explains why Bill 21 remains at the heart of political tensions.

The Supreme Court will eventually render its decision, but this will not resolve the fundamental problem and there is no doubt that this issue will be a central focus of the next Quebec provincial election. As long as the constitutional question is not resolved democratically, anti-Quebec chauvinists in English-speaking Canada and narrow nationalists in Quebec will continue to exploit it to divide society, much to the benefit of big business.

The real battle is not confined to the courtrooms: it is waged in the streets and in workplaces, building a popular balance of power capable of rolling back freedom-curtailing laws.

Rather than being counterposed, democratic rights should be understood as complementary. There is no need to choose between Quebec's national right to sovereignty and the individual right to practice religion or spirituality. On the contrary, this complementarity is what facilitates an anti-monopoly character to grow within and alongside the struggle to expand democratic rights, including labour rights. ■



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Alberta referenda denounced as xenophobic scapegoating to conceal UCP's failed policies



PV ALBERTA BUREAU

Danielle Smith and her UCP government are going all in for the referendum as a substitute for policies that benefit working Albertans.

A set of nine questions will be put to citizens on October 19, five of them calling for reducing the rights of immigrants, and four others aiming for constitutional changes to increase the powers of provincial governments at the expense of the federal government. The questions have already been strongly criticized for inflaming anti-immigrant propaganda and scapegoating immigrants for the failures of government.

"A referendum organized by an anti-popular government is a sham of democracy," said Communist Party – Alberta leader Naomi Rankin. "We are expected to wait quietly for October 19 to supposedly express our views, while the provincial government is already carrying out its deeply unpopular program of decimating Medicare and other social services, starving schools and universities, and undermining gender rights."

Even if the actions of the UCP did not go against the interests and the opinions of working people in Alberta, there are other problems with the whole process.

The questions already have reactionary assumptions built in," said Rankin. "These include assumptions that healthcare and other social services are facing scarce resources, that immigration causes an increased load on such services without considering that immigrants may be disproportionately healthcare workers, that the provincial government is a more trustworthy custodian of social services and economic policy than the federal government, and so on."

Rankin also said that the referenda are part of the government's effort to scapegoat immigrants for its own failures. "If the provincial government were not so disastrously carrying out a right-wing program that favours short-term corporate profits no matter the social cost, there would be no basis for putting forward divisive proposals to fix the self-imposed problems. In a province with an abundance of valuable natural resources and a highly trained workforce, it takes a lot of effort to run the economy and the provincial budget into the ground."

The Alberta Communist Party leader added that the referendum format "is designed to force citizens to choose yes or no to a single sentence, with no allowance for the possibility that complex social problems and long term policy planning might actually require a whole paragraph." ■

Strong unions a source of hope for justice and global solidarity



BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION MEMBERS AT 2026 AGM [CREDIT: BCTF]

Reflections on the BC Teachers' Federation AGM by a BC public school teacher

ROZHIN EMADI

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) held a highly successful Annual General Meeting this year, featuring a series of thoughtful, critical and analytical discussions on teachers' working conditions, the threats facing public education in BC, and the broader political climate in our province, country and world.

One of the key leadership priorities for the year emphasizes the urgent need to "respond to immediate member needs related to excessive workload, classroom violence and the influence of the far right" while also "asserting trust in teachers as experts in education." Another highlights the importance of "enhancing local and member political organizing capacity to elect progressive school trustees."

We are living in a very dangerous moment. Around the world, the rise of the far right is threatening democracy, public institutions and the rights of ordinary people. From ICE detention centres that violate the bodily autonomy of migrants, to aggressive warmongering that has brought us to the brink of global conflict, the stakes could not be higher. The Doomsday Clock now sits at just 85 seconds to midnight – the closest humanity has ever been to nuclear war. At the same time, we are witnessing massive cuts to social spending that undermine the public sector, including public education.

In November 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the Trinational Conference in Defence of Public Education in San Antonio, Texas. The focus was combating the rise of the "new far right." One thing that stood out to me was how the far right tries to discredit public education by smearing teachers. They accuse educators of indoctrinating students with so-called "gender ideology" or "Critical Race Theory." But the reality is very different. Teachers are educating students against hate, violence and war. They are teaching young people about the history of racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia so that we can build a more just society.

These attacks are not about protecting students – they are about eroding trust in public education and paving the way for privatization. These smearing campaigns by the far right have sown widespread distrust, turning many people against public education. Meanwhile, when we give power and a platform to these far-right forces – often presenting themselves as "parents' rights" or "parents' voice" groups – they undermine our public values of inclusivity and anti-discrimination by legitimizing private agendas rooted in oppression and hate. For these reasons, as the BCTF AGM clearly decided, it is essential that we, as a union challenge these dangerous myths and continue to affirm trust in teachers as education experts.

Just a year and a half ago, the BC Conservatives nearly won an election on a platform that targeted teachers and public education. Many of these right-wing forces have also promoted residential school denialism, even holding public rallies that spread misinformation and whitewash history. This has been

particularly harmful to Indigenous educators and students, who not only have to confront this hate but also face the risk of losing the progress made in the BC curriculum on Indigenous education if these forces come to power in a future provincial election.

For this reason, the BCTF AGM voted to support a petition launched by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, calling on the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to include residential school denialism.

With municipal elections approaching, the danger remains that far-right individuals could win seats on school boards and target educators who hold progressive and social justice-oriented values. Thankfully, the BCTF recently won a human rights tribunal case against Chilliwack School Board Trustee Barry Neufeld, who had published numerous discriminatory and oppressive statements that reinforced harmful stereotypes and tropes about 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers. As the BCTF stated, this victory "affirms the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers and individuals to be free from discrimination, including attacks on trans identity framed as 'gender ideology.'"

This case also highlights the importance of having progressive members on school boards and preventing individuals like Neufeld from wielding power. In San Antonio – in one of the most anti-union states in the US – teachers mobilized to elect a progressive school board. As a result, they implemented one of the most forward-thinking curricula I have ever seen, designed to help students develop a "critical consciousness" so they can play an active role in transforming the world.

This example shows that when we organize and fight, we can win. If teachers in San Antonio were able to achieve this, we can accomplish a great deal here as well. We must work to elect progressive candidates to ensure that far-right forces do not harm teachers or students.

The BCTF AGM also considered the growing presence of AI in public education. Members passed motions calling on the Federation to advocate for clear provincial guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence in schools. Many teachers are concerned about losing professional autonomy if they are required to use AI in their classrooms, so the union is communicating with the Ministry to ensure its use will not undermine our autonomy.

Teachers also raised concerns that AI technologies may weaken students' critical thinking skills. As a result, the union will call on the Ministry to ensure that any district adoption of AI involves "meaningful teacher consultation, respects Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, prioritizes students' critical thinking, and keeps AI use optional for all educators."

Finally, members emphasized that AI is not a solution to teachers' increasing workload. As one teacher noted during the discussion: "AI is often presented as a solution to workload, but technology cannot fix structural problems in education. If teachers are overworked, the real solutions are adequate

staffing, proper funding and reasonable expectations – not relying on automation."

Sadly, while school boards are increasingly investing in artificial intelligence, they are making cuts to public arts education. Several school districts have seen their music programs reduced or eliminated this past year, a clear example of the creeping privatization of our public education system. The AGM voted to have BCTF call for "adequate funding for universal, sustainable, accessible and high-quality arts education across the province."

"In this moment of mounting global crises, many young people are carrying a deep sense of uncertainty and hopelessness about the future," stated an educator from Comox. "Art gives students a way to process their emotions, express experiences, and make sense of a complex world. But the arts are more than an outlet. They are also a tool for reflection, connection and social change. It gives students the space to question, to imagine and to see the world from perspectives beyond their own. And imagination matters. If we want a better future, we need people who can imagine that future first. As educators, we have a responsibility to protect spaces where young people can dream, play, create, and explore their humanity. Because if we want a generation capable of building a more just and compassionate world, we need to nurture not only their knowledge but also their imagination."

At the AGM, BCTF President asked guest speaker, BC Premier David Eby, why public funds continue to go to private schools rather than being invested more fully in public education. Afterward, teachers chanted "Tax the Rich," highlighting our frustrations with the growing wealth inequality and disparities in our province, while criticizing the economic decisions of the current government.

Connected to this, BC teachers voted to have our Teacher magazine "include substantive content on class consciousness, labour issues, the labour movement and matters related to our contract." As a union, we need to speak openly about the difficult economic conditions many people are facing and help educate our members about the causes behind them.

Ultimately, this requires building class consciousness, and we must ensure that more working people develop it as well. History shows that when economic hardship intensifies, the far right often exploits legitimate grievances to gain support. At a time when nearly half of the people in Canada are living paycheck to paycheck, we need to win working people over and mobilize them around progressive demands, such as pushing governments to invest more in public services and working-class communities.

Overall, the BCTF AGM has given me hope – hope that unions can make a real difference when they stand up for workers and fight for justice across the world. ■

See also "BC teachers' union endorses BDS campaign" on page 8

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View from Havana: Cubans are resolved to resist

■ FROM PG 3

military threat. Beyond this negative, strictly legal demand, however, we mustn't forget what we're defending and why.

What we defend in Cuba is not just an idea: it is a material reality. In standing up for Cuba, we are defending economic democracy and popular power. We are defending the right of working people everywhere to the fruits of their labour, and against the predations of capitalism. The struggle is not only one of ideas – it is an international class struggle for the benefit of all but a dispossessing few.

We defend Cuba not only because Cuba needs us, but because Cuba leads. If Cuba falls, it will spell disaster for the world – not by analogy, which is no basis for solidarity, but by example. In Adler's words, "a century of anti-colonial struggle is at risk."

In his address, Diaz-Canel spoke of the enormous burden placed upon the present generation, who now confront one of the gravest tasks in Cuban history: "to save the homeland, socialism, and to give continuity to Fidel's revolution." As we imagine what it means to move in solidarity with these inheritors, we must be ready to receive our own equivalent instructions.

"When you go back to your countries," Diaz-Canel said, "you must multiply the force of the people." This international strength will not transpire by storytelling, nor by the multiplication of image, nor the amplification of rumour. Fidel Castro emphasized the importance of the Battle of Ideas in the twenty-first century; and Fernando González, a national hero and veteran of the Cuban Five, implored those attending to take part in "digital activism" and to counter corporate lies with truth.

This work is essential, but the determination of truth also requires trust – not only in one's sources, but in the revolution underway. The truth in Cuba is not an appearance but a process, and its very telling commands participation.

The view from Havana

With this involvement in mind, what did we experience on this most recent visit to Cuba? At ICAP, Fernando also spoke of the arrogance and cynicism of US imperialism; and while we were in Havana the US Treasury Department announced that it would not allow Russia to deliver oil to Cuba – an infantilizing order that presumes to wedge itself between old friends.

At the time of writing no oil has entered Cuba for three months, and on day two of our visit the national power grid went down entirely for the second time this month.

The fuel shortage in the country was apparent. Automobiles were scarce and traveling by taxi required US dollars and a day's notice to schedule. The streets were full of motorized tricycles with passenger carriages, a kind of rickshaw run by solar-charged batteries, and the classic cars for which Havana is so photogenic were few and far between or still. Infrequent transit stops were crowded with people, unsure of whether a bus would ever arrive. Individuals stood on the side of the road to hail rides, often waving Cuban pesos in the air to indicate their willingness to pay any driver that would pick them up.

We spent time with an established musician who told us that the cost of transporting his gear so greatly exceeded the fee that he could no longer afford to perform.

The most reliable way to get around was by foot, and walking to our destinations took up much of each day. We cautiously stepped down sidewalks that were crumbling and at times treacherous to pass. During evening blackouts, we strolled down dark and narrow streets, passing families who had moved their activities out into the cool night air. Older gatherings played dominoes by moonlight while younger people sang along to their car radios.

Despite the unfamiliar and dimly lit paths we ventured down, our safety was rarely if ever of concern. This is noteworthy, where the blockade explicitly intends to set desperate people to war with themselves. In almost any US city, a half day of the difficulties that the Cuban people face would instigate far



greater social turmoil than is apparent here.

Other concerns presented themselves, however. Trash had piled up on corners, waiting for garbage trucks to refuel and resume collection. We were regularly approached by people with curiously similar stories designed to elicit donations of USD. It was heartbreaking when they felt the need to apologize for having asked, flashing a look of wounded dignity.

We also walked by people greeting each other joyously, laughing and joining in song. We saw the colonial-era mansions that have been turned into headquarters of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, into polyclinics, schools and housing for the people. These staples remain despite obvious dilapidation, fulfilling crucial functions at reduced capacity.

While earlier visits might have furnished a less worrisome appraisal, one feels the strain not only of the blockade itself, but of a collective heave against its unacceptable conditions. Cuba is fighting – not just for survival, but to protect its very real achievements. As such, the stark contradictions one sees in Cuba do not indicate a "failed state," but a nation's resolve to continue its sovereign development in the shadow of history's most powerful empire.

That said, the ingenuity by which Cubans work around the blockade creates a patchwork feeling, and particularly in the dark. Many small businesses, from bars to bodegas, have their own backup generators and power supply. These often use home generators linked to solar panels, or batteries that can be charged from the grid while the power remains.

The relative autonomy of these small enterprises from Cuba's electrical system, rocked as it is by shortages, means that even in a blackout, every street is pocked with lights. Such urban constellations could be said to visualize an increasingly uneven social fabric; but this too is only half the story.

We were also told of how small businesses with their own modest systems frequently lend power to nearby polyclinics and plug gaps in essential services – not to undermine or to evade state control but to protect their neighbours in a crisis, without fanfare or condition. Plainly put, the collective spirit of Cuban society, instilled over decades of superior education and heightened struggle, can't be extinguished half so quickly as the US hopes.

Let Cuba Live!

The Cuban reality is complex, but our task is clear. As the Convoy departs Havana and the media binge begins, we must redouble our efforts at solidarity. This means linking our material aid to political campaigns, and refusing to speak of desperate conditions without identifying the causes and denouncing the US blockade.

This means working through the appropriate channels so that relief never arrives with compromising conditions or places unacceptable demands on Cuban sovereignty. This means increasing the pressure on the government of Canada to assert our economic and political independence of US monopoly and to break the blockade, and advancing these demands through the trade union movement where we wield maximum strength.

Anything short of this work would be a merely charitable contribution to an island that continues to give all, as seen from the hospitality that it extends during the darkest hours.

Hasta la victoria siempre! Cuba must live! ■



US-Israeli war on Iran called "ecocide"

GRAHAM HOLTON

On February 28 the United States and Israel carried out coordinated airstrikes on Iran during peace talks. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, was killed, along with several members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The US and Israel continued strikes on oil storage facilities causing massive fires, towering smoke plumes and streets lit up at night by the flames. In Tehran toxic compounds from burning plastics, fuel and chemicals filled the air, contaminating soil, water sources and aquifers, important for drinking water.

A teacher in Tehran described the attacks as "Something like a black monster has swallowed the sky... the air is unbreathable." After fifteen minutes outside, she developed headaches, burning lips, and irritated eyes due to the toxic air. One Tehran resident said "The rain is black ... I'm seeing black rain." Another witness described the rainwater was black on his hands, from burning oil mixed with rain. Eyewitnesses said the sky darkened dramatically, "This morning the air was pitch black. It is daytime, but it's dark like night." Smoke plumes from burning oil storage sites blocked the sunlight. Environmentalists have called it a "catastrophe" and "ecocide."

Shina Ansari, the head of Iran's Department of Environment (DOE), has condemned the airstrikes by the United States and Israel on Iranian oil storage facilities. Ansari said, "The enemies have started environmental war on Iran, endangering people's health. They're targeting oil facilities, particularly in metropolitan areas where a large number of people live. There's no justification." Burning oil facilities release hydrocarbons, sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides, heavy metals and soot. The air is filled with chemicals that cause respiratory illnesses, skin irritations and long-term cancer risks.

Harming civilians this way violates international law. Ansari said that Iranians "are confronting an immoral, environmental war. We have to do our best to keep people safe and away from disastrous consequences of toxic pollutants. The department of environment has already warned people."

Ansari sent a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and other relevant environmental organizations, condemning the US and Israeli attacks, urging them "to respond decisively to these hostile measures." Ansari called the environment "a silent victim" of a war in which the long-term ecological and societal ramifications threaten communities across affected regions. If the US bombs nuclear sites the consequences will be severe, with the release of radioactive contamination.

These large fires and explosions of fuel depots and refineries have released tens of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases and hundreds of thousands of kilograms of toxic pollutants. Satellite photos show thick smoke plumes over Tehran, comparable to the pollution caused by the Kuwait Oil Fires in 1991, one of the largest wartime

pollution events in history.

Back then the Iraqi military set fire to 700 oil wells during the Gulf War, releasing 1.5 billion barrels of oil into the environment, contaminating soil, groundwater, and marine habitats. Up to 6 million barrels of oil burned, daily emitting 13,700 tons of toxic smoke, and 50 million barrels of oil formed "oil lakes." The release of greenhouse gases contributed to global climate concerns. The long-term ecological impact included habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, and long-term health issues for humans and wildlife. The present destruction of Iran is comparable, although serious pollution is localized so far.

The massive black clouds over Iran have disrupted bird migrations during the spring. Iran sits at the crossroads of the Central Asian, East African, and Black Sea migration corridors, a major feeding centre for migrating birds. It has 558 recorded bird species, sixty-three of which are globally threatened. There are 105 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas covering 85,000 km². The bombing and military activity has disrupted natural habitats and ecosystems, with wildlife fleeing lost habitats, further damaging biodiversity. Even protected areas are affected by sounds, fires and pollution far beyond the battle zones.

Around 500 oil tankers are currently trapped in the Persian Gulf unable to access the Strait of Hormuz. At least sixteen civilian ships have been attacked, with several tankers being set on fire from missile strikes. The sinking of large oil carriers would release a flood of oil destroying the Gulf's delicate ecosystems, destroying coral reefs and large fish stocks so important to local populations for food. Several dangerous pollutants are released from the burning oil tankers, releasing hydrocarbons, benzene, toluene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These are carcinogenic chemicals linked to DNA damage.

The IRIS Dena was an Iranian naval ship torpedoed by a US nuclear powered submarine in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka. The pollutants released include diesel and bunker fuel, lubricating oils and hydraulic fluids, paint, solvents, chemicals and fragments of metal, plastic and insulation. The war continues.

At time of writing, the US Embassy in Baghdad has been hit by a missile. Although Trump described the war as a "short term excursion" there's no end in sight to the war he started. His officials have defined the targets of the way so loosely that they can declare victory at any time.

The killing of 160 people, including many children, on a strike on an Iranian primary school has been denied by the US leadership. Trump tried to blame the strike on the Iranians themselves, but backed off when asked how the Iranian military got its hands on a US-made Tomahawk missile.

Up to 3.2 million people have been displaced. In Southern Lebanon, around 800,000 civilians have had to leave their houses after Israeli evacuation orders.

There is no end in sight. ■

LABOUR

Bus drivers hold the line in North Bay

For over a month, Alouette Bus drivers in North Bay, Ontario have been walking the picket line. The 80 members of United Steelworkers Local 2020 are on strike for better pay.

Drivers say they are currently paid below the provincial benchmark and are pushing for wages that reflect the essential role they play in safely transporting students every day. They rejected the company's last offer of \$20 per hour – less than the living wage in North Bay.

"I'm fighting for a livable wage – not just for me, but for other single parents and families like mine," she said. "Behind every bus driver is a family that's feeling this. We want to go back to work, but we need to be paid fairly for the work we do."

Alouette Bus Lines has been using scabs to continue operations.

BC dairy milk testers into fifth month of strike

Dairy milk testers in BC have been on strike at testing provider Lactanet since November 25, 2025. The workers, members of the BCGEU, have been working without a contract since September 30, 2023 and took strike action after 20 months of bargaining.

The union wants increases to mileage compensation that covers workers' costs of driving their personal vehicles to farms throughout the province, to pick up samples for testing.

Lactanet milk testers in BC are currently paid \$0.41 per kilometer. In comparison, the Canada Revenue Agency uses \$0.72 per kilometer for work travel using personal vehicles.

"Many of us milk testers work second jobs to make ends meet," said Jack van Dongen, chair of the workers' bargaining committee. "We're not trying to get rich doing this job, but it's not reasonable or sustainable for us to pay out-of-pocket for travel expenses, especially since that's not the industry norm."

Titan lockout continues as company flip flops on closure agreement

Unifor Local 195, which represents locked-out workers at Titan Tool & Die in Windsor, has filed a bad faith complaint with the OLRB after the company flip flopped on a closure agreement.

Sixty workers – 27 active and 33 more on layoff – have been locked out by Titan since August 2025. The company had demanded 15 pages of sweeping concessions, which the workers rejected.

Local 195 president Emile Nabbout said Titan indicated it wanted a closure agreement, and that discussions were underway. But Titan then changed its mind, prompting the bad faith complaint.

Public works employees strike for wages

Twenty-two public works employees in Taché, Manitoba have been on strike since February 23. The workers, members of Operating Engineers of Manitoba Local 987, have been without a contract since the end of 2024.

The key issue in the strike is wages, with the union wanting wage parity with similar workers in neighbouring rural municipalities.

Since the strike began, snow has not been cleared and ditch work to mitigate spring flooding has not started. The workers recently warned Taché councillors that overland flooding could be imminent if they don't get back to work soon.

Local 987 business representative Trevor Yuriy said the municipality's response is to try to change the essential services bylaw to include spring maintenance.

As CLC convention approaches, workers looking for more labour action on jobs and trade



PV LABOUR BUREAU

With the recent announcement that Canada lost a whopping 100,000 jobs in the first two months of 2026, working people are becoming increasingly anxious about employment security. This latest job loss news – described by CBC as “one of the worst monthly job losses seen in years outside of the pandemic” – can't be dismissed as a one-off, either, as it comes on the heels of 12 months of virtually no job growth across the country.

Government response to the jobs crisis has been thoroughly inadequate. While some 27,000 workers in Ontario have lost jobs in the softwood lumber, steel and automotive sectors, the Workforce Tariff Response, a joint program with the Ontario government, provides paltry funding for re-training and job search. Across the country, Employment Insurance applications are skyrocketing; they jumped by more than 13 percent between December 2024 and July 2025 alone. But rather than improve EI – by making it non-contributory, by extending coverage to all unemployed workers benefits, and by increasing benefits to 90 percent of previous earnings for the entire period of unemployment – Ottawa's reply has been merely to waive the waiting period and extend the benefits period by up to 20 weeks for select workers.

At the same time, Mark Carney has doubled down on the USMCA trade agreement as the vehicle of choice for Canada's economic stability and development, in the face of Donald Trump's trade war. The prime minister claims that the agreement, which is coming up for review this summer, is “the best trade deal [that Canada has] with the United States” and that it is “better than that of any other country.”

When USMCA was negotiated in 2018 – the result of Donald Trump's drive to rewrite NAFTA – labour leaders in Canada were generally receptive. While identifying some problems, then CLC president Hassan Yussuff welcomed what he called “key gains” and opined that “workers across the country will be happy” with much of the USMCA content. Similarly, Unifor wrote in 2018 that “while there are areas of legitimate concern, the USMCA is an improvement over the original NAFTA with quantifiable gains for workers.”

So, is USMCA really the best path forward for working people? A look at

the deal's impact suggests that the labour leadership's initially positive response was naïve at best, and that the agreement has had a similarly devastating impact on the working class as its predecessors, NAFTA and the Canada-US FTA.

USMCA proven to be bad for workers

When USMCA was negotiated in 2018, official unemployment in Canada was 6 percent. It spiked during the pandemic, of course, and then briefly hit a low of 4.8 percent in July 2022, due largely to people leaving the workforce entirely. If the USMCA were truly an effective method for, as its proponents claim, “stabilizing and expanding the economy and jobs,” we would expect to see unemployment decline and remain below its pre-pandemic levels.

But in fact, after the brief low of 4.8 percent, unemployment rose and passed its pre-USMCA level to over 6 percent. It hit 7 percent in November 2024, before Trump elected, and has remained in that area since. According to Statistics Canada, a one-percent change in unemployment or employment levels is equivalent to around 210,000 workers.

At the same time that unemployment rose, the employment rate – representing the proportion of the workforce that actually has jobs, whether or not they are looking – fell. It was 62.5 percent in 2018 and, after a collapse around the pandemic, returned to same level in late 2022. This corresponds to over 7.8 million workers who are in the workforce but without work.

Here again, a trade deal that serves the interests of working people should be expected to create jobs in timely fashion and to provide them to lot more than 60 percent of the workforce. But by the fall of 2023, the employment rate dipped downward to under 61 percent and has remained there since. This reduction corresponds to around an additional 380,000 unemployed workers.

So, since the USMCA came into force, net job loss is at least 500,000 workers – 380,000 from declining employment between 2018 and 2025, plus 100,000 lost jobs in the first two months of 2026. Structural unemployment, based on the employment rate, has risen to affect around 8.2 million workers.

At the same time, underemployment is rising – this is measured by comparing the proportion of full-time to part-time jobs. Data from Statistics Canada show that in 2018, 81 percent of jobs in Canada were

full-time and 19 percent were part-time. That ratio steadily fell in the years after USMCA came into force, and by 2025 just 76 percent of jobs were full-time and 24 percent were part-time.

This suggests that underemployment has grown by 26 percent in the less than 6 years than USMCA has been in force.

There's little point analyzing jobs without looking at the wage picture as well. At first glance, the picture isn't bad: workers' wages rose from approximately \$27 in 2018 to \$34 by 2024, a 26-percent increase in gross earnings. But when inflation is taken into consideration, it becomes far more sobering: real wages only rose 6 percent.

The big reason behind this is the increase in the consumer price index, which rose by over 30 percent between 2018 and 2025.

While have workers struggled with the impact of USMCA, one sector of Canadian society has benefited mightily: corporations.

In 2018, corporate profits in Canada were \$500.3 billion. While they took a hit during the pandemic, they quickly rallied and spiked to record levels in 2022. From then, they have continued to grow, reaching a new record high of \$677 billion in 2025.

So, corporate profits have grown by over 35 percent since USMCA came into force, despite net job loss of around a half million workers. By comparison, corporate profits have grown nearly 600 percent more than real wages.

Clearly, like its predecessors NAFTA and the FTA, USMCA has been a disaster for working people. Heading into a convention in May, and ahead of the USMCA review in July, union members need to press the CLC into engaging affiliates, provincial federations and labour councils in a cross-country campaign to mobilize all workers – organized and unorganized, inside the Congress and outside – in the struggle for trade policies that truly put workers first.

Labour campaign on trade and jobs

At the beginning of 2026, the CLC issued a call for “a workers-first trade policy that preserves and expands Canadian jobs, strengthens domestic industry, and regulatory space to invest in domestic manufacturing, supply-chain resilience and future industries.” This call, issued in anticipa-

■ CONTINUED TOP OF NEXT PAGE

500,000
Lost jobs since
USMCA
implemented

26%
Increase in
underemployment

\$677
BILLION
Record corporate
profits in 2025

tion of the USMCA review, was echoed by several union affiliates and reflected similar demands in Unifor's Protect Canadian Jobs campaign.

The statement is a good starting point – but it's only that. It has to be brought into force through an action campaign based on specific demands.

A worker-first trade policy needs to start with the call for a full employment economy. Two keys to this are a shorter work week with no loss in take-home pay, combined with public ownership and operation of key industries.

Public ownership of industries is expressly restricted in the USMCA: state-owned enterprises and monopolies must operate on a commercial basis and not create unfair competition for private firms. This provision drives the few publicly owned enterprises that exist in Canada to operate in exactly the opposite manner to what workers need – by competing with private, often huge transnational firms, they constantly seek to reduce employment, diminish wages and casualize work.

The crisis at Canada Post – which is under extreme government and corporate pressure to be split up and privatized – is a prime example of how membership in corporate trade deals like USMCA distorts publicly owned industries and prevents them from being democratically operated in working people's interest. This is one clear illustration among many of why the CLC needs to call for Canada to get out of corporate trade deals like the USMCA.

Instead of promoting side deals in the USMCA or parroting anti-communist rhetoric in response to potential trade with China, working people in Canada need the labour leadership to champion mutually beneficial trade policies with the world, based on full employment, respect for Indigenous rights and environmental protection.

They need labour to fight for government procurement policies that serve and defend these same goals, not the goal of increasing profits for the biggest private monopolies. They need unions to oppose Mark Carney's military economy, and instead to call for cuts to the skyrocketing arms budget and for those funds to be invested in public infrastructure and services that serve people's needs while creating jobs.

And they need escalating action campaigns that engage workers from the grassroots and bring them into the streets, not lobbying campaigns by hired professionals who meet behind closed doors with politicians who then ignore them.

CLC convention – a decisive moment

After reviewing the impact of USMCA, it's no surprise that workers are calling for more action on jobs and trade – what's surprising is that the labour movement isn't doing that.

But in the lead-up to the CLC convention in May, labour activists across the country have been promoting resolutions calling on the Congress to mobilize a mass campaign for trade policies that truly put workers first. Several labour bodies – from union local to labour councils – have submitted these resolutions to the convention.

It is critical that the CLC come out of this convention with a commitment to leading this kind of action campaign on trade and jobs. There is a broad basis for building this struggle, but delegates will need to make sure that the resolutions hit the floor and that they are passed with strong and widespread support.

They will also need to ensure that the CLC commits to concrete policies and actions. These include job creation by expanding social spending on healthcare, education and social programs, through construction of affordable social and public housing, and by nationalizing auto and steel and by building value-added jobs in manufacturing. And it includes cutting the military budget to fund these and more people's needs.

Peace, jobs and public investment in health, education and social programs – this is what a good life looks like for working people. And that's why the CLC leadership needs to take on this fight. ■

BCTF

BC teachers' union endorses BDS campaign

ROZHIN EMADI

Today in BC, the tax burden on working people has increased relative to that of the wealthiest in society. At the federal level, Mark Carney has proposed a 10-percent cut to public services, which could lead to the loss of more than 40,000 public sector jobs. At the same time, the government has proposed a major increase in military spending – to \$150 billion annually.

While some argue this will create jobs, research shows that every \$1 million invested in the military generates about seven jobs, compared with 14 in healthcare and 20 in education.

With this in mind, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Annual General Meeting took a strong stance against rising militarism by becoming the first public K-12 education union to endorse the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The BDS campaign was initiated by Palestinian Trade Unions and social justice organizations to pressure the state of Israel to respect international human rights laws in its treatment of the Palestinian people.

This was the highlight and by far the biggest victory of the AGM. After vigorous and meaningful debate, BCTF decided to join several other Canadian unions, labour councils and federations in this international movement for peace, justice and solidarity. As one teacher noted, "How we spend our money matters. Every dollar spent on companies and institutions – many of which are Canadian – is a statement of permission that allows them to perpetuate our current, devastating reality."

This is undeniably true. It is also evident that Palestine became a test to see how far warmongering forces could go and what they could get away with. Sadly, the world failed to hold Israel accountable, and repressive forces around the globe took note. Today, the conflict in the Middle East is much worse and has escalated into a regional war with the potential to become global. Meanwhile, Trump and his so-called "board of peace" plan to reshape Gaza by constructing luxury hotels for the world's wealthy while Palestinians continue to face displacement and ethnic cleansing.

As a union, the BCTF decided to oppose this and take a stand. The AGM made a critical decision: when governments fail to hold warmongering forces accountable, we will take action through our workplaces and unions. One Haida Gwaii teacher powerfully stated, "Unions exist for one simple reason: when people are powerless on their own, they gain power together."

By taking this stance, the union places itself on the right side of history, following the example of the labour movement's fight against South African apartheid. It is clearer than ever that the violence in the Middle East must end, as all people in the region – regardless of ethnicity or religion – deserve peace. A Palestinian teacher beautifully said, "I envision a world where children of all faiths – including Muslim, Jewish and Christian – can laugh and play along the shores of Gaza." ■



Newly formed Oregon union coalition makes push for "climate jobs"

A newly formed coalition of Oregon unions will advocate for a union-built transition to clean energy. And it has a big head start on how to achieve that: A book-length set of policy recommendations from the Climate Jobs Institute, part of Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

The group is called Climate Jobs Oregon. It held its public launch on January 23 at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 hall in Portland, followed by tours of four construction union training centers. The launch party was packed with state, county and city elected officials and their staffs, and attendees applauded the commitment of sponsoring unions to promote green jobs that are good jobs too.

Early sponsors include the Oregon AFL-CIO, Oregon's Building Trades Unions, IBEW Locals 48, 125 and 932, Operating Engineers Local 701, Ironworkers Local 29, Laborers Local 737, Oregon and Southern Idaho District Council of Laborers, Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, and United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 290.

Legally, the coalition consists of two tax-exempt non-profit organizations: An educational group called Climate Jobs Oregon

and a political advocacy arm called Climate Jobs Oregon Action Fund. Both list Oregon AFL-CIO President Graham Trainor as president in the founding documents filed with the Oregon Secretary of State. Taking action to create the group was approved by convention delegates at the 2025 Oregon AFL-CIO convention.

Climate Jobs Oregon is modeled on similar groups that formed in other states: Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington state. Each group has Climate Jobs in its name, and union jobs are at the heart of it. The New York group helped win a requirement for Project Labor Agreements in the construction of new renewable power generation.

Climate Jobs Oregon is in the final stages of hiring a full-time staff person. They'll have plenty to do, including reforming siting and permitting processes to speed up energy development, promoting new energy generation, storage and transmission facilities, and advocating for union-built green public housing. ■

Northwest Labor Press

Public sector workers pay the price in 2026-2027 Saskatchewan budget



The Saskatchewan Party's 2026-2027 budget, delivered March 18, fails community-based organization (CBO) workers, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). The budget provides only a 2-percent funding increase, which the union notes is 1 percent less than last year's allocation and well below rising costs.

"Our sector is already among the lowest paid in the province, and many CBO workers are forced to take on second or third jobs just to cover basic costs like bills and groceries," said Christie MacNeill, chair of the CUPE CBO Workers of Saskatchewan. "It is deeply disappointing to receive even less funding at a time when inflation continues to soar."

During the November 2025 meeting with Minister of Social Services Terry Jenson, CBO representatives raised serious concerns about the lack of stable, multi-year funding, which undermines organizations' ability to plan and deliver services effectively. The 2-percent funding increase also comes with no oversight from the Ministry of Social Services, and there is no requirement ensuring that funding reaches frontline staff, raising concerns about whether workers will see any benefit.

"We called on the government to commit to stable, multi-year funding, enforceable standards for transparency and accountability,

and stronger health and safety oversight," said MacNeill. "Those concerns fell on deaf ears."

CBOs play a critical role in communities across Saskatchewan, delivering vital services such as social support, vocational training for people with disabilities, shelter services and addictions treatment. CUPE is calling for long-term, stable funding agreements, transparent allocation mechanisms and investments that recognize the value of frontline workers.

Education support workers ignored again

Education support workers are once again missing from the province's priorities. The budget makes no mention of the workers who provide critical daily support to students across Saskatchewan.

"Education support workers are critical to student success," said Shandel McLeod, vice-chair of the CUPE Saskatchewan Education Workers' Steering Committee, EWSC. "We support students with diverse needs, keep schools running and help create safe learning environments – yet we continue to be ignored by the Ministry of Education."

McLeod noted that the budget includes a 2.6-percent increase in operating funding for school divisions – an amount insufficient to keep pace with rising costs and which does nothing to address chronic understaffing or workload pressures faced by education support workers.

"Students succeed when they are properly supported," said McLeod. "You strengthen education by investing in the people who support students every single day."

CUPE is calling for meaningful investment in education support workers, improved staffing levels and funding that strengthens existing school infrastructure so students can get the support they need to thrive. ■

Real sovereignty cannot be built on imperialist foundation

■ FROM PG 2

corporate class that benefits from maintaining Canada's place within the US-led imperialist alliance, even as US-imperialism becomes increasingly violent and erratic. It is working people that have everything to lose from war and austerity.

Real sovereignty for Canada cannot be built on the foundation of an imperialist war machine. It cannot be built by slashing healthcare, education and childcare to pay for the highest military spending since WWII, as the Carney government is doing with its deepest austerity drive since the 1990s. It cannot be built by a "Defence Industrial Strategy" that claims to create jobs but is really a plan to funnel public money to monopolies integrating us further into a US-dominated military complex.

So how do we actually strengthen Canadian sovereignty?

It begins with an independent foreign policy based on multilateral and mutually beneficial trade, not subservience to Washington. It means public ownership and democratic control over key economic sectors: energy, natural resources, banks, insurance, steel, auto and aerospace. This would help direct the economy toward social needs, not corporate profit.

It means funding science, publicly owned media and a democratic culture, rather than starving them.

True sovereignty requires an equal and voluntary partnership between nations within Canada – Indigenous nations, Quebec and Acadia – including respecting their rights to self-determination. A country that denies these fundamental rights cannot claim to be united against external threats.

And finally, real sovereignty means building a decent social safety net, robust public healthcare and education – a standard of living that stands in stark contrast to the United States – giving working people something worth defending. These are the demands that build genuine independence, not the fantasy of a "progressive" military build-up that only serves to tie us tighter to the declining, though increasingly violent, empire we are supposedly resisting. ■

Premier booted off stage because of cuts

■ FROM PG 12

As most savvy politicians will admit, you can't just take money away from programs, jobs and services without offering at least a little something in return. Houston is preparing to follow PM Mark Carney's lead on the federal stage to make Nova Scotia an "energy superpower."

As Houston said in December 2025: "We have probably 32 trillion cubic feet of natural gas underfoot. Why don't we develop our own? We haven't done anything for 10 to 15 years... So we lifted the bans (on fracking to develop onshore gas and on exploring for uranium)."

He's had to stand corrected by scientists who insist we have only 7 trillion cubic feet of gas – an 80-year supply offshore.

In 2024, the Houston Conservatives campaigned on a platform called "Make it Happen" promising more doctors, lower taxes, raising wages, improving healthcare and affordability. It's a "bait and switch" ploy according to an article in the Cape Breton Post:

"The industry-friendly and environmentally harmful posture of this government has invited corporations seeking access to Nova Scotia's lands and resources to invest in the province as Premier Houston makes commitments to turn Nova Scotia into an energy superpower."

Some say if he had run on the "superpower" program, openly pushing fracking and uranium mining, the election results might have been different. After all, fracking and mining are associated with respiratory disease, cardiovascular illness and various cancers that especially affect children.

According to the Post, "The harms of this vision are wide-ranging and tragic in

that they will result in the clear-cutting of forests, noise and air pollution and the long-term poisoning of soil and water – including drinking water – with heavy metals and radioactive materials."

Rural-urban split

In NS, as in most smaller provinces, the rural-urban divide is huge. The rural areas and smaller towns tend to vote Tory, and the cities tend to vote NDP – and the Liberals pick up what they can. We see this in Alberta and Saskatchewan, too. The right relies on the countryside for its support.

Last month, Houston and his government's popularity, temporarily shaken, was at 48 percent, only 4 points behind where it was in the fall of 2025. If an election were held today, Houston is still in majority government terrain. But the spirit and resolve of what Houston insultingly calls "special interest groups" such as people in the arts and culture, in environmental movement, African Nova Scotians, Indigenous folk, public service workers and carers, and disability rights activists are getting organized, and growing.

For the first time, two weeks ago a NS premier was booted off the stage. For the first time, those who oppose the government protested in impressive numbers three times in 8 days.

Something is going on in NS – and for Houston, it won't be good. ■

Judy Haiven (jhaiven@gmail.com) is a principal of Equity Watch, a Nova Scotia based non-profit that fights against discrimination, sexism and bullying at work



"False scarcity"

■ FROM PG 12

spray-painted "Fuck Ford" on it. Within seconds, police moved in, dragging a young man off the statue and shoving him to the ground. One knelt on his neck and another pressed both knees into his back. They yelled at him to stop resisting as he lay pinned beneath them. Another slapped three separate people – not to restrain them, not to protect anyone, but out of what witnesses later described as "vitriol and anger."

The Canadian Federation of Students condemned the response as "heavy-handed and disproportionate," calling it "a clear and calculated attempt at repression, intimidation and fearmongering." The government always finds money for militarism. Not just abroad but here in Canada as well, against students demanding an education.

Now, with OSAP gutted and tuition rising, students are being asked to pay for a crisis they didn't create. Ben described it as a case of "false scarcity." There's plenty of money, but not for working-class students. It's for bombs, for billionaires, for the same system that kneels on protesters' necks when they dare to demand better.

The March 4 rally brought thousands into the streets but a single rally, no matter how loud, won't win this fight.

"Solidarity feels like a real mechanism," Ben said. "It begins with one-on-one conversations. Talk about your experiences." And join your union local, pushing for solidarity with the student movement.

Uri sees this rally as a seed, not a peak. The YCL has made it a priority to help rebuild that movement, getting members involved in their student unions. The task now is to turn that solidarity into something that lasts – an organized, fighting movement that can win. ■

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WHAT'S LEFT

CANADA-WIDE

APR 19 | DAY OF ACTION FOR CUBA

Cross-country Day of Action for Cuba, called by the Canadian Network on Cuba. Check your local Cuba solidarity group for events in your area.

VANCOUVER

APR 26 | PUENTES DE AMOR RALLY

12 PM at the corner of Commercial and Broadway. Cuba solidarity rally with CCFA Vancouver. End the blockade! Send oil now!

WINNIPEG

APR 26 | END THE BLOCKADE

1-2 PM at the corner of River and Osborne. Join the Manitoba Cuba Solidarity Committee for monthly action calling for an end to the US blockade of Cuba. End the blockade! Send oil now!

TORONTO

APR 26 | END THE BLOCKADE

1 PM at the US Consulate, 360 University Ave. Join CCFA Toronto and other solidarity activists for a monthly picket against the US blockade. End the blockade! Send oil now!

OTTAWA

APR 17 | CUBA SOLIDARITY PICKET

4:30 PM at the US Embassy, 490 Sussex Drive. Join Ottawa Cuba Connections for monthly action to call for an end to the blockade and the return of the Guantanamo base to Cuba.

OTTAWA

APR 26 | PUENTES DE AMOR RALLY

11 AM at the Cuban Embassy, 338 Main St. Monthly action in solidarity with Cuba. End the blockade! Send oil now!

Jorge Gómez Barranco

Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee honours the memory of the musician and revolutionary Jorge Gómez Barranco, who passed on March 23 in Havana, Cuba. A key figure in the Nueva Trova movement, Gómez was the founder and director of the legendary Grupo Moncada in 1972. He served in the National Assembly of Popular Power for four terms and was a member of the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba.

Over the course of its evolving membership, the music of Grupo Moncada would encapsulate the breadth of Antillean culture and resistance. As the Cuban Ministry of Culture notes, the music of Gómez and Grupo Moncada remains "a living part of Cuba's sonic life, where song is understood not only as an aesthetic expression, but an act of conscious awareness and cultural memory."

Grupo Moncada has a special relationship to Manitoba and to Canada, having represented Cuba with a performance at the 1999 Pan-American Games in Winnipeg. This pivotal cultural exchange began a deep friendship between our committee members and the group, especially Jorge Gómez, whose music and steadfast inspiration lives in our hearts.

Frankenstein: A politically charged meditation for our times

JENNY FARRELL

Yet another Frankenstein film has appeared on screens. Despite acclaim, it bears little resemblance to Mary Shelley's novel. For readers interested in Shelley's political vision and the historical pressures shaping her work, the 1818 text remains indispensable. To mark the 175th anniversary of Mary Godwin Shelley's death, we revisit this novel.

Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* in 1816 at the age of eighteen, publishing it in 1818. The work emerged amid post-Napoleonic Britain's political conservatism, when fear of revolutionary ideas from France fostered a repressive climate. The French Revolution's legacy, coupled with war and economic crisis, provoked social unrest and led the British state to suppress ideas perceived as destabilizing.

Radical politics, religious dissent and emerging scientific theories were viewed as threats. Materialist theories, which explained life through the body, sensation and experience, were particularly attacked. Journals such as the *Quarterly Review* condemned materialism as undermining both Church and state.

Debates about the nature of life became politically charged, fueling censorship and prosecutions for blasphemy, while economic hardship and industrial change – exemplified by the Luddite uprisings of 1811-1819 – further heightened social tension.

Shelley's family and intellectual background also shaped her novel. The daughter of William Godwin, a radical philosopher, and Mary Wollstonecraft, a pioneer of women's rights, she was immersed from childhood in debates on reason, gender equality and social reform. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) profoundly influenced her.

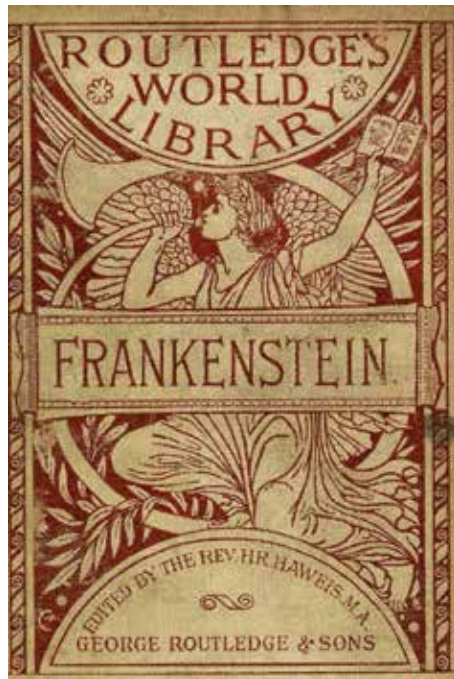
Frankenstein engages with contemporary radical science, portraying life as a product of material processes, shaped by sensation, environment and experience – an alignment with the materialist thought under attack in Britain. Political pressure extended to her family: Percy Bysshe Shelley's atheism and radicalism made England increasingly hostile, prompting the couple's exile to the Continent in 1816.

Frankenstein was conceived that summer at Lake Geneva, in a circle including Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Byron's doctor, John William Polidori. The "Year Without a Summer" forced indoor evenings filled with discussion on philosophy, science and life itself.

After reading German Gothic fiction, Byron proposed a ghost story competition. This led to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), the latter establishing the archetype of the aristocratic vampire, a bloodthirsty feudal lord. Mary Shelley, however, transformed the ghost story into a philosophical novel exploring science, responsibility, and social exclusion.

The novel narrates Victor Frankenstein's attempt to animate life from assembled body parts. Rejecting his creation at the moment of animation, he abandons it. The Being initially behaves kindly, learning language, literature and conduct. Persistent neglect and cruelty drive it to revenge.

Shelley's settings carry political significance. Geneva, Victor's home, embodies Enlightenment contradictions: it is both a site of repressive Calvinism and of Rousseau's radical philosophy. Ingolstadt, where Victor establishes his laboratory, was associated in the British imagination with the Illuminati, viewed as a Jacobin-atheist conspiracy. Victor's secret experiments thus mirror revolutionary transgression. His failure lies not in ambition, but in its irresponsible execution and his abdication of duty.



Shelley presents the Being as fully human: naturally benevolent, it performs secret good deeds, restrains anger, and approaches humans with reason and compassion. Only systematic rejection – primarily by Victor, but also by other people it encounters – turns it to violence. Its request for a female companion is framed as a claim to natural justice and social recognition; Victor's destruction of this companion completes the creature's isolation.

The narrative structure reinforces this critique: after Victor's bride Elizabeth is murdered, he becomes the obsessed hunter, mirroring the Being's earlier quest for recognition. Their final chase in the Arctic symbolizes exile into moral and political stagnation. Shelley grants the Being all but the last word, expressing remorse and withdrawal, while Victor dies unrepentant. The novel suggests that neglect and the abdication of social and ethical responsibility – rather than the creature's origin – create monstrosity.

The subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, underscores this political dimension. By using as her epigraph Adam's challenge to his maker from Milton's *Paradise Lost* – "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man?" – Mary Shelley shifts judgment away from the creator's authority and towards his responsibility and the rights of the created. Scientific creation is thus linked to debates about tyranny, equality and reform.

The novel also engages with imperial and expansionist themes. Mastery of nature and empire are evoked by Walton's Arctic expedition and by Clerval's optimism about bettering conditions in India. Victor mirrors the dangers of expansionist ambition: he seeks ultimate knowledge without ethical preparation.

The Being, by contrast, cultivates reflection and moral restraint, only turning violent due to sustained societal rejection. Its trajectory prefigures Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, exposing societal hypocrisy and prejudice. Both Mary Shelley's and Emily Brontë's novels challenge bourgeois norms and call for a radical rethinking of social and ethical responsibility.

In sum, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is more than a Gothic tale; it is a politically charged meditation on science, ethics and social responsibility. Written in a climate of political repression, the novel critiques illegitimate authority, emphasizes moral development through experience, and interrogates the consequences of neglect and exclusion.

Victor's failure and the Being's moral potential illustrate Shelley's central warning: knowledge and power, divorced from ethical responsibility, yield destruction while attentiveness, reflection and compassion become the foundations not just of human flourishing, but of a just social order. ■



International law: Is it progressive, reactionary or neutral?

JIMMY CORCORAN

Is international law progressive, reactionary or neutral?

Before answering, one needs a Marxist understanding of law. Marx claimed that "the totality of [society's] relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure."

Following the October Socialist Revolution, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic adopted the following definition: "Law is a system (or order) of social relationships which corresponds to the interests of the dominant class and is safeguarded by the organized force of that class."

The reality of the class nature of law in bourgeois society is hidden by the claim of the equality of all citizens. This is the contradiction at the heart of bourgeois law.

Despite its class nature, law can provide an arena of struggle, and communists can engage with the system either to defend the movement, expose class injustice or protect gains won through mass action. This position is fundamentally different from the social-democratic approach, which sees the courts as a neutral arbiter that can be used to incrementally reform capitalism from within. Our ultimate goal is to replace the entire bourgeois legal and state system with a socialist one.

If national law reflects the interests of the dominant class in society, does it follow that international law, based on the UN Charter, reflects the interests of the hegemonic world power? And if so, does international law offer a terrain for class struggle?

A Marxist understanding of international law is based on Lenin's theory of imperialism as the monopoly stage of capitalism. In 1935, the Soviet legal theorist Pashukanis stated that the real historical content of international law is the struggle between capitalist states. He stated that the emergence of the USSR meant that international law assumed a different form – that of a temporary truce between two antagonistic class systems.

The interests of US state monopoly capitalism have always dominated the UN, but the universality of the rights contained in the UN Charter, plus the strength of the USSR, forced the US to negotiate rather than dictate (though not always).

Following the overthrow of European socialism, the position of US imperialism

strengthened as the unipolar hegemon. As the KKE correctly stated at its recent Congress, the overthrow of the USSR has had a negative effect on the UN. However, the contradiction between its form and content still exists, with the principle of sovereign equality remaining central to the UN Charter. This remains the primary legal shield of smaller, weaker states against imperialist aggression and, as such, has long been problematic for US imperialism, which is increasingly unwilling to accept the legal constraints imposed by UN membership. At the recent Munich "Security" Conference, US Secretary of State Rubio declared that the US would not allow international law to stand in the way of US imperialism's "right" to world domination.

The US solution has been the "Rules-Based International Order." Unlike international law, which consists of treaties, customary law and general principles identifiable through formal sources, the "rules" are undefined, unwritten and shifting. Its ambiguity is its strength as an ideological tool. It conflates the interests of the NATO/EU bloc with the interests of "the international community."

International law is not progressive nor neutral; it is a core element of global capitalism and imperialism. It is an active force that shapes, enables, and legitimizes the exploitation of labour and resources on a world scale.

This does not mean, however, that engagement with international law is futile. Opposition to the genocide in Palestine, the embargo on Cuba and the kidnapping of Venezuela's President Maduro can be mobilized around the universalism of the UN Charter.

Anti-imperialist states and social movements must engage with international law, using legal arguments to expose hypocrisy, build solidarity and protect policy space. The universalist language of the Charter provides tools for struggling against colonialism and imperialist domination.

Reforming international law is necessary but insufficient. We must engage with international law to resist imperialism and protect popular gains; and further, we must mobilize to overthrow the capitalist system that produces imperialist law. The goal is not a more just international law within capitalism, but the abolition of the class relations that make law, in its current form, necessary. ■

Socialist Voice (Ireland)

SolidNet.org
News, documents and calls for action from Communist and Workers Parties around the world

Nova Scotians are angry — and active — about government funding cuts



JUDY HAIVEN

On March 11, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston announced he was going to restore \$53.6 million in the \$130 million cuts his Tory government proposed for its budget.

To some, he looked like a good guy — even a listener. He heard a smattering of media interviews with angry parents who stood to lose grants to care for their disabled adult children at home — thanks to Houston's budget cuts. He didn't look like such a good guy at the celebration at the African Heritage Month gala in February, when dozens of Black Nova Scotians booed, hissed and raised clenched fists when Houston spoke at the Halifax Convention Centre. A week before, he had announced cuts which would disproportionately affect African Nova Scotians and Indigenous people, disabled people and the elderly.

He tried to ignore two of the biggest rallies ever, each with more than 1,000 demonstrators, held two days back-to-back at Province House the week before. On March 10, he was greeted by another yet demonstration against his cuts — this one more than 800 strong.

Suddenly, he changed his mind and reversed about 40 percent of the cuts announced in his budget. Praiseworthy as that is, do all our journalists have to fall over one another to commend him for it?

What did Houston agree to? Originally, he cut financial grants to 287 NGOs, charities and government programs. Now he's spared the execution of a few dozen on the list.

The ones — I should say the "causes" — the government will continue to fund are programs that affect "Joe and Jane Average." For this government, Joe and Jane are rural or small town based people, who do not earn a lot and who the powerful have assessed as Tory supporters and prospective Tory voters.

For example, on Houston's chopping block was the NS Caregivers' Benefit Program which, as noted at the start of this article, pays a subsidy of \$400 a month for in-home caregivers for elderly or disabled adults. The \$12.7 million program was going to be cut by \$2.5 million — 20 percent. Some Nova Scotians were concerned that dropping money from the program would mean they would have to quit their jobs to stay home and look after family members — full time. The worried caregivers couldn't afford to leave their paid jobs — especially since the stipend for the carers has been capped at a measly \$400 a month for 16 years, despite NDP efforts to get it doubled. But this week, our mea culpa premier agreed to restore the funding (at \$400 a month) to the caregivers.

Houston has also cut grants to equity-advancing programs at the high school to university levels. Programs such as the Dalhousie University's Transition Year Program (to allow better access to university for Indigenous and Black students), scholarships for Women in Engineering and other initiatives were chopped. After the protests, some cuts

were reversed as of March 11. March 13, it was revealed that a new YWCA daycare centre, one of the few in the province that will serve disabled children, has been denied government funds of \$1.4 million. The money is earmarked to hire speech therapists, physiotherapists and other professionals needed to help the children with special needs.

Huge hit to arts and culture

Still, NS is closing a dozen of the province's 28 museums, cutting about 400 jobs of provincial government employees, and cancelling support of \$700,000 to NS publishers.

Virtually all the province's arts, culture and heritage programs, including music events, live theatre and festivals have had their funding cut from 30 to 55 percent. NS's subsidy to the province's premier performing space, Halifax's Neptune Theatre, will be cut by \$150,000. The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia will suffer a \$497,000 cut. The government is cutting \$55,000 from the Joggins Fossil Institute that looks after the Joggins Fossil Cliffs in Cumberland County, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2026, it will get less funding than it did when it first received the UNESCO designation 18 years ago!

What will become of the dozens of music festivals and theatre productions across the province every summer, and Celtic Colours in the fall? Will the government still purchase Nova Scotia art to protect in the province's Art Bank? What will happen to the Artists in the Schools program?

We have to bear in mind that the budget for arts and culture represents only 1 percent of Nova Scotia's \$18.9 billion budget. Yet it's been cut to smithereens.

Slippery politicians such as Houston want to believe that showing a bit of grace to elderly, disabled, Indigenous and Black Nova Scotians and putting back their underfunded and minimal programs will quell his critics. He doesn't believe that taking away funding for the arts will count against him — after all, the comparatively well-off in Halifax tend to vote NDP and returned eight (out of nine) NDP MLAs from Halifax and Dartmouth ridings in the 2024 provincial election.

Lifting the ban on fracking and uranium mining

The other day I was listening to a Tory apologist on CBC Radio One. When presented with the idea that the government could avoid the cuts entirely by simply reinstating the 1 percent to the HST cut last year, he said "not so fast." He explained that people in rural NS get few perks from the government support for the arts because they don't attend shows, or theatre, or art galleries. But the 1 percent HST cut means they "got" something from their government — just like when driving to Halifax, the recent removal of the bridge tolls saves them \$1 or two or free parking at hospitals. These are tangible benefits from a notoriously parsimonious, nasty and secretive government.

■ PREMIER BOOED OFF STAGE, PG 10



As Ford smashes OSAP, students across Ontario build a fighting movement

LENNY DEVEREUX

"Students choose nursing because we care about healthcare and the dignity of our patients," Sierra Punchard of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association told the crowd outside the Ontario legislature on March 4. "But our passion doesn't pay our debt."

Four thousand protesters crammed into Queen's Park's snow-narrowed walkways to fight back against Doug Ford's latest assault on education — lifting the 2019 tuition freeze for 2-percent annual increases and capping student assistance (OSAP) grants at just 25 percent, forcing students to cover the rest through loans. A second "Hands Off Our Education" rally was held on March 24, just as this issue of People's Voice was heading to print.

The Conservative government claims this will "preserve student access to education for decades to come." But as Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) president JP Hornick told the rally, the only "access" being preserved is that of militarism to Ontario's public budget. "They always find money for resource extraction, kicking Indigenous people off their land, and militarism. When it comes to education, students are asked to foot the bill." Condemnation echoed through the park: "Shame!" — shame on the Ontario government, shame on Doug Ford.

Ford's claim that students are using OSAP to get "basket-weaving" degrees is inaccurate and tone-deaf; it's also blatantly racist. High schoolers from Etobicoke School of the Arts point out, "basket weaving is an Indigenous practice." Weavers select materials with care, sustainably harvesting local plants with thanks or prayers to the Earth. The design carries culturally important meaning, represented through the weavers' careful work.

Students expressed real fears that they will be unable to afford post-secondary education, and they underlined a class distinction between OSAP recipients and the politicians cutting it. "I think it contributes to the fact that Ford was able to cut OSAP without thinking about it, because he's been in such a privileged position his whole life," one student explained. "He doesn't understand that cutting OSAP will cut the number of people who go into healthcare, pharmaceuticals, education — all the other things we need to keep society running. I also don't think he understands how impactful student loans are, considering the fact that his father funded whatever he wanted to do."

One student described her family's class journey across generations. "My grandparents weren't able to access education. My parents were because they had the privilege of free education [in Brazil]. They were able to give me a life where I don't have to worry about having food on the table."

Ben McCarthy, a faculty member and divisional executive member of OPSEU

who grew up in a quarry town, sees Ford's cuts through the lens of communities left behind. Ford talks about the "brain drain," but Ben explains this government is driving it.

"The money being taken out of those communities is from people not able to do the skilled work required to make those economies grow. It's a confusing thing because if you look at per-student funding across the country, Ontario is the most poorly funded." This remains true despite the Ford government's promised \$6.4 billion to education funding over the next four years. "We're one of the wealthiest provinces in the nation, and we're being told that we can't afford to fund education. I think there's a false sense of scarcity that this government wants to put around."

That "false scarcity" hides real abundance — just not for working people. "In 2023-2024, the college system was \$2 billion in the black," Ben said. "From one year to the next, they're doing record-breaking layoffs — 12,000, maybe the highest in Ontario history."

This is capitalism in action: COVID was used to justify cuts, then colleges made record profits.

Limiting higher education accessibility, and therefore subsequent job prospects, in rural communities draws a straight line between community poverty and lack of government investment. Governments provide poorer regions with lower quality infrastructure, housing and food options (rural communities are often "food deserts"), and public services like schools, hospitals and transit. As a result, higher education is a privilege for a lucky few, who then leave in droves for the big city and wealthier neighbourhoods.

Uri, a member of the Young Communist League (YCL), sees Ford's cuts as part of a longer war. "This is a continuation of what Ontario governments have been continuously doing on both sides of the political spectrum since the 90s," he explained.

Harris's "Common Sense Revolution" gutted education funding, centralized control over schools, and, as his own education minister was caught on tape admitting, deliberately manufactured a crisis to justify cuts. Ford is simply the next torchbearer of this legacy.

Students also demand an end to the Student Choice Initiative, buried in Ford's omnibus Bill 33. Uri explained the policy "gives students the ability to opt out of any non-compulsory fees involving clubs or unions, which effectively stripped the operating budget out of anything to do with student life on campus." If students can't fund their clubs, their unions or their organising spaces, they can't fight back.

The March 4 rally was loud, angry and entirely peaceful — until the moment it ended.

As the crowd dispersed, a protester climbed the statue of George Brown and

■ FALSE SCARCITY, PG 10

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