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# people's VOICE

**J.K. Rowling  
is wrong...**

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The fight to defend public ownership of hydro goes back many years. Seen here: a 1995 rally in Toronto against the Harris Tory government.

# STOP

## Hydro One privatization!

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## Which way ahead for Ontario Federation of Labour?



*"The real issues for OFL delegates flow out of the objective attacks on working people, and how labour reacts to these attacks" - PAGE 3*

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### CUPE convention

Meeting in Vancouver in early November, delegates to the CUPE National convention elected a new president, rallied for "green jobs", and adopted a "Strategic Directions" document for the next two years

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### People's Climate Summit

Ahead of the UN's COP21 global environment summit in Paris, grassroots activists gathered for a People's Conference in Bolivia.

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### Communist conference

Representatives from 58 Communist and Workers' Parties met in Istanbul, Turkey, at the end of October. The annual meeting called for stronger common action against imperialism and fascism.

# Mass action can halt Hydro privatization

By Liz Rowley, Toronto

The privatization of Hydro One has begun. In the first week of November, the first public offering of Hydro stocks resulted in the sale of about 10% of the public utility, generating great excitement on the TSX where the RBC Capital Markets and ScotiaBank led the pack in scooping up the largest parts of this and future offerings.

The Hydro One firesale is an out and out gift to the banks and corporations, in exchange for some quick money to fund the government's unfunded \$30 billion infrastructure program – one of two key promises that won them the June 2014 Ontario election.

The government says the main objective of the sale is funding for the infrastructure program. But only \$4.6 billion will be realized by the sale – less than one-sixth of what's needed – and at a huge cost to the public.

Instead, this \$30 billion could be generated by reversing an estimated \$15 billion in corporate tax cuts and by increasing the corporate tax rate to 22% for an additional \$10.5 billion annually. That would raise the funds for the infrastructure program, and maintain Hydro One as a public utility. It would also generate a much larger, and stable revenue stream for other public projects, like public hospitals, the long promised (but never delivered) needs-based funding formula for education, or a provincial system of affordable public childcare,

urban and inter-urban public transit.

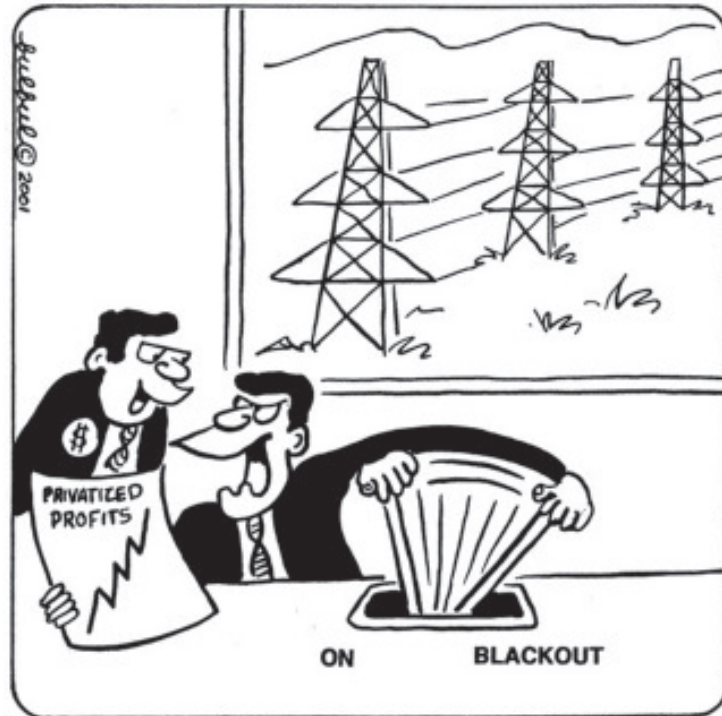
But if the objective is privatization (or 'unlocking' equity in existing assets, as the Liberals so fetchingly describe it) then the government's actions are much clearer. Privatization is a goal all by itself, and more will follow if the sale of Hydro One is successful.

The Liberals, and the corporations they evidently govern for, may think this is reasonable, but the public certainly doesn't. What's needed are more and better services; not less.

In all, the government plans to sell off 60% of Hydro One, claiming it can retain control over electricity in the province with 40% of the shares. That's a story for the gullible and the uninformed, who don't know how banks and corporations work together to secure control with very little equity. Even the Board will be filled with bank and corporate representatives, including those 'representing' the government and the public.

In fact, this sell-off is the realization of former Tory Premier Mike Harris' effort to privatize Ontario Hydro – a deal that was stopped by an angry and organized public in 2002. Privatization, deregulation and trade deals were part of the austerity agenda then, and they're part of it now too.

Former TD Chief Economist Douglas Peters says it like it is: corporations will demand at least an 8% return on their investment – fat profits in other words. This will



send electricity rates through the roof for ratepayers, including industrial users, homeowners and tenants.

Furthermore, the 2004 province-wide electricity blackout was caused by a private electricity company in Ohio, which produced a power surge because it feared not getting approval of its bid for higher rates. Suffice it to say, corporate greed knows no borders.

Hydro One generates \$1 billion annually for the public treasury, funds that are spent on health, education, public services, cities,

and more. These cuts will be deep, and they will be permanent. Jobs and services will be lost across the province.

For more than 100 years, Ontario Hydro has maintained a reliable supply of cheap electricity to industry and ratepayers, becoming the province's most valuable and productive public asset. Created by a Conservative government to develop industry and create jobs, that mandate is just as vital today.

Public opposition stopped Tory privatization plans 15 years ago.

Widespread opposition this time includes the public, the NDP and Conservatives in Queen's Park, the Communist Party, and organized labour. Ontario's Financial Accountability Office states that privatization will raise electricity rates and government debt.

But the Liberals are plowing ahead anyway. Under cover of the federal election, they have set the privatization wheels in motion, trying to beat the clock figuratively and literally. If they can privatize more of the Hydro One stock before opposition crystallizes into public action, the government wins. By doing it early in their mandate, Liberal spin doctors hope the public will forget about it by the next election.

Fortunately for supporters of publicly owned and affordable electricity transmission, Ontario's labour parliament meets in convention this month in Toronto. Decisive action by OFL delegates and leadership to take this fight to the streets, and to demand public hearings and a stop to the firesale of Ontario's most important public asset, can put this on the front burner at Queen's Park.

Working with labour's allies in the Common Front, public opposition can be moved out of the kitchens and onto the lawns of Queen's Park. Mass protests and independent political action by labour and its allies are the only thing that can stop the privatization train now.

Let's hope this is a central issue at the OFL convention. ●

## The little campaign with big ideas

By Johan Boyden, Montreal

Finally, the marathon election is over. Harper got the boot. Now the Liberal Party is toasting a sweet majority: 54 percent of the seats, with 40 percent of the votes. Not a bad return on money, they must be thinking.

The mass media are currently giving Trudeau a honeymoon. The CBC and Radio Canada are no exception. Take, for example, CBC's discovery of an "average, West Coast, middle-class mom voter," who wrote a letter via Facebook to the young Prime Minister. And - wait for it - Trudeau replied!

Still, I read her message. "Even though I put my X next to your [party's] name, I did not vote for you. I voted against the alternative," she wrote to Trudeau. "How many millions of us gambled today on whatever bet would be 'not Harper'?"

Campaigning at the doors, people often spoke to Communist candidates about the need to kick out Harper, "but what can we vote for"? Such conversations were also

reflected in discussions over Twitter and other relatively new social media.

To be sure, some twitter users simply kept us updated, albeit unintentionally. "There is a lot of



signage in my neighborhood to vote Communist for a man named Iqbal Kahlon," a young woman in Surrey wrote.

Others gave feedback on our leaflet: "So interesting. Found a Communist Party flyer on my car today in Esquimalt. Captivated by platform." Or: "Reading through the platform of the Communist Party. There's some pretty good stuff."

These comments came out of the blue. "The Communist Party supports a \$20 minimum wage, better than any other party." "People should really check out the Communist Party and their position on indigenous rights." "The Communist Party is the only political party that is all out pro-Palestinian."

When the election came, people even tweeted that they had voted Communist. But for our party, it never was just about the votes. Of course, we fought hard for them, and the result was somewhat uplifting: 4,382 votes across the country despite an almost total media blackout. While only running 30% more candidates than in 2011, the Communist Party scored a 50% increase in votes.

Our best results were by Peter Marcus (525 in Vancouver East) and Kimball Cariou (447 in Vancouver Kingsway, breaking the 1% threshold), Jason Devine (390 in Calgary Forest Lawn), and party leader Miguel Figueroa (261 in Toronto's Davenport riding). Other candidates achieved over 150, including Marianne Breton Fontaine and Adrien Welsh (177 and 158 respectively in the Montreal ridings of Hochelaga and Outremont), Bob Mann (169 in Hamilton East-Stoney Creek), and Ryan Barry (151 in Nova Scotia's South Shore-St. Margarets).

All this was part of the struggle for ideas, a struggle perhaps most clearly illustrated in the tweets about our candidates in debates:

"I'd say the communist candidate [Sean Burton] is actually



YCL members during the campaign, at the Toronto Labour Day parade. (Photo: Ed Bil)

winning the debate so far." "The Communist candidate [Mike Lewis] just got louder applause than the NDP." "Communist Party candidate [Bill Sloan] starts the debate by breaking out into song. 'Go Harper Go, Just Go, And Don't Come Back'. Catchy tune."

"Communist party candidate Darrell Rankin says 2% cap on federal funding for First Nations postsecondary education is racist." "Saleh Waziruddin: Isn't it a bit 'barbaric' to refuse a new inquiry to missing and murdered aboriginal women?" "Liz Rowley says no Ring of Fire Development can happen until outstanding land claims are resolved."

"First references of the night to 'apartheid Israel' come from Communist candidate Drew Garvie." "Yes the Canadian Wheat Board is fundamental to food security and survival of the family farm. Thanks Tristan Dineen." "Stuart Ryan criticizes universities

and the fed government of 'using' international students while simultaneously burdening them with high tuition. Right on!"

Another person tweeted, "The continued existence of the Communist Party is kind of admirable and impressive."

These are just a few tiny snapshots in 120 characters. Snapshots of Communists in the battle of opinion. A campaign focused not on "the gamble of voting against Harper," but on projecting and uniting around a real people's alternative agenda.

Ours was a farsighted campaign, well worth remembering. And now, in different forms, that struggle continues to win a people's alternative, to shift power to the working class, and for socialism. Well done, little party with big ideas!

(Johan Boyden was the Communist Party's central campaign organizer.) ●

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[www.communist-party.ca](http://www.communist-party.ca)

[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)

[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)

[rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com)

<http://solidnet.org>

# “Real Change” and the Ontario Federation of Labour convention

*Commentary from the Ontario Trade Union Commission, Communist Party of Canada*

The Ontario Federation of Labour Convention takes place Nov. 22-27, after unprecedented infighting, disaffiliation, dues strikes and back-room skirmishing. There will be a new leadership, guaranteed because the outgoing president Sid Ryan is not standing for re-election. But masked by the thrust and parry of trade union bickering and outright slander, usually delivered in the mainstream media, is the rather one-sided clash between social activism and social compliance. The pity is that after the smoke clears, even the combatants may not know what the fight was about or what was won or lost. That is because the contradictions preceding the convention were obscured by oblique sham issues - a created “financial crisis”, hidden cameras and implied sexism - constructed for the purpose of obscuring the real problem.

The real issues flow out of the objective attacks on working people and how labour reacts to these attacks. The weapons of attack are: NAFTA, CETA, TPP, precarious work, the attack on collective bargaining, de-industrialization, privatization, the attack on the ecology, and thirty years of wage stagnation and a decline in the stability of life. The neo-liberal corporate agenda. Labour has had a mixed response at best, but within that mix are the seeds of the conflicts and contradictions that will shape this OFL Convention. The ghost of Wayne Samuelson or the ghost of Sid Ryan? The inertia of rest or the inertia of motion?

The last decade has been marked by unexpected militancy erupting in the Occupy Movement, Idle No More, the Quebec students struggle, the G8 demonstrations and hundreds of important engagements and environmental struggles. These movements have recruited labour support, and influenced labour, but none of them originated in or were led by the organized labour movement. Labour has fought a rearguard struggle marked by defensive action at best and concession bargaining at worst. The most organized section of the working class has been, with the exception of teachers and some other public sector unions, in a secondary role and generally in retreat. Why?

Why is it that with 40% of the working class precariously employed, contracted out and super-exploited, the percentages of the organized in an expanding workforce have dropped ten points in 30 years? Are today's workers genetically or biologically different than their grandparents who built the labour movement? Or is it because we have a different leadership with different priorities?

The answer lies in the ideological contradiction between parliamentary struggle farmed out to the NDP, and advocacy for independent political action expressed by massive street-level mobilization. It should be obvious

that what works, like the Quebec student strike, would be the acid test. But not so. No matter how successful, street level struggles seem to embarrass labour leaders and social-democratic politicians. They prefer antiseptic lobbying and endless petitions that beg for “fairness”. At the G8 Summit struggles, youth activists shared wire detention cages while top labour leaders had guest status at the cocktail parties.

The scenario of the NDP throwing away the BC and Ontario elections, now repeated in the Liberal majority federally, should cast some doubt on this methodology. But the response has been to undermine and replace leadership that attempted mass mobilization and partnership with the social justice movements. While the Liberals constructed a fantasy of “real change” for a hungry electorate, the NDP moved to the right for a balanced budget and responsible government.

The Liberals are a party of capital; while they talk of “real change”, that change will be within the parameters of the neo-liberal agenda. While the “iron glove” of Stephen Harper may be replaced by the “velvet glove” of Justin Trudeau, the “fist” of the ruling class is still there.

But what of the maligned precarious and unemployed legions of youth? What of the indigenous people and the missing and murdered indigenous women? What of the Hamilton Steel pensioners? What of the 60% of unemployed who are denied benefits? What of the working families who cannot afford hydro? The list goes on, including the future displaced victims of CETA and TPP. Can the working class afford to lobby and beg for fairness for another four years to see if the Liberals will destroy capitalism? What is the chance of that? The cards are dealt and the die is cast. The Liberals are the party of big business, we already know that. But what is the role of labour? What is to be done?

If labour adopts a policy of co-operation and conciliation, it will be pulled constantly to the right in parallel with the unrestricted flow of capital and the destruction of sovereignty imposed by CETA and TPP. Even if the trade unions and the NDP express official opposition to these deals, without massive mobilization and extreme economic pressure, the results are inevitable and predictable. The dream of working class unity will be spelled out in the reality of poverty, degradation and despair. Without a Common Front, a partnership with the social justice movements, Indigenous movements, LGBTQ organizations, women's organizations, with labour as the catalyst, the outcome is sadly predictable. Even with this kind of unity the fight will be hard. Without it the fight is already lost.

In short, the working people need a marching song not a lullaby. We need leadership that will mobilize, not go back into

hibernation. We need independent political action, not contracting out. We need mobilization and

social pressure that tells the government that it cannot rule us without concessions to our

demands, that we have the ability to force “real change”, and we don't have to beg for it. ●



Delegates at the 2013 OFL Convention marched for a higher minimum wage and other pro-worker demands. What type of strategies will emerge from the 2015 Convention? (PV photo by Ed Bil)

## CUPE elects new President, adopts “Strategic Directions”

By Kimball Cariou, Vancouver

By a margin of about 300 votes, Mark Hancock was elected the new national president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees at the union's 27<sup>th</sup> biennial convention, held Nov. 2-6 in Vancouver. Over 2100 delegates attended the convention, the first major trade union gathering since the Oct. 19 federal election.

Hancock, who has been president of CUPE's British Columbia division since 2013, defeated Ontario CUPE leader Fred Hahn for the top post. He replaces Paul Moist, who retired after 12 years as CUPE national president. Charles Fleury was re-elected by acclamation as national secretary-treasurer.

While the outcome reflected a wide range of factors, such as provincial loyalties, some delegates viewed the contest as a referendum on differing strategies. Hancock is widely seen as a stronger supporter of the NDP, while Hahn has been associated with efforts to build common front struggles against right-wing economic and social policies. On the other hand, Hancock also speaks about labour-community coalition building, and Hahn is an NDP member.

Outgoing president Paul Moist spoke at a lunch hour rally held during the convention to promote the “Leap Manifesto,” the joint statement issued by progressive environment, indigenous and cultural activists during the federal election campaign. About half of the CUPE delegates took part in the “Leap” rally, along with hundreds of local community and labour activists. Many of the banners and placards empha-

sized the need for investment in renewable energy projects, to create jobs while curbing carbon emissions.

The mood of the rally was simultaneously festive and wistful. Participants celebrated the defeat of the Harper Conservatives, but many were still talking about the NDP's “missed opportunity.” While most were pleased that the new Liberal government has responded positively to some of the demands raised by mass movements, there were also warnings that the Liberals support

# CUPE

the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal and other key elements of the corporate agenda.

Other speakers at the Leap rally included Tsileil-Waututh First Nation anti-fossil fuel campaigner Reuben George, Stephen Lewis, and author Naomi Klein. Lewis made a point of welcoming the growing expressions of opposition to capitalism, in terms which could imply criticism of the NDP's centrist election campaign. All of the speakers called for unity of the labour movement, environmentalists, indigenous peoples and other progressive forces, but none addressed the thorny relationship between such struggles and the NDP.

These contradictions were evident in the “Strategic Directions” document adopted by delegates on the final day of the convention. Titled “Building Workers' Power,” the paper outlines key issues facing organized labour today, and projects the main priorities for CUPE over the two years before the union's next national convention.

Despite its revolutionary title, the document does not use the terms capitalism or socialism, instead presenting a broad outline of the neoliberal attack on working people, and the necessary response by trade unions. “Strategic Directions” calls for a range of approaches to strengthen the ability of CUPE to organize and engage in collective bargaining, to help elect NDP governments, and to protect the planet and fight for global justice. It also lays out a series of progressive policies, and advocates a “social unionism” approach to build wider movements around these issues.

Analysing the recent federal election, “Strategic Directions” argues that “the Liberal party successfully positioned itself to the left in the eyes of Canadians,” and goes on to state that “CUPE remains committed to ensuring that the New Democratic Party represents workers' interests, and supporting the NDP to represent our interests in the political sphere. CUPE will participate in the NDP's review of this election campaign, offering critical but constructive input and advice. We will continue to build our political party, the NDP. We must encourage more involvement in our party throughout the union...”

Given that many progressive activists were deeply disappointed by the NDP's acceptance of fundamental neoliberal economics in recent elections (BC, Ontario, and now federal), it remains to be seen how the new CUPE leadership will convince its own members that the NDP really is the political party of the trade union movement. ●

“Strategic Directions” can be accessed at the CUPE website, [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca).

# EDITORIALS

## Celebrations and a caution

Debates over the direction of the new federal government are heating up, across the political spectrum. For example, CUFI-Canada, a hardline Zionist group, has condemned Foreign Affairs Minister Stephan Dion's statement that Canada will "return to the role of honest broker" on Israel/Palestine issues; if this does mark a break with support for the violent policies of the Israeli apartheid state, all supporters of Palestine welcome the news.

More such developments can be expected. The Harper Tories represented the most dangerous, anti-people elements of the ruling class in Canada, and their defeat is a significant victory, not just a simple transition from one bourgeois party to another. The new government plans to repeal the notorious anti-immigrant Bill C-24, to restore the Interim Federal Health Program for refugees, to let federal scientists speak about important research, to reinstate the long form census, to suspend the elimination of urban home mail delivery, etc. All these wins were achieved mainly by the mass movements which resisted the Tory agenda for years, and we join with them in celebrating every such victory.

At the same time, the Trudeau Liberals are still a party of big business, strongly committed to the capitalist system and to the "trade deals" pushed by transnational corporations. The new Liberal caucus supports the "humanitarian intervention" doctrine used by imperialist powers to justify every disastrous US-led military action of the past two decades, from Yugoslavia to Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and other countries. Justin Trudeau promised to amend Bill C-51 and to change the electoral system, but it remains to be seen if these will be anything more than cosmetic fixes.

So let's keep pressing the Liberals to carry out their positive promises - and prepare to resist the pro-corporate and pro-war agenda which will inevitably follow.

## Getting the inquiry right

Sometimes symbolic actions can deliberately obscure realities. Stephen Harper's 2008 "apology" to the victims of residential school abuse was later exposed as a brazen attempt to minimize political fallout. His government stubbornly resisted calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, signalling that the ex-PM does not regard indigenous people as equal to "old stock Canadians."

Now, the first steps of the Trudeau government towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples are being closely watched. Will the son of the prime minister whose government's infamous White Paper set off an upsurge of aboriginal militancy show true respect for First Nations? Or will Justin Trudeau stumble out of the gate? The national inquiry issue will be a critical test, around the terms of reference, the consultation process, and the political will to implement final recommendations.

Trudeau and his new Justice Minister, Jody Raybold-Wilson, must avoid the mistakes of the B.C. inquiry led by Wally Oppal, such as its narrow focus on the botched criminal investigation of Willy Pickton, or more accurately, the refusal of police forces to treat the disappearances of indigenous women seriously. The Oppal inquiry was never designed to gather information to help end systematic violence against indigenous women and girls.

The federal inquiry must instead take the advice of those who have worked so hard to keep this tragedy at the centre of public attention. Family members, the First Nations Summit, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and others, all want prior consultation with indigenous women themselves. They stress that the inquiry should be conducted by a woman, and hear from all the affected communities. Not least, the government must take action, in contrast to British Columbia, where most of Oppal's recommendations were ignored. The proof of Justin Trudeau's intentions will not be in his campaign promises of reconciliation, but in starting the national inquiry on the right foot.

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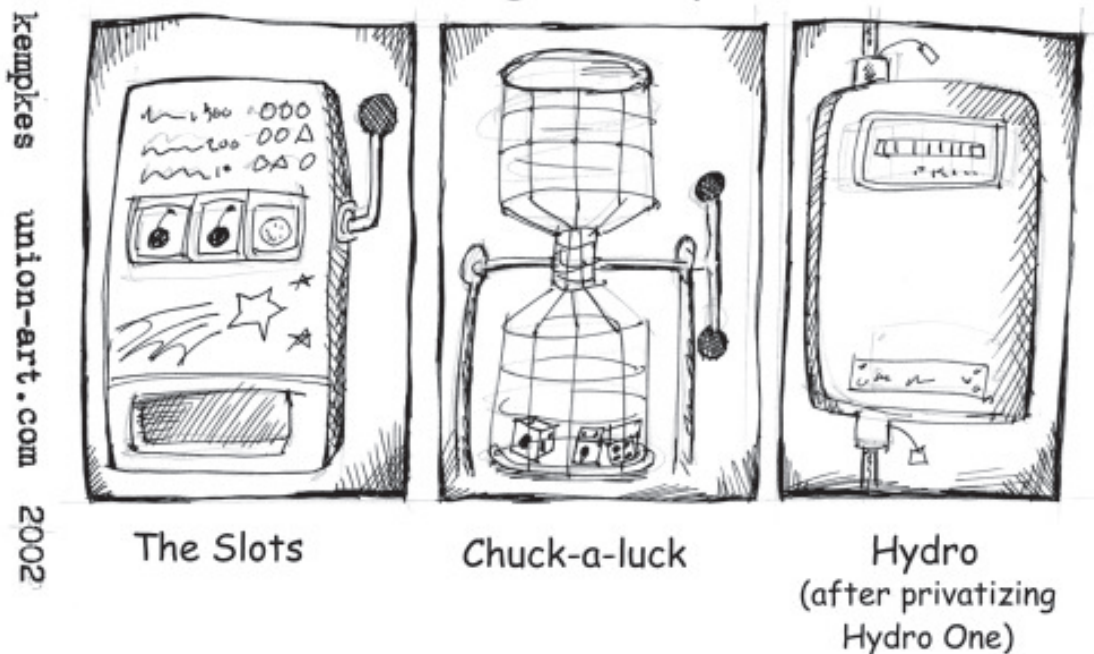
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## Feeling Lucky?



## Another made-in-Queen's-Park mess

By Liz Rowley

Ontario's teachers and educational workers entered 2015 without a contract, and some may leave the year in the same condition. The problem? The Liberal government in Queen's Park.

It started when Premier Wynne promised never to treat teachers and education workers the way her Liberal predecessor had, when Dalton McGuinty suspended free collective bargaining and imposed a contract with \$2 billion in cuts in 2012.

McGuinty's create-a-crisis government prorogued when the Tories smelled blood and refused to support his infamous Bill 115 to extend the wage freeze to the broader public sector. A month later McGuinty resigned, leaving his cabinet members to clean up the mess and try to hold onto government.

In the subsequent leadership campaign, Wynne campaigned from the left. Convention delegates elected her over a right-wing opponent, shaken by the sight of thousands of angry teachers and education workers demonstrating outside, supported by a mobilized labour movement led by OFL President Sid Ryan.

Clinging to government by a thread, Wynne promised to fix Bill 115. Teachers and educational workers, she said, could count on her to treat them with respect and fairness.

Wynne didn't mention her government's decisions: first, to continue the austerity course set by McGuinty, including an extended wage freeze across the public sector; and second, to abandon the government's 2003 promise to introduce a needs-based funding formula for education, negatively affecting School Boards, communities, students' learning conditions, and the working conditions of teachers and educational workers.

These are the real roots of the crisis in education, and the real reason for the difficulties faced by unions in the education sector trying to secure collective agreements 14 to 18 months after previous contracts expired.

Add to this the Wynne government's decision to introduce two-tiered bargaining, where the unions each have to negotiate not one but two contracts: one with the province over wages, and the other with local School Boards over working conditions. This set of negotiations was all about contract stripping and "net zero" bargaining, which left unions (at best) with a 1.8% pay

increase over three years, and a signing bonus that wasn't part of the wage package, offset by changes to working conditions, and an inflation rate not much less than the wage increase.

Add to this the green light given by the Education Minister, allowing local School Boards to unilaterally cut wages by 10% to employees who are still working, but whose unions have refused to sign contract stripping collective agreements. Not mentioned is the School Boards' earlier demand (now abandoned) that unions should agree to increased class sizes and decreased prep time for teachers. Not mentioned is the fact that School Boards deliberately backed away from negotiations with the Elementary Teachers, apparently hoping that the delays would turn the public against the unions and pressure them to make concessions.

Add to this a decision by the provincial government, deliberately leaked to the media, to reimburse unions and school boards for some of the extra-ordinary expenses incurred as a consequence of the two-tiered bargaining imposed by Wynne. As expected, this generated a huge backlash against the unions, painted as greedy fat cats who are indifferent to cutbacks in schools and communities. Not mentioned is the fact that only unions—not School Boards—are now required to produce receipts for cheques still to be issued, or that the unions have always submitted receipts for expense cheques.

These protracted struggles directly affect students and the quality of education they receive, but the end is still not in sight. Many local contracts are still to be negotiated and more to be ratified.

While all of the unions in the sector expressed mutual solidarity at protests and demonstrations, there was no coordinated bargaining strategy, despite the fact their contracts all expired at the same time. Coordinated bargaining would have made them all stronger, and better able to communicate their anti-austerity, pro-education message to the public.

Once the larger unions and bargaining units have settled, smaller unions in the sector will be in the weakest position, as the most likely to face the public's wrath alone. Labour must not allow this to happen. As the unions themselves say, "teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions." We're talking about our children, and our sisters and brothers in the trade union movement. We're talking about quality education and

the future of our country.

The real causes of this protracted struggle need to be exposed. The policies of the Liberal government are directly responsible. In a workplace, they'd be fired. Come the next election, the Liberals should be fired too, and replaced with a government committed to a people's agenda - not the corporate agenda so revered in the Ontario Legislature today.

In the meantime, the fight to defeat wage cuts, privatization, and austerity, has to be stepped up. The Common Front in Quebec is a splendid example of how the labour and people's movements can join to fight austerity, to defend free collective bargaining and to protect and advance workers' economic and social interests.

Likewise, the great Quebec student strike of 2012 to defend accessible post-secondary education was transformed into a struggle of those who work for a living, who want real and fundamental change—not cosmetic change—for themselves and their children. This movement won the admiration and support of workers across Canada, and then it defeated a government and its anti-youth, anti-worker, anti-social policies.

That's the kind of unity and all-in struggle we need today in Ontario, to restore quality public education and health care, to protect and expand civil, democratic, and labour rights, and to build a future where people's needs trump corporate greed. For now, the fight by teachers and education workers continues to be a main battlefield in Ontario.

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# Want democratic reform? Let's start with the country's newspapers

By progressive commentator Murray Dobbin, posted on his blog at [murraydobbin.ca](http://murraydobbin.ca)

Observing the cathartic effect of the end the Harper regime reveals just how traumatized millions of Canadians were by nearly 10 years of rule by this vindictive prime minister. The analogies and metaphors keep coming: like getting out of jail, like waking up from a nightmare, like the end of an occupation.

This election will provide students, pundits and authors with career-building opportunities to dissect the results. Part of that analysis will, of course, examine the unprecedented assault on democracy carried about the Conservatives. As it should, because undoing the damage must be the litmus test for the new Liberal government and Parliament.

However, while it is critical to track these efforts, the other democratic institution which needs renewed attention is the media and in particular the newspapers in this country. Regrettably, we have adapted to the outrageous concentration of newspaper ownership in Canada, greater than in any other developed Western nation.

But the newspapers perhaps did us a favour in the last week of the campaign with their inane endorsement of the Harper autocracy for yet another four-year term. Postmedia and the *Globe and Mail* actually managed to write editorials justifying the re-election of a man turfed from office by a tsunami of voter revulsion.

The *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* editorials both declared their support because of Harper's economic record — but ignored all the actual evidence. The *Globe* declared: "The key issue of the election should have been the economy and the financial health of Canadians. On that score, the Conservative Party has a solid record." And the *National Post*: "Harper's commendable record in office cannot be dismissed. Our economy is in good shape..."

These declarations are infuriating because the exact opposite was recently meticulously documented by Unifor economist Jim Stanford, who co-wrote an analysis of all the prime ministers back to 1945 using 16 separate indicators. It wasn't even close: Stephen Harper's government had by far the worst economic record of any government in 70 years: "For 13 of the 16 indicators, the Stephen Harper Conservative government ranks last or second last among all postwar Prime Ministers. And its average ranking across all 16 indicators is by far the worst."

It should come as no surprise that the *National Post* and the *Globe* should rank the Harper government as having a "solid" economic record. They don't mention in their assessment the many aspects of the economy that are not solid — aspects that affect ordinary people: unemployment, growth, job creation, youth employment, job quality, real personal incomes, inequality, or personal debt.

Those who run the country's daily newspapers reveal

themselves as concerned only about "the economy" in the narrowest sense, using it as a code word for the corporate elite, the one per cent — not the economy of ordinary wage and salary earners. They throw their support behind a government that simply facilitates economic growth by getting out of the way of business, by signing "trade" deals, gutting corporate and wealth taxes, and driving down wages.

There was a time when the outrageous concentration of newspaper ownership was an issue, but it has become the new normal.

## OTHER VOICES

Even when Conrad Black took over most of the dailies in the country in the 1990s, the commentators missed the most important feature of the media coup. While Canadian newspapers had always been pro-business, they had never before been strategically harnessed to accomplish an ideological purpose: to systematically roll back the activist state and the benefits it delivered to ordinary Canadians.

But that is why Black bought (and subsequently gutted) all those papers. He was in lock-step with the Reform Party cum Alliance Party and shared an identical objective. When we talk of democratic reform, we absolutely must include the reform of the newspaper. There is little point in

reforming parliamentary institutions if the instruments of civic literacy have been turned on their heads to produce precisely the opposite result.

Running a newspaper in a democracy should be seen as a privilege as much as it is a right. It is not like running a clothing store or a car wash — it is fundamental to the health of society, to how we decide to live together, to how our values are reflected back to us. When the news media are so completely out of touch with how a large majority of people feel about their country, there is something wrong with the state of human affairs.

News as a public good How do we fix that? It is worth going back in history to two periods when there was an appetite for reform — the 1970 Davey Report and the 1981 Kent Royal Commission on Newspapers — both publicly established federal examinations of media concentration and its impact on Canada. (This overview is a must read if you want a reminder of a time when genuine public discourse was the norm.) Their recommendations, read in today's context, sound positively revolutionary. Had they been implemented the history of the country may well have been altered.

Today we can take some solace in the fact that the same demented "free market" ideology that continues to play havoc with the real Canadian economy (the 99 per cent) is helping to weaken the newspaper industry in Canada. While there are many factors in newspapers' decline, the fall in readership suggests a growing



Image and more research available at <http://prudentpress.com/wp-content/uploads/Media-Ownership.jpg>

disconnect with Canadian values. Newspapers that continue to ignore the wave of contempt that swept the Harperium from power will deserve their fate.

And indeed they are dying a slow and painful death. Postmedia, the owner of the *National Post* and 45 other dailies (having swallowed the Sun chain's English language papers) recently reported out on their steady decline: "Canada's largest newspaper chain saw advertising and circulation revenues tumble at a faster pace. The owner of the *National Post* and numerous major city dailies reported a loss of \$140 million... in the three months ended May 31."

Reading the Postmedia papers is a demoralizing experience, given that nowhere do you find Canadian values reflected in their reporting or opinion pieces. But when you learn that the *National Post's* paid subscribers (2014 numbers) total 83,671 out of 24 million plus eligible voters, it sort of lifts your spirits (though they do get an additional 100,000 digitally).

One answer to the democratic deficit created by media concen-

tration (and ideological bias) is the idea of publicly subsidized newspapers, not unlike the CBC model and models in Europe. As Ezra Klein of the *Washington Post* writes: "We have public universities and public centers for disease research and public firefighting departments... Why should news be different?" In a democracy, the news is just as important: "What if we could create a funding source that recognized the news' role as a 'public good,' ... What if, in other words, we subsidized it?"

Another possible model is a for-profit newspaper owned and operated by a foundation willing to put the profits back into the paper rather than shareholders' pockets. More on these possibilities in a future column. But when the next Canadian daily approaches its demise, perhaps local citizens and a few enlightened millionaires could buy it up and model it on the assumption that a robust, investigative news department and a variety of provocative commentators are first order reforms critical to our country's democracy. ●

## European Communists call for egalitarian and progressive education

**The Initiative of the Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe (CWPE) released this statement criticising the trend towards discriminatory and commodified schools in Europe.**

An education system reflects the dominant ideology of the society in which it is based. It reflects the values of the dominant class. Across Europe the class-based education system remains a tool in the maintenance of an exploitative society while the parameters of the education system are dictated by the monopolies which have the power in their hands. Their main aim is to teach the children of the working class at all education levels to submit to their exploiters.

This system is inherently reproducing discrimination on a class basis, being designed to maintain and reinforce this.

Education is increasingly commodified and provided for those who can afford to pay; it is increasingly handed over to sponsors while the monopolies' executives undertake activities that even include "teaching" school and university students. There exists a huge discrepancy determined by class between

schools in relation to pupil background, the manner and extent of resourcing, facilities available, and the academic progress of students.

The anti-people policies of the governments and the EU with the constantly reducing state support and the enormous shortages in books, the lack of accommodation, canteens and transport intensify class barriers, and force the people's families to resort to loans, placing an unbearable burden on their shoulders.

The content of education is becoming increasingly reactionary, with school and university books that contain anti-scientific

ideological constructs, isolated fragments of knowledge and scattered pieces of information. This results in the fragmentation of the young persons' thought and development. All kinds of historical distortions are taught that attack the activity of the labour and people's movement. Anti-communism and slanders against socialism are being regurgitated in education at all levels. Children are being subjected to the EU's propaganda from a tender age. They are being inculcated with the poison of competitiveness, profit, entrepreneurship and class collaboration so that these become the criteria for their thinking.

Research at universities has been handed over to the monopolies in order to serve their profitability.

Increasingly, students from the working class and the poor popular strata are forced to leave school and students are taking poorly-paid work with working hours that disrupt their studies. At the same time, flexible working arrangements and dismissals are imposed in schools and universities.

Education should be comprehensive and universal, with an enhanced content and free for all, including migrant students, asylum seekers and students with special needs, from pre-school through to and including post-graduate studies, with all requirements, including books and IT equipment, provided free at all levels. This also means the abolition of all business activity in education. All shortages in educational personnel must be immediately addressed. All graduates must have full rights.

We call on the peoples throughout Europe to strengthen their struggle for the right of their children to comprehensive and enhanced education, against the political line of the bourgeois governments and the EU, against imperialism, big capital, and the monopolies. ●



Demonstrators in London participate in a 2014 protest against student loans

# 17th IMCWP calls for "common action against imperialism and fascism"

**Press release of the Communist Party, Turkey on the 17th International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in Istanbul, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2015**

The 17th International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties has been successfully held in Istanbul on the topic "The tasks of Communist and Workers' Parties to strengthen the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation, imperialist wars and fascism, for workers' and peoples' emancipation, for socialism".

The meeting was attended by 104 delegates, representing 58 communist and workers' parties from 48 countries. Six parties could not attend the meeting but sent their greetings and written contributions.

After the extraordinary meeting in Damascus and the 14th meeting in Beirut, it was the third of IMCWP meetings held in a Middle East country, Asia Minor being the junction point of unique spheres of political class struggle. The meeting took place during the heydays of the parliamentary elections in Turkey, in which the hosting Communist Party, Turkey took part, under the intense oppression of the government.

The meeting provided an opportunity for an exchange of opinions and information on the latest developments of imperialist restructuring, escalation of fascist movements in different regions and the quest for emancipation opening up opportunities for a vigorous working class struggle. The perspective to develop joint and convergent action was shared.

The parties that attended the meeting gave information on their activities and the progress of communist movement in their countries. The speakers expressed their concern towards the escalating prohibitions, persecutions and discrimination against Communist Parties.

The responsibility of the communist and workers' parties to strengthen the working class struggle in regions under imperialist threat and intervention was underlined. Likewise stressed was the concern about rivalries among capitalist powers, aggravated by their regional collaborators. The dangers posed by militarization and the concern to fortify anti-imperialism in such regions of competition was expressed.

The refugee crisis came to the agenda and the need for promoting not only internationalist solidarity but also class consciousness against discrimination policies and abortive patronage policies was pointed out.

Due to the restructuring of capitalism exhausted by crisis and the restoration of imperialism in regions of vacuum, the meeting drew attention to the rise of erroneous expectations of reforming the capitalist order in favour of people's and of establishing peace under the patronage of imperialism.

The timeliness and urgent necessity for promoting socialism was resolved as the sole answer for the quest of peoples against

barbarism and impoverishment. There was a confirmation on breaking away from the hegemonic capitalist *modus vivendi*.

The particular importance of orienting patriotic resistances against military aggression and popular struggles against austerity measures towards a class confrontation was pointed out. This was reiterated with the emphasis to mobilize the working class in order to lead these struggles towards socialism.

Coordinating communist and workers' parties' struggles on all these issues in order to stir up the class movement on a revolutionary basis was highlighted.

Participants saluted the struggle of the peoples in Latin America and the central role of communists in these struggles for independence and socialism strengthening the anti-imperialist and progressive forces of the region. Solidarity with Cuba and its socialist revolution, as well as with the Venezuelan people and their Bolivarian revolution was reasserted.

The meeting assessed the struggle of the European peoples against their governments' imperialist policies and domestic exploitation of workers and enslavement of migrants. The determination of the working class

in Greece to reject subordination to the blackmail of EU, ECB, IMF including the rejection of negotiations with the Troika was valued. The election results in Greece and Portugal for the communists were hailed, qualified as hopeful and encouraging.

The consequences of inter-continental confrontations and alliances between imperialist centers were dealt by the participants. NATO's intention to open new military bases in Hungary and Slovakia and Russia's interventionist policy towards Syria, beside the confrontation in Ukraine, emerge as a change in power balances, both paving the way for a reinforced anti-imperialist struggle and also increasing the precision of communists to keep independent from mainstream power politics. Fascist paramilitary forces are deliberately backed by liberal governments, shifting the context of struggle to identity politics and stimulating the dilemma of cosmopolitanism and nationalism which pushes back the internationalist stance of the working class. On the other hand, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which will provide a basis for a new wave of attacks on the working classes, was called to attention and taken as an agenda of struggle for the forthcoming period.

The dual threat in the Middle East and North Africa caused by the jihadists and the Israeli state

was confirmed, both corresponding to a de facto coalition against secular and patriotic forces. Not only ISIS but also other Islamic reactionary groups, notably the components of the FSA in Syria, have a counter-revolutionary character and their role in legitimizing military interventions has to be deciphered. The Gulf states' support for these jihadist groups and Saudi Arabia's assault in Yemen was vigorously



condemned as well as the threat posed by the Israeli state towards Syria. More revolting is the increasing attacks of Israel to the Palestinian people, bombing residential areas, carrying out arrests. The meeting declared its solidarity with the people resisting these attacks, particularly in Palestine and in Syria, calling for a uncompromising struggle against imperialism and fundamentalism.

The growing need to strengthen the ideological struggle against the infiltration of bourgeois ideology within the ranks of communist movement had been stressed in the previous communist and workers' parties' meetings. The current

meeting updated the facts and warnings. The artificial revival of social democracy nourished by populism, narrowing the opposition to neo-liberal policies, obsolete dictatorships and military aggression sets a trap for the communist movement rendering the class struggle blind against the real sources of these attacks. While it is imperative to challenge all efforts to criminalize communists and condemn their historical legitimacy,

there is a further need to demarcate the revolutionary and class based line of the communist and workers' parties from the conformist and opportunist tendencies within heterogeneous opposition movements focused on mutant aspects of contemporary capitalism.

The participant parties had the opportunity to develop their bilateral relations, to contact other parties and to exchange views.

We believe that the international meeting contributed to the consolidation of the communist and workers' parties' policies in triggering the working class movement in each country and will initiate their common action against imperialism, fascism by raising up socialism as the concrete solution for emancipation.

The meeting's issues of action were adopted as guidelines to be implemented, materialised and to be monitored by the Working Group until the 18th IMCWP meeting.

Istanbul, Nov. 2nd, 2015 ●

## "Together, we will get rid of this barbaric order called capitalism"

*Excerpts from the opening speech to the 17th IMCWP, by Kemal Okuyan, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Turkey (KP)*

I don't prefer to start with the cliché phrase that "in these difficult times we've been passing through..." There has never been an easy time for the working class movement. It is not surprising that today capitalist classes attack on labour movement and strive to abolish all the acquirements that working classes has gained along centuries, they have done each time when capitalism passed through successive economic and political crisis. It is not surprising that contradictions among imperialist powers deepen and the threat of war and fascism rise.

It is true that this threat implies additional difficulties for the communists. Restrictions, bans, arrests, persecutions, murders... We have countless examples of such aggressions by the bourgeoisie in the history of communist movement. Right here, in our country, communists were forced to engage in clandestine struggle for decades. Today is no exception. There is only one meaning of the unjust implementations that we do and will protest in Kazakhstan,

Ukraine, Hungary, Baltic countries and others: we cannot speak of any real freedom or democracy under capitalism!

There are no reasons to tell that certain periods provide "smoother" conditions for the communists. And, I mean the periods when capitalism gains relative stability and extend the scope of bourgeois democracy due to one reason or the other. Of course, this can be asserted only if we are still committed to our only reason for being: the claim to establish a classless society free from exploitation. A stabilized capitalism would not and does not resolve exploitation, unemployment, inequalities, poverty and the possibility of crisis. The stability of capitalism provides dominant class with additional opportunities to deceive working masses. In that regard, the difficulties for the communists increase in certain ways.

Dear comrades, We must get rid of capitalism. Humanity can no longer put up with this barbarism. I dare to declare this in a country where we faced with one of the worst electoral results a communist party can get, just four months ago.

I dare it not because we are dreamers, utopians, adventurers or fools, but because we are communists!

It is clear that the struggle for socialism demands patience and persistence. We would not make a



*Kemal Okuyan, Secretary of the CC, Communist Party, Turkey*

revolution but create caricatures, with a voluntarism that does not take into account objective conditions, nor we would without taking pains. Caricature is an impressive, creative and cheerful art; yet those who become caricatures themselves in politics would cheer no one but our enemy.

Comrades, the history of the communist movement is full of great victories and achievements. Taking it further, I can say that if the communists were taken out from the history of last 160 years, the world would not only turn into

ahell, but it would become barren in every sense of the word. The communists left their mark on their epochs in the fields of science, art and culture.

...We have no doubt that we will eventually succeed in our struggle in this problematic and surprising country. We also have no doubt that you too will triumph in your struggles. Together, we will get rid of this barbaric order called capitalism. All we need is Marxism-Leninism; not as a worn-out slogan but as a living guide that enlighten our path. ●

## "A strong rejection of the pro-austerity and pro-war agenda"

### *Contribution to the 17<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, presented by Communist Party of Canada leader Miguel Figueroa*

First of all, we join with others in expressing our solidarity to our host party, the Communist Party, Turkey... At such a critical moment in this region, with dark clouds of war swirling everywhere, with imperialist intrigues fomenting national and religious conflict in order to extend its hegemony, and with a humanitarian and refugee crisis of epic proportions, the principled, internationalist role of Communist and Workers' parties across the Middle East are more crucial than ever.

The tasks currently facing our parties – and all the anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces in a broader sense – flow from an objective assessment of the general, systemic dynamics of capitalism today. In our view, the basic, underlying contradictions inherent to this system are maturing at an accelerating pace, giving rise to a series of interrelated crises which have sharpened over the recent period.

Foremost amongst these continues to be the historic conflict between the two main classes – the working class and the ruling capitalist class – locked in dialectical unity and struggle by virtue of their central location in the process of production. The class struggle is intensifying everywhere, as state-monopoly capital strives to drive down the price of labour-power to reverse the decline in the rate of profit, and to preserve their class domination at the expense of the workers and their labour rights.

In the Canadian context, this

takes the form of an all-sided capitalist offensive against the wages and living standards of workers, the loss of full-time and permanent employment, especially in industry, and its replacement with part-time, contractual and other forms of precarious employment, growing social disparities between the super-rich and the vast majority of working people, the spread of poverty and insecurity, and the increased attack on the trade unions, labour standards and workers' rights in general.

The Canadian State plays a central role in enforcing this capitalist offensive, through austerity programs, the weakening and privatization of public programs, services and social protections, the



imposition of pro-corporate trade and investment pacts like the Canada-Europe (CETA) and Trans-Pacific Partnership deals, and legislative and judicial attacks on trade union rights.

Another critical aspect of this capitalist offensive which our Party prioritizes in its work is the drive to militarization, imperialist aggression and war. Over the past decade in particular, Canada has played an increasingly active and bellicose role within the NATO imperialist alliance, especially in the occupation of Afghanistan, in

Libya, in support of the fascist regime in Kiev, and as one of Zionist Israel's strongest backers. It has hiked military spending, announced major procurements of new stealth fighter jets and warships, and is now expanding the number of Canadian military bases on foreign soil.

A third priority for our Party is the struggle to defend and extend the democratic rights of the people and to combat every encroachment on the right to political dissent, violations of civil liberties, and the passage of authoritarian and even proto-fascist, police state laws such as C-51 (the new 'anti-terrorism' law) by governments at every level. This also includes the battle against all forms of racism and Islamophobia, and ultra-right, fascist groups seeking to divide the working class on this basis; the struggle for the full emancipation and social equality of women and sexual minorities; and the struggle in solidarity of the just demands and national rights of Canada's indigenous peoples and of Quebec.

Finally, our Party also considers among its top priorities our active participation in the environmental movement, and in particular efforts to mitigate and reverse climate change, the impact of which falls most heavily on the working class, peasants and farmers, and on the poor and marginalized sections of the people around the world. We sense a special responsibility on this point, not only because on a per capita basis, Canada is among the worst polluters in the world – but also because of the disgusting role which the Harper Conservative government has played in obstructing any binding international agreement to reduce emissions – a cravenly self-serving policy on behalf of Canadian energy, mining and resource monopolies.

The recent federal elections must be seen in this context. In our view, the defeat of the Harper government marked a significant victory for the working class, for indigenous peoples, for women, youth and students, for the unemployed and underemployed, and for the LGBTIQ communities. It was a victory for all those dedicated to peace and disarmament, for immediate action to combat climate change, and to the struggle for social equity and social justice. The results reflected a strong rejection of the pro-austerity and pro-war agenda of the Conservatives by the peoples of Canada.

We have no illusions about the new Liberal majority under Justin Trudeau that is now in place. The Liberal Party is also a bourgeois, big business party; it has not changed its political colouring or class orientation. It remains

committed to neoliberal economic doctrine at home, and to an imperialist foreign policy abroad.

We think it wrong however to dismiss this outcome as simply the meaningless replacement of one bourgeois government with another. The Harper government was the most anti-working class, anti-democratic, pro-war, misogynistic government in Canadian history. Its defeat opens up new political space to not only reverse the damage already done, but to also win more advanced and radical democratic, economic and political demands. This will require however a conscious political and organizational struggle to invigorate the extra-parliamentary movements, and an ideological struggle to shed illusions about the bourgeois role and character of the Liberal government... ●

### **Support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel**

*The following resolution, co-sponsored by the Communist Parties of Britain, Canada, Ireland, Lebanon, and South Africa, was signed by parties attending the Istanbul meeting.*

We the undersigned parties... agree to support and actively promote the international movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until such time as it ceases its violations of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Palestinians have suffered for generations in camps and Israeli prisons, facing torture and death, and Israeli bombings of their schools and homes. Today they are being walled off from the water in their deep aquifers, from access to Jerusalem, from fishing and farming. Gaza is treated as a prison by the Israelis and the rest of Palestine is colonized, and partitioned into townships. BDS is a non-violent form of political action that has had effect in the past – for example, against Apartheid South Africa – and is again showing its effect on the Israeli economy. The naming of an Israeli Cabinet Minister to an anti-BDS portfolio indicates that the Zionist Netanyahu government is fearful that the BDS movement will grow. The active involvement of our parties in the BDS campaign can contribute to international coordination and help build the broad front in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggles against the Israeli state. ●

## "Our task is to save humanity and the planet from capitalism"

### *Excerpts from the contribution of South African Communist Party (SACP) to the 17<sup>th</sup> IMCWP in Istanbul*

We want to congratulate the Communist Party, Turkey for making excellent arrangements for hosting the 17th IMCWP in these difficult and testing times in Turkey, the region and the world. We want to pay homage to the people who lost their lives in a recent brutal bomb attack in Ankara. We salute the steadfast and fighting people who are not cowed and are bracing such attacks, but also defying them to express and register their protest against the anti-people policies of Erdogan's AKP government.

... The SACP is conscious of the enormity of the tasks that confront the working class, its formations and the popular strata in the struggles for an alternatives in South Africa, the region and the world. This, we believe, requires even greater unity between and amongst the progressive and popular forces to enhance its mobilisation, campaigning capacities and overall tactics.

In fact we require a deep debate and discussion in the communist movement to outline perspectives and appreciation for those explor-

ing the difficult tasks of evolving a trajectory for change - an alternative to capitalist development within conditions and circumstances not of their own making.

We require deeper analysis of the ongoing processes in Latin America in particular, to appreciate the efforts of leftward shifts occurring there and the huge challenges they confront in articulating an alternative trajectory for the countries and peoples' away from 'there's no alternative' (TINA) notion of the doomsayers.

The SACP which is an active participant in the Tripartite Alliance led by the African National Congress (ANC), also understand the challenges that confront the progressive alliance in our country and has continued work on that front, but has also scored major victories in the past. We take responsibility for the revolution - both the victories and setbacks! Huge advances have been made to reverse the legacy of apartheid colonialism through a myriad of policies in the last 20-odd years, though a lot needs to be done to ensure fundamental transformation occurs. It is for this reason that we have supported the ANC's more radical second phase of transformation so as to ensure that the process becomes reversible

and materially alters the conditions of the majority of our people, who are the working class and the poor, women and youth.

Recently, the country witnessed mass protests of university students marching and demanding lower fees at universities for 2016. The SACP and the Pro-gressive Youth Alliance - which includes the progressive South African Students Congress, the ANC Youth League and the Young Communist League of South Africa - supported this struggle and expanded the demands to explore 'free education for the poor' and the fundamental transformation of higher education. Former white universities which have positioned themselves as bastions of neoliberalism and capitalism have deliberately excluded poor and working class students from accessing university education through a myriad of measures, including through financial exclusion and making university education more expensive and therefore out of reach for the majority.

Though these universities are state-funded, they have relied on the notion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom to entrench anti-people programmes and furthering a neoliberal agenda. They receive per

capita higher private sector investment in comparison to non-white university, which remain marginal and 'bush' universities in a post-apartheid South Africa.

The demand for free education



for the poor and fundamental transformation of higher education will provide the basis for the decommodification of basic services such as education, health and housing.

We are confident that the demands and struggle for free education, are attainable within the context of creating alternatives. The Minister for Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, (the General-Secretary of the SACP), has argued that in order to finance the no-fees and free education for the poor, taxing the rich more and/or through corporate tax and windfall taxes will be the

avenues which will be explored.

...While it is imperative to develop short term interventions to save jobs, to address crisis levels of household indebtedness and much more, we must never lose sight of the deeply embedded structural features of the current capitalist crisis both in South Africa and globally. Since 2008 the epicenter of global capitalist crisis has shifted from Wall Street to Iceland, from Portugal, to Greece and Puerto Rico, to the Chinese stock markets. One 'solution' after another simply results in further knock-on crises elsewhere.

Everywhere the rural poor, the working class and the vast stretches of the middle strata globally are suffering, while a 'one percent' rentier class becomes ever more filthy rich. The scandalous death of tens of thousands of desperate refugees in the Mediterranean and in Europe - fleeing poverty and imperialist inspired destabilization in Syria, Libya and elsewhere - is another manifestation of the deepening crisis of capitalism.

Capitalism is in crisis - our task is not to save capitalism from its crisis, but to save humanity and the planet from capitalism!

Socialism is the future! Build it now! ●



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## ILO on climate change

Hopes for the Paris Climate Summit in December to capture one of the three top union demands have received a boost with the UN's International Labour Organization formally adopting criteria for realizing the 'Just Transition' principle. The decision of the ILO Governing Body has defined essential steps to transform economies to a low-carbon future, creating new jobs and supporting workers and communities in high-carbon sectors as industries are transformed.

The labour movement argues that the challenge for governments is to settle a deal in Paris that will avoid catastrophic climate change, which would destroy lives and jobs across the planet. The plans set out by the ILO are intended to help create a wider social dialogue among employers, unions and governments around the urgent and complex transition that has to happen. The ILO criteria are seen as a historic agreement on the need to work out industrial transformation without leaving workers behind. Unions are now demanding that the same governments which signed on to "Just Transition" at the ILO must follow this through at the Paris Summit.

## 21 die in Pakistan factory collapse

A plastic bag factory collapsed on Nov. 4 in Lahore, Pakistan, killing at least 21 and injuring dozens. Between 150 and 200 workers, including child labourers, were in the factory when the building collapsed. Rescuers, who mostly include members of the Pakistan Army, reported hearing voices in the rubble, and family members received calls from relatives trapped in the debris.

Workers at the Rajput Polyester plastic bag factory reported cracks in the production floors to management after a 7.5-magnitude earthquake hit the country October 26, according to Solidarity Center sources and media reports. When workers brought the cracks to the company's attention, they reportedly were told that managers work under the same roof.

The Jinnah Hospital, where some injured were taken, said most of the victims were young workers, with many suffering head injuries and fractured limbs." News photos from a variety of outlets confirm that children are among those killed in the collapse.

Workers at the factory did not have a union. Factory operations run 24 hours, seven days a week, with three shifts each comprised of some 150 workers. Rajput is located in the Sundar Industrial Estate, an export processing zone near Lahore. No factories in the industrial estate have unions that

are not employer-run.

Pakistan has not ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention on the right to a safe and healthy work environment. In 2012, more than 300 workers were killed when fire swept through a textile factory complex in Karachi.

## Tunisia unions win Nobel Prize

The Tunisian General Labour Union (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail, UGTT) was at



the forefront of the four organizations that recently won the Nobel Peace Prize,

At a ceremony in Washington, D.C., to receive an award presented by the Global Fairness Initiative honouring his work, UGTT Secretary-General Houcine Abassi said "the Nobel Prize is not given just to us, but to all the labour movements in the world." The award "sends a message that unions can play an equal role in government, in social dialogue ... and many times can provide critical leadership."

In October, the Nobel Committee recognized the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet—comprised of the (UGTT); the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts; the Tunisian Human Rights League; and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers—for establishing "an alternative, peaceful political process at a time when the country was on the brink of civil war."

Abassi described the many hours of dialogue in the months after the 2011 Arab uprising deposed dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and ushered in a period of economic and political uncertainty. In the discussions, the UGTT succeeded in including collective bargaining rights and the right to strike in the new constitution, which Tunisians approved in 2014. Through the UGTT's efforts, the constitution also enshrines many more fundamental social and economic rights for Tunisians.

The Tunisian union movement has been in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and social equality since its formation in 1946. Following the country's independence from colonial rule

in 1956, the organization played a key role in establishing a road map for national development that made Tunisia the most advanced economy in the Arab Maghreb.

In the months after the 2011 uprising, the UGTT employed direct action when mass mobilization was needed to shore up democratic principles like women's rights and freedom of speech, all top priorities for Tunisian unions.

## Unpaid migrants arrested in Qatar

More than three dozen migrant Nepali workers based in Qatar were arrested in late October by local police and sent to deportation centre. The workers have been seeking judicial remedy for the past against their employer for denying them regular payments. Police arrested the workers at midnight in the labour camp where they live. Those who were not in the camp at the time escaped arrest.

The workers had filed cases against their employer, Metal Farming Centre, at various Qatari judiciaries including the High Court and Supreme Court for denying them payments. Some of the cases have reached the Supreme Court, with a hearing slated for November 8.

Arrested migrant workers in Qatar are usually deported to their respective countries after first being kept at a deportation centre. The company employed 118 construction workers, out of which 88 were Nepalis. Others were Indian and Sri Lankan. They were owed amounts ranging from 400 to 25,000 Qatari riyals (about \$145-\$9000 Can) by their employer. The visas of some workers had expired two years ago.

## Will TPP resemble CAFTA deal?

When Guatemala joined the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement in 2006, proponents said it would improve conditions for workers, raise wages and make it easier for unions to organize. Seven years later, Guatemala was named the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists. Basic rights of workers to form unions and speak out without facing discrimination are not enforced.

Supporters of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are making similar promises, claiming that the deal will improve labour standards across signatory nations, especially in countries known for mistreating workers and failing to enforce employment laws. According to U.S. officials the TPP "has the strongest protections for workers of any trade agreement in history."

CAFTA supporters struck a similar tone a decade ago. Seeking support from Congress, then-US Trade Representative Rob Portman said the deal had the "strongest labour and environmental provisions of any trade agreement ever negotiated by the United States."

Instead, violence and intimidation of labour activists in Guatemala has spiked. Despite promises by successive govern-

ments, the situation has only worsened with each passing year. Murder is a constant problem for workers who organize unions in Guatemala. Since 2007, more than 70 labour activists have been killed, according to the nonprofit Solidarity Center. Kidnappings, break-ins and death threats are common.

Critics maintain the legal system remains biased against workers, despite assistance from the International Labour Organization and other international donors. Employees who are fired for organizing unions or speaking out about working conditions often struggle to find remedies in the courts. Frequently, pro-worker orders from judges go unheeded.

Export-oriented factories, or maquiladoras, have thrived under CAFTA. While the facilities are supposed to respect labour law to receive generous tax breaks, Guatemalan authorities rarely enforce this requirement. Bosses regularly block efforts to organize unions, use subcontractors to avoid legal liabilities, demand uncompensated overtime and oversee hazardous working conditions.

Cathy Feingold, director of international affairs with the AFL-CIO, said the structure of CAFTA left little incentive for the Guatemalan government to monitor and improve labour standards. It allowed Guatemala to start reaping the rewards of the trade pact without showing evidence it was complying with the deal's labour standards.

Critics say TPP commits the same error. Without immediately demanding that countries comply with its labour provisions, it extends benefits to countries like Malaysia, where a recent report found nearly a third of all migrant workers in the nation's booming electronics industry are working under forced labour conditions.

## US auto bargaining

The United Automobile Workers union reached a tentative agreement on a new contract for

more than 52,000 workers at Ford Motor Company on Nov. 6, while workers at General Motors concluded voting on a proposed four-year deal. The deals would conclude bargaining talks that began this summer with the Detroit carmakers.

The first company to settle was Fiat Chrysler, where workers rejected the initial contract proposal. The UAW leadership resumed bargaining with the company to win better terms for union members. The key component of the revised Fiat Chrysler agreement was a provision that entry-level workers would eventually achieve wage parity with long-term employees. When Fiat Chrysler workers voted to accept, it set a template for GM and Ford.

The union says the tentative agreement with Ford includes "substantial economic gains" and job security for workers. While no details were released, the union said the contract would provide both entry-level employees and veteran workers with pay increases that are probably similar to what workers received at Fiat Chrysler and GM.

The GM agreement calls for all workers to receive raises as well as an \$8,000 signing bonus. Like the Fiat Chrysler deal, the GM agreement calls for entry-level employees to get a series of raises that, over time, will bring them close to the \$29-an-hour wage of veteran workers. The union announced that 55 percent of its GM members had approved the contract. However, the deal will not formally be ratified until after union leaders meet with skilled trades workers who voted against the deal.

The tentative Ford agreement "is significant for our members in that it creates a clear path for economic advancement for active members and rewards veteran employees for their sacrifices in recent years," said Jimmy Settles, head of the union's Ford department. If the UAW leadership council supports the deal, it will be put to a membership vote.

## Join the Communist Party of Canada



The Communist Party of Canada, formed in 1921, has a proud history of fighting for jobs, equality, peace, Canadian independence, and socialism. The CPC does much more than run candidates in elections. We think the fight against big business and its parties is a year-round job, so our members are active across the country, to build our party and to help strengthen people's movements on a wide range of issues. All our policies and leadership are set democratically by our members. To find out more about Canada's party of socialism, contact the nearest CPC office.

### Central Committee CPC

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**Atlantic Region CPC**  
Box 70, Grand Pré, NS, B0P 1M0  
Tel/fax: 902-542-7981

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)



# "Capitalism is Mother Earth's Cancer": World People's Summit issues 12 demands

By Deirdre Fulton, *Common Dreams*

The establishment of an independent climate tribunal to hold wealthy nations accountable emerged as a central goal of the World People's Conference on Climate Change (WPCCC), held Oct. 10-12 in Bolivia.

Decrying capitalism as a "threat to life," an estimated 7,000 environmentalists, farmers, and Indigenous activists from 40 countries convened in the Bolivian town of Tiquipaya for the Conference, aiming to elevate the demands of social movements and developing countries in the lead-up to UN-led climate talks.

"Capitalism is Mother Earth's cancer," Bolivian President Evo Morales told the crowd, which also heard over the course of the three-day conference from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as well as other Latin American leaders.

The people's summit produced

a 12-point declaration that will be presented during the COP21 climate negotiations taking place November 30-December 11 in Paris, France, during which 200 countries will attempt to cement an agreement to curb global warming. The COP21 agenda has been criticized for its sidestepping of issues like the role of capitalism in climate change and for the robust involvement of multinational corporations in the talks.

According to a translation, the Declaración de Tiquipaya calls for, among other things:

- the creation of an international tribunal with "a binding legal capacity to prevent, prosecute and punish states that pollute and cause climate change by action or omission";
- compensation from wealthy countries to developing nations for "climate, social, and ecological debt accumulated over time";
- reclamation of the global commons; and
- wholesale rejection of global



Bolivian president Evo Morales answering questions during the People's Climate Summit.

capitalist and colonialist systems.

"We demand that the Paris Agreement does address the structural causes of capitalism," the declaration reads. "It does not have to be an agreement that reinforces the capitalist model, through more market mechanisms, allowing volunteer commitments, encouraging the private sector and strengthening patriarchy and neo-colonialism."

In advance of the Bolivia summit, the World People's

Conference website elaborated further: "The world is being buffeted by multiple global crisis that manifests itself in a climate, financial, food, energy, institutional, cultural, ethical and spiritual crisis. These are the manifestations of unbridled consumerism and a model of society where the human being claims to be superior to Mother Earth... It is a system characterized by the domination of the economy by gigantic transnational

corporations whose targets are the accumulation of power and benefits, and for which the market values are more important than the lives of human beings and Mother Earth."

Though the establishment of an independent climate tribunal emerged as a central goal of the Bolivian summit, a Reuters report noted that the idea "is a non-starter with almost every other country going to the Paris talks."

Even the European Union, which as recently as December argued for a strong, legally binding deal, "is increasingly talking about a pledge and review system," Reuters wrote, "under which national commitments would be re-assessed every five years against a goal of halving world emissions by 2050."

As for Bolivia, teleSUR reports: "The South American nation has taken it upon itself to advocate for climate change issues on behalf of other developing nations," with environmental activist Moira Zuazo telling the publication that "70 percent of the Bolivian people say that development is less important than Mother Earth and we are listening to them." ●



## Arctic Initiative for Peace and an Ecologically Sustainable Future

The Communist Parties of the Nordic countries, the Russian Federation, Canada and the USA have adopted an "Arctic Initiative" resolution against militarization and exploitation of the northern environment.

The parties were present in Istanbul for the 17th meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (see pages 6 & 7). The joint statement, titled the "Arctic Initiative for Peace and an Ecologically Sustainable Future" reads:

We the Communists in the high North share a common need to strengthen the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation, imperialist wars and fascism, for workers' and peoples' emancipation, for socialism.

We struggle in different conditions. Neoliberal politics has a global plan of action. Publicly-produced and owned services are competing with private sector business politics. In all our countries communists are working for stronger working class rights and better public services.

We share common worries about the state of the Arctic's natural environment which is especially vulnerable. Expansion of mining industries and oil and gas drilling will maximize business profits at the cost of nature. Capitalist exploitation in the Arctic means increasing activities with extremely high risks of natural catastrophes, and trampling the basic rights of the aboriginal peoples.

We are extremely worried because of the NATO's growing military activities in the Arctic. NATO aims to incorporate all the Nordic countries into its military exercises and membership, and into the campaign to depict Russia as the next possible war enemy.

Instead of military confrontation and exploitation of nature in the Arctic, we require strengthening peaceful collaboration, development and ecologically sustainable plans on how to use the Arctic natural resources.

Signatures (in alphabetical order): Communist Party in Denmark; Communist Party of Canada; Communist Party of Denmark; Communist Party of Finland; Communist Party of Norway; Communist Party of Russian Federation; Communist Party of Sweden; Communist Party USA. ●

## A warning about the TTIP

By Maude Barlow, in the *UK Morning Star*, Nov. 4, 2015.

Canada is the most sued country in the "developed" world, and that should sound alarm bells in Britain.

Several weeks ago hundreds of thousands of people across Europe and Britain marched to protest against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a massive planned new trade deal between Europe and the US. They were rightly sounding the alarm as TTIP will greatly reduce the ability of local governments to spend public money for local development, impose new limits on the right of governments of all levels to regulate on behalf of their citizens and environment, endanger public services and jeopardise Europe's higher standards on labour, food safety and social security.

TTIP also includes the investor state dispute settlement (ISDS), a provision that will allow US corporations to sue European governments for laws and practices that threaten their bottom line.

There are now over 3,200 bilateral ISDS agreements in the world, and foreign corporations have used them to sue governments over health, safety and environmental laws.

Cigarette-maker Philip Morris used ISDS to challenge Australian rules around cigarette packaging intended to promote public health.

Swedish company Vattenfall is suing Germany for a reported 4.7 billion euros relating to Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power.

But people in Britain and Europe should be paying attention to another deal that has had way less attention. CETA — the

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada — is equally disturbing and way further along in the process. Canada's experience is relevant for two reasons.

The first is that we Canadians have lived with ISDS for 20 years. It was first included in the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the US and Mexico (NAFTA) and has been used extensively by the corporations of North America to get their way.

As a result of NAFTA, Canada is now the most sued developed country in the world. There have been 35 corporate ISDS challenges against Canada and we have already paid out over 135 million euros to US corporations.

Foreign investors are seeking another 1.75 billion euros from the Canadian government in new cases and Canada has already spent over 45 million euros defending itself from NAFTA challenges.

Two-thirds of the claims involve challenges to environmental protection or management of our own resources, issues that should reflect the democratic will of the people of Canada.

No surprise, the US has never lost a NAFTA case. In this game, the big guys generally win.

The other reason people in Britain and Europe should care about Canada is that CETA is a "done deal," meaning that, even though it has not been ratified politically, the negotiations are finished and they contain ISDS provisions. CETA could act as a "back room" for US corporations whether TTIP is adopted or not.

There is a great deal of opposition to ISDS in TTIP, so much so that many think either

ISDS will have to come out of the deal or be radically modified, or it will be defeated in Europe.

Already, the European Commission has proposed ISDS "reforms" to TTIP that would set up a new European investment court which would be more transparent and accountable, although still unacceptable to most of us.

But all a US agriculture, energy or drug giant would have to do to take full advantage of ISDS is use its existing subsidiary in Canada, or set one up, and sue European governments through CETA.

US corporations would have as much access to challenge Europe's higher standards under CETA as if TTIP with a full ISDS had been signed.

There's very little in these trade deals that is actually about trade. They're much more about handing over frightening new rights to corporations that fundamentally challenge the way that governments legislate on behalf of ordinary people.

It's no wonder that a UN expert on human rights recently referred to ISDS as "an attack on the very essence of sovereignty and self-determination, which are founding principles of the United Nations."

People in Britain should learn from our experiences in Canada and understand that this new generation of trade deals poses a terrible threat to the health of their people, the resilience of their communities, the fate of their public services, and the protection of their natural resources.

(From Nov. 1-9, Council of Canadians spokesperson Maude Barlow will be in Britain on a speaking tour called "Stop the Transatlantic Trade Deals") ●

# Sorry, J.K. Rowling, you're wrong over the Israel boycott

By Ramzy Baroud

I knew of famed British author J.K. Rowling's books through my teenage kids, but until recently I knew little about the author herself.

Under an oblique title, "Israel needs cultural bridges, not boycotts," Rowling, along with a few other celebrity writers, argued against growing calls for an academic boycott of Israel.

Using generalised, ambiguous wording that offered little by way of compelling Israel to end its ongoing occupation in Jerusalem and the West Bank, genocide and siege in Gaza and protracted institutional discrimination against Arabs and other minorities in Israel, she argued for "cultural engagement," instead.

Such engagement, her letter reads, "builds bridges, nurtures freedom and positive movement for change. We wholly endorse encouraging such a powerful tool for change, rather than boycotting its use."

The author seems disconnected from the reality of life under Israeli occupation.

On the day of writing this article, I spoke to Ismail Abu Aitah, a young man from Gaza who lost both his parents, his brothers and

one of his nephews when Israel blew up their house in the 2014 summer war. He was badly injured, as was almost every surviving member of his family.

"I am sorry, Ramzy, I cannot give you exact dates and times to what has befallen my family," he messaged me on Skype. "After July 24 2014, I lost interest in life and stopped paying attention to the passing of time."

How is one to console Ismail? How is one to console the families of over 2,200 Palestinians killed in the last war, over 400 in the previous war and over 1,430 in the one before that, in addition to the tens of thousands of wounded and maimed? Not forgetting the many killed in the West Bank this October alone, some executed point blank? Will Rowling's call for engagement suffice?

For her, even non-violent acts of countering Israel's ongoing massacres in Gaza and the military occupation in the West Bank are excessive.

"Cultural boycotts singling out Israel are divisive and discriminatory and will not further peace," reads the letter she signed.

Amnesty International said Israel's violent response to a burgeoning uprising in occupied



Gaza solidarity rally in Toronto, July 2014 (PV photo by Ed Bil)

Palestine appears to have "ripped up the rulebook and resorted to extreme and unlawful measures."

But with scores of UN resolutions never respected, Geneva Conventions never honoured and humanitarian laws never valued, Israel has never followed a rulebook to begin with.

Racism in Israel is so rife that being dark-skinned in that country can be a terrifying experience. When a mainstream US newspaper like the *Washington Post* headlines

a news report with "Israeli government to refugees: Go back to Africa or go to prison," this is an indicator that Israel has a serious problem.

If Rowling and her peers do not see an urgency in standing up for millions of Palestinians who are enduring daily deaths and discrimination — as they have for 67 years — what is their reaction to the violence against Africans and dark-skinned people, who are beaten by mobs and abused by police and discriminated against by the government itself?

Imagine life being a thousand-fold worse for Palestinians, a nation that is forced to choose between two terrible fates — permanent destitution and exile on the one hand or perpetual war and occupation on the other.

"We will be seeking to inform and encourage dialogue about Israel and the Palestinians in the wider cultural and creative community," Rowling's letter reads.

Can those "creative" elites possibly be any more disconnected from reality to the extent that they perceive a nation that stands accused of violating human rights with such impunity for nearly seven decades as one that simply needs a nudge to dialogue?

To expect dialogue with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has just dehumanised Palestinians further by accusing them of concocting the Holocaust, is not just impractical but is the very definition of insanity — seeking dialogue with a belligerent occupier, over and over again and expecting different results.

Fortunately, Rowling's last-

minute intervention and her barely concealed defence of Israel arrives belatedly.

A defining moment is imminent, as hundreds of scholars in Britain have just added their support to the academic boycott, to be added to the 100 artists who joined the cultural boycott last February and hundreds of universities and academics in the US who did so last August.

These are just a few examples of a massive, non-violent campaign that targets Israeli academic and cultural institutions — not individuals — who contribute directly or otherwise to the injustice that is meted out against Palestinians daily.

The scholars from Britain, exceeding 300 and the last to join the boycott campaign were, like thousands more, guided by the spirit of the struggle against the former apartheid South African government.

This was overcome largely because of the struggle and steadfastness of the South African people, aided by morally guided actions of boycotters all around the world, which included Britain.

Had the famed author achieved her current status during the height of South Africa's apartheid, would she have issued a similar call, declaring her "support for the launch and aims of culture for coexistence," rather than demanding an end to apartheid, even if it meant severing ties with apartheid government institutions? At this point, the answer is uncertain.

Last February, the letter from the British cultural figures read, in part: "During South African apartheid, musicians announced they weren't going to 'play Sun City.' Now we are saying, in Tel Aviv, Netanya, Ashkelon or Ariel, we won't play music, accept awards, attend exhibitions, festivals or conferences, run masterclasses or workshops, until Israel respects international law and ends its colonial oppression of the Palestinians."

What is appropriate for South Africa should be appropriate for Palestine, too, even if Rowling and her respected peers find that too objectionable.

Dr. Ramzy Baroud has a PhD in Palestine studies from the University of Exeter. He has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years, and is the founder of *PalestineChronicle.com*. ●

## Documentary exposes political mass murder in Mexico

*Ayotzinapa: Chronicle of a State Crime*, documentary by director Xavier Robles, El Principio Producciones, 140 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles. Review by Tim Pelzer.

The disappearance of 43 students in Iguala last year remains an open, festering wound in Mexico. While many Mexicans suspect that security forces killed the students, President Enrique Peña Nieto blames drug gang members. Xavier Roble's "Ayotzinapa: Chronicle of a State Crime" clears up any doubt about what really happened to the students.

On September 26, 2014, students from the Ayotzinapa Normalista school went to Iguala to raise money to finance a trip to Mexico City. Every year, Mexicans march in the capital to honour student protestors who were massacred by the army in Mexico City in 1968, and the young students, mostly in their early 20s, wanted to be there. According to survivors Jose and Omar, heavily armed police, waiting for the young defenceless students when they arrived in Iguala, opened fire on the buses carrying them. Video evidence taken by cell phones confirms this. While police gathered up surviving students who were never seen again, a few were able to slip away.

The ambush took place within blocks of the base of the 27th infantry battalion which never tried to rescue the students, despite crackling gunfire ripping through the night air. Soldiers only appeared 2-3 hours later to search for wounded students in the local hospital, according to Omar. Soldiers verbally abused the wounded survivors, calling them common criminals. As they were leaving, the green clad infantrymen



Vancouver Solidarity with Ayotzinapa rally held on Sept. 26, 2015.

threatened to let the police take care of the students. "They were going to let the police do their dirty work", remarked Omar.

This raises the question: why would police want to disappear 43 young students? Robles suggests that the students were killed for political reasons. Established in 1926, after the Mexican revolution, for students from indigenous, campesino and poor backgrounds, the Normalista schools had always been hotbeds of resistance against social injustice. Required readings in these schools include Pablo Neruda, Eduardo Galeano, Maxim Gorky, Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin.

These schools have produced a steady stream of left-wing political activists and figures, including famed 1970s guerrilla Lucio Cabanas. Guerrero, the state where the students were disappeared, has been in a continuous rebellion against central and state governments aligned with drug cartels, which have pursued neo-liberal policies.


For many years, police, soldiers and drug cartels have carried out a

campaign of terror against environmental, peasant and union activists and leaders in Guerrero. Many have turned up dead.

Robles places the disappearance of the students in Iguala within a broader context, where Mexican governments at the state, national and municipal levels have melded with drug cartels, turning the country into a narco state.

"Ayotzinapa: Chronicle of a State Crime" is an eye-opening, elegantly crafted documentary that sheds light on what happened on that tragic night. While not currently available on DVD or Blue Ray, it is making the rounds of the film festival circuit, and has recently been screened in Vancouver, Kamloops, Victoria and Kelowna, BC. It will be shown in 150 cities in 26 countries, including the upcoming Havana festival of New Latin American film in December. While it is a long documentary to sit through at 140 minutes, it is a worthwhile view. Watch for a screening near you.

For more information, visit the *Vancouver Solidarity with Ayotzinapa Facebook group*. ●



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, November 27**

**"La Peña Nuestra"**

Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver  
706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)  
\$10 Entry

**About Vancouver's 'La Trova Nuestra'**

La Trova Nuestra is composed of 20 individual trovadores who originate from across Latin America and now reside in Vancouver. These trovadores are the keepers of a musical tradition which began with pioneers of the vernacular song. La Trova Nuestra incorporates this tradition interplaying music and poetry. At its foundation is the essence of a popular culture interpreting daily expression... an expression with origins deep within La Raza Mestiza (mixed roots) of Latin America - an expression of the explosive changes within the continent of Latin America today. La Trova Nuestra could be defined as "The encounter between a man, a guitar and poetry -Voices pledging for a better world."

## Quebec Common Front stands firm

*PV Montreal Bureau*

Quebec's labour movement is standing firm, as the giant 400,000-strong public sector union strike by the Front Commun (Common Front) continues. The Front Commun, an alliance of trade unions in the Quebec public sector, plans to step up actions and hold a three-day general strike in early December.

Over the past weeks, rotating strikes have taken place across the province. Despite some cool seasonal weather, the mood on the picket lines has been resolute, upbeat and noisy. Thousands have walked out in every region, including 98,000 in Montreal and 41,800 in Quebec City. The strike is reaching as far north as Kuujuaq, on Ungava Bay, where community

health workers are involved; east to the social service workers on the Iles-de-la-Madeleine in the Gulf of St Lawrence, and west to the teachers of the Cree School Board on James Bay.

However, negotiations with the Couillard Liberal government are being overshadowed by the looming threat of back-to-work legislation. With the strong mobilization of their members, and favourable public support, such a decree would be likely very unpopular but could halt the action.

Anti-labour legislation in Quebec imposes harsh penalties on illegal strikers particularly in the over-broadly defined "essential services" of health care. Legislation brought in by the Bourassa Liberals after a 1986 strike imposed heavy fines. After

the Quebec nurses staged the longest nurses strike in Canadian history in 1999, Bouchard's Parti Québécois government further severely curtailed the right to strike in health care. Now, for every day on strike, workers lose two days' pay and one year's seniority, and the union loses twelve weeks of dues.

For now, the Liberals seem content to use the back-to-work legislation as a tactical threat. The government's proposal was a two year wage freeze, followed by one percent annually for the remaining three years. Since then, reacting to the first wave of rotating strikes, the government has made a new offer: a one year freeze, then, after three years, another one year freeze, keeping the rate at just 3 percent over five years.

The Treasury Board's proposal has been rejected by the unions, who note that it would reduce salaries for some 18,000 workers (mainly women), cap salaries for thousands of others, and start young workers at a lower pay level. Other sticking points include pensions. ●

## Nanaimo Golf Club lockout update

*By Alan Boyden*

On October 30, a rally took place to bolster support for the union workers locked out since April 24 at the Nanaimo Golf Club. Members of several unions and concerned citizens, including the Nanaimo Club CPC, joined the workers to show solidarity. Others came from Victoria, Vancouver and Courtenay, to demonstrate to patrons attending the Golf Club's Gala Banquet that the workers are firm in their resolve to achieve a fair wage and fair working conditions.

The Club management led by Ash Chadha still refuses to come to the bargaining table. Preliminary steps to lay groundwork for a meeting, drawn up by the Club's lawyer and union representatives, were sabotaged by management who leaked false information. Then, under the pretext of being generous and accommodating, they put forward a similar offer to the one rejected by the workers last May, showing that management is not prepared to negotiate in good faith.

However, the morale of the locked out workers is remarkably high. They cheerfully smile and wave to vehicles on the highway who honk and shout support. During the rally, some folks intending to have dinner at the Golf Club paused and then drove away. The parking area was conspicuously empty. Two citizens supporting the workers strolled over to the club banquet hall and see how the "gala evening" was going. They noticed that less than a third of the set tables were occupied.

A moral victory has been achieved by the courageous Local 40 workers. Thanks to their constant vigil, the word is getting out: "the Nanaimo Golf Club is not the place to eat!" This will remain until the restaurant, culinary support team and bartenders receive a fair deal. It is time for Mr. Chadha to resign and let a more competent and fair-minded successor take over.

The workers on the picket line appreciate the support and encouragement received from readers of People's Voice. Their struggle is our struggle; in solidarity, united we stand. ●

## Grace Tickson, 1923-2015

One of the best-loved members of the Communist Party, Grace Tickson died on Nov. 2 in Nanaimo, BC, at the age of 92. She is survived by her son Ray and numerous grandchildren, as well as a multitude of friends, dance partners and fellow activists for peace and social justice. Grace was instrumental in the organization of the BCGEU, and was deeply involved in many working class struggles through her entire life on Vancouver Island. She was well known as a Raging Granny, and for her enthusiastic outlook on life. The Editorial Board of People's Voice and the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party salute Grace Tickson's marvellous life, and extend deepest condolences to all her family, friends and comrades. A celebration of life will be held at a later date, and our next issue will feature a detailed obituary.

## ARDIS HARRIMAN

**CELEBRATION OF LIFE**  
will be held in early December.

**For date and location, or to send messages and greetings, please contact Liz Rowley at 416-469-2446**

## People's Voice deadlines

**December 1-31 issue: Thursday, Nov. 26**  
**January 1-31 issue: Thursday, Jan. 7**

**Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
<pvoice@telus.net>**

## What's Left

### Global Climate March

World-wide events on Sunday, Nov. 29. For your local time and place details, visit <http://globalclimatemarch.org>.

### Vancouver, BC

**Annual Revolution Banquet**, Sat., Nov. 14, doors 5 pm, dinner 5:30, program 7 pm, at Victoria Drive Community Hall, 2026 E. 43 Ave. Great food and performers, toast to the Revolution, YCL greetings, and more. Tickets \$20 (students & unemployed \$12), Centre for Socialist Education, 604-254-9836.

**Resistencia**, documentary on 2009 coup in Honduras, with filmmaker Jesse Freeston, Monday, Nov. 16, 7 pm, Vancouver Public Library.

**Venezuela in Motion**, new documentary films, Sat. Nov. 21, 2 pm, at Vancity Theatre, 1181 Seymour St., free admission, sponsored by Hugo Chavez Defense Front and Venezuelan Consulate.

Chavez Defense Front and Venezuelan Consulate.

**Concert and Book Launch**, "Soviet Princeton: Slim Evans and the 1932/33 Miners' Strike", with Solidarity Notes, Fraser Union, and Jon Bartlett & Rika Ruebsaat, St. James Hall, 3214 W. 10 Ave., \$5 at door.

**La Trova Nuestra**, monthly Latin American social evening, Friday, Nov. 27, 8 pm, at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, admission \$10.

### Toronto, ON

**Event to mark centenary of Joe Hill's death**, at the Hirut Restaurant, 2050 Danforth Ave., Thursday, Nov. 19, starting 7:30. Call 416-556-3513 for more information.

**Celebration of Life for Ardis Harriman**, will be held in early December. For information on time and place, or to send messages, contact Liz Rowley, 416-469-2446.

## This year, put the Communist Party on your gift list!

This holiday season the Communist Party is celebrating the end of 10 years of Harper's extreme right-wing, pro-war government, and the upsurge of public opposition that ushered him out October 19!

But significant parts of the Harper agenda remain on the table, still in play with the new Liberal government:

- \* the Trans Pacific Partnership, which will decimate the auto industry in Canada; undermine the supply management system, cut farm incomes, and compromise Canada's food security; protect drug company patents for years, making drugs even more expensive, draining our Medicare budgets, and fattening profits for Big Pharma; and allow transnational corporations to over-ride elected Canadian governments.

- \* a foreign policy of permanent involvement in US and NATO dirty wars against countries that pose no threat to Canada.

- \* Bill C-51, which must be repealed, not amended, to protect our civil, labour and democratic rights.

- \* mass unemployment and austerity policies designed to drive down wages, incomes and living conditions, leaving our youth without a future,

- \* the privatization of Medicare and the attack on the Canada Health Act.

- \* the Immigration and Refugee Act which welcomes the wealthy and rejects the rest.

- \* the Foreign Temporary Workers' Program that turns foreign workers into indentured labour with no rights and no access to citizenship

Canadians may not see it yet, but a massive struggle is shaping up. At issue is the kind of country we want, vs. the country the transnational corporations and their governments intend to

impose. In this, they have the support of both the Liberals and Conservatives, and on too many occasions even the support of the NDP.

The Communist Party has consistently opposed this anti-human capitalist agenda in the streets, in the factories and workplaces, on the picket lines, sit-ins, protests and demonstrations, on the hustings, wherever people are in struggle. Since 1921, we have fought for a better life for workers, youth, and women, for peace and disarmament, for sovereignty, democracy, and equality. We fight for working class and people's unity, and for strategies and tactics to strengthen the working class movement, while always advocating for a socialist Canada as the real alternative to imperialism, racism, fascism and war. Today this struggle is international as well as in Canada, and more important than ever.

We need your support now to help us organize through the winter, when many of the struggles mentioned above will be in full swing.

Your contributions help us organize across Canada around issues like C-51 and the fight to Save Canada Post, to print booklets and leaflets, to hold public speaking tours, educational events, and seminars. All of this and more is paid for by your donations.

The Communist Party is supported solely and only by its

members and friends – working people like you who know why these struggles are so important.

Thanks to tax rebates available from Revenue Canada for political donations to the Communist Party of Canada, contributors can make their donations stretch up to four times more than the actual cost, after rebates are applied.

For example, a \$400 donation will only cost the donor \$100, after filing the Official receipt with your taxes, and receiving the 75% rebate. A \$100 donation will only cost \$25 after applying the rebate, while a \$200 donation will cost \$50, and a \$300 donation will cost \$75, after the rebate. Please note that donors must have a taxable income of at least \$20,000 to qualify for the rebate, according to Revenue Canada.

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## Marxist Theory

# US imperialism's failed tactics

Commentary by Zoltan Zigedy, <http://mltoday.com>, October 17, 2015

US imperialism and its allies learned a hard lesson from their unsuccessful adventure in Vietnam. Escalating US troop involvement to nearly half a million serving at the war's peak, drawing on forced enlistment (conscription) to rotate nearly three million personnel serving throughout the war, and incurring over 200,000 casualties proved to be a politically destabilizing, consensus-challenging endeavour.

Military planners recognized that unless they were able to generate a broad consensus for war or guarantee a short, decisive duration, the draft risked a politically volatile backlash. Consequently, they opted for developing a volunteer army and a war-friendly culture to legitimize its use.

But they drew an even more important conclusion. Where imperialism fought a foe defending its homeland, the costs were usually far too great for the US public to tolerate. Certainly US engagement in the world-wide, anti-fascist war of 1939-1945 enjoyed unwavering popular support. But US forces never fought on Japanese soil and only briefly in a crippled Germany.

When engaged in supporting a rump regime in Korea, the US military achieved, at best, a stalemate. The same boots-on-the-ground approach in Vietnam collapsed before a people deeply resentful of US occupiers.

After Vietnam, imperialist war planners devised a tactic of relying more and more upon surrogates. Understanding that local populations furiously opposed foreign occupiers, the US sought to impose its objectives by creating and supporting mercenary forces who could claim, at least tenuously, to local status. From supporting UNITA or FNLA in Angola to creating, arming, and aiding the Contra movement in Nicaragua, the US preferred waging aggression with surrogate forces.

An effective, massive propaganda effort "legitimized" the client armies as "freedom fighters."

Probably the most successful use of the post-Vietnam tactic was in Afghanistan, where US covert services armed a reactionary tribal opposition to destabilize a secular, modern government and, as a result, gave a decisive, strong impetus to an emergent Islamic fundamentalist war against secularism of all kinds. The jihadist movement found its legs, its confidence as surrogates against an urban-based Afghanistan government supported by the Soviet Union, then a bulwark against US imperialism.

After the demise of the Soviet state, the US cautiously employed its "professionalized" and volunteer military in Iraq, Afghanistan, and once more in Iraq. Still, military planners hoped to quickly train a surrogate force and just as quickly evacuate US ground forces, leaving client states with militaries sufficiently armed and motivated to crush any domestic resistance to a US-friendly regime.

While the tactic held the promise of minimizing domestic resistance by using a compliant media to construct the false narrative of democratic change and humanitarian intervention and while the tactic hoped to generate tolerable US casualties and minimal material costs, resistance movements once again proved to be far more determined, and

**Anti-imperialists can draw a small consolation from these tragic, morally repellent aggressions: the US tactics have failed to achieve their goal of creating global fealty to US interests.**

stability far more elusive, than the best minds of the military or covert services imagined.

Fourteen years in Afghanistan and twelve years of propping up a client state in Iraq, manufacturing a failed state in Libya, and sparking a devastating civil war in Syria are testament to a failed policy.

More importantly, the failure is part of a continuous, irreversible decline in US imperialism's ability to impose its will in a world of stiffening anti-imperialist resist-



In a sign of things to come, US Airman First Class Bill Robinson under guard by a Vietnamese People's Army soldier after his capture on September 20, 1965.

ance and growing inter-imperialist rivalries.

Nothing underlines this new reality more than the latest events in Afghanistan and Syria.

Despite a massive concentration of weaponry, superior pay, and the best US training, the Afghan surrogate army suffered its worst defeat ever at the hands of the Taliban in the siege and occupation of Kunduz. All reports indicate that the Taliban forces were inferior in numbers and weapons and that the US-trained government forces had little stomach for the fight.

US officials have been obliged to announce a delay in the exit of troops from Afghanistan in the face of this defeat. President Obama has decided to pass on the Afghanistan quagmire to the next

President, just as President Bush passed it on to him.

Russian engagement in Syria has inadvertently exposed the lies and failures of US actions in that country. Since the Obama administration began encouraging and assisting the overthrow of Syrian President Assad, the government and the lapdog media have claimed the existence of a democratic, moderate opposition. From late in 2011, US and UK military leaders began planning armed action against Assad. A surrogate army (the Free Syrian Army) was projected as an alternative to the fundamentalist jihadist seeking a feudal-theological state (Qatar and other Gulf states intervened, pretending no such distinctions). Weapons were diverted from Libya and CIA training began in earnest with a projected military force numbering in the tens of thousands.

After the ISIS threat emerged, the US and the other interventionists further pretended that its client fighting forces were equally engaged against ISIS and

the many other groups fighting Assad who were designated "terrorist" by the West.

In reality, the US "freedom fighters" were virtually non-existent or collaborating enthusiastically with the jihadists. Their sole target was Assad.

The Obama government has conceded that of thousands vetted by the CIA program only a few hundred remain on the war front. Most have shared their weapons with or joined the jihadists or left Syria with the thousands of immigrants. The half-billion-dollar program is a disaster, with the US administration pledging to pass the remaining weapons and resources on to existing fighting groups in Syria.

The spectrum of the Western media reports that, especially since the Russian intervention, there is extensive cooperation, coordination, and joint action between all elements of the Syrian anti-Assad forces - so much for the ruse of an independent force in opposition to fundamentalism.

As the *Wall Street Journal* reports: "...the Homs Legion of the Western-backed Free Syrian Army... together with the Islamist group Ahrar al-Sham and Nusra Front [Syria's al-Qaeda affiliate] has formed joint command in Northern Homs." The *Washington Post* has identified a similar unholy alliance of jihadist and "moderates" that was crafted into a Nusra-led Army of Conquest. Only the most glib continue to believe that there is a significant difference between Western-backed "freedom fighters" and their jihadist allies.

Western liberals can make believe that US involvement in Syria is for some greater good, but the facts speak clearly. As with Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, tens of thousands are dead, infrastructure is devastated, and the social fabric is irreparably torn simply because imperialist powers seek more compliant, more sub-servient states. The facts expose the lie that the US and NATO seek the values of democracy, freedom, or the other values that prove so persuasive to those apologizing for self-interested regime change.

Anti-imperialists can draw a small consolation from these tragic, morally repellent aggressions: the US tactics have failed to achieve their goal of creating global fealty to US interests. •

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