Stop the GM Closure! Stop NAFTA 2.0!

Nationalize GM operations in Canada!

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Death toll in Saudi-led war in Yemen far higher than reported

Save the Children reports that 85,000 Yemeni children under the age of 5 may have died of hunger and disease since the outbreak of the conflict in 2015, far higher than earlier numbers. Meanwhile, the US and Canada continue to sell billions of dollars of military hardware to Saudi Arabia, which is leading the war against the people of Yemen.

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Reds prepare for 2019
Next year will be a big one for the Communist Party of Canada, including the party’s 39th Central Convention, an update of its program, and the next federal election campaign.

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Canada’s epic fail
Another broken promise? The federal government pledged to take action within three years on Specific Treaty Claims, but there has been no progress in two-thirds of such claims.

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French language rights
French-Ontarians have constitutional rights to services in the French language, but the Ford Conservative government of Ontario is openly violating its legal obligations.

Page 5

A century of lies
The fighting finally ended 100 years ago, but the sickening propaganda lies used to justify the slaughter of millions in the First World War simply keep getting recycled to whip up war fever today.

Page 12
Communist Party gearing up for action in 2019

Next year will bring important developments for the Communist Party of Canada, which continues to grow and rebuild across the country. The CPC’s Central Committee met in Toronto over the Nov. 17-18 weekend, holding an intensive discussion on plans for 2019, including an update of the Party’s basic program at its 39th Central Committee. The CPC is also beginning initial preparations for the next federal election, scheduled to take place in October.

Elected in May 2016, the Central Committee meets from coast to coast, and leads the CPC’s work between conventions. The CC meeting discussed a detailed Political Report on recent political developments in Canada and internationally. Presented by leader Liz Rowley on behalf of the party’s Central Executive, which leads its work on a day-to-day basis, the report pays particular attention to the growing global dangers of war, fascism and environmental catastrophe.

“Since our last plenum,” the report says, “US imperialism has launched a massive new drive to war and regime change, threatening the entire world, without a murmur of opposition from the Canadian government. “This includes US withdrawal from the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) Agreement, which put a pause on the development and stock-piling of nuclear weapons. A whole new round of nuclear weapons development and deployment is now on the agenda.

“The US has also increased its military budget from $610 billion in 2017 to $780 billion in 2018 and $715 billion in 2019. The combined military spending of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, United Kingdom and Japan at $578 billion is $137 billion less than the US will spend next year. These are funds that could and should be diverted to a global campaign to stop climate change. The October report in the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is clear that the world has 15 years to stop global warming, or face long-lasting and irreversible changes, including to global geo-systems, human health and well-being. “The US is preparing for new wars and ramped up wars against the states most frequently mentioned by President Trump, including regime change and the overthrow of socialist and popular governments, against the popular opposition inside the US, and against refugees and immigrants attempting to find protection in the US against the wars launched or funded by the US in their home countries. “We are witnessing a descent into fascism in the US, driven by the insatiable greed of the transnational corporations and the ascendency of the most reactionary and violent sections of capital and the military to power, through the Republican Party headed by Donald Trump.”

The Political Report goes on to analyze the serious forms of working class and popular resistance to this drive towards war and reaction, from new labour struggles across the US itself, to opposition in many countries against imperialist’s attempts to install compliant leaders and governments. “In a section on the situation in Canada, the report examines the accelerating drive to the right, as seen by the election of right-populist governments in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, the formation of Maxime Bernier’s so-called ‘People’s Party of Canada,’ and the activities of many far-right, white nationalist and neo-nazi groups. “On the other hand, there have been a number of important labour struggles since the last CPC meeting in March 2018, as well as big popular mobilizations by students, environmentalists, Indigenous peoples and other groups. “But the divisions in the trade union movement and the CLC’s relative inaction remain a barrier to a stronger fightback. “To turn this situation around,” the report says, “the left must get organized, get stronger, and build its influence in the trade union movement with demands for unity around strong policies, for militant action on the job and in workplaces, for independent labour political action and social unionism, and for unions that are membership-driven, active and accountable to their members.”

The final section of the Political Report examines the growth of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League, pointing to the increasing popularity of socialist ideas in response to the crisis of capitalism and the rise of the ultra-right. “The Party’s previous 38th convention took the decision to update ‘The Future is Socialism,’ the program adopted after widespread internal discussions in early 2001. This meeting of the CC heard a special report on the progress it was making, and approved an extensive set of recommendations to update six important policy areas: the environment, women and gender issues, social democracy, the national question in Canada, changes in the composition and structure of the working class, and the dangerous growth of far-right, anti-socialist, populist and fascist movements. “These recommendations are being circulated to Party clubs and committees across the country for full debate and feedback over the next several months. After delegates to the 39th Central Committee finalize the changes, an updated version of the program will be printed and posted on the Party’s website, www.communist-party.ca. In the meantime, the proposed changes will be publicly available for interested people to read.”

The CPC will meet again in February 2019, to issue an official call to the 39th CPC convention (planned for the May 17-20 weekend in Toronto), and to launch the Party’s formal pre-convention debate.

Communist Party of Canada leader Liz Rowley

Unifor calls on General Motors to allocate product to Oshawa

Unifor, the union representing workers at GM’s Oshawa Assembly Plant, received notification on Nov. 25 that the company would make a major announcement the next day. When the news was made official, GM confirmed there is no product allocated to the Oshawa Assembly Plant past December 2019.

Based on commitments made during 2016 contract negotiations, Unifor says it “does not accept this announcement and is immediately calling on GM to live up to the spirit of that agreement.” The union is calling on GM Canada to allocate product to the Oshawa Assembly Plant past its current run date of December 2019.

“GM confirmed it would close the plant, many workers walked off the job and set up a picket line. That evening, Jerry Dias, national president of Unifor, told an overflowing union hall that the company would fight “tooth and nail” against the planned move. “They are not closing our damn plant without one hell of a fight,” Dias told the audience.

“Oshawa Assembly is GM’s most decorated plant with a highly skilled, committed workforce,” said Dias in an interview with the news media. “Additionally, the USMCA provides the Canadian auto industry with firm footing so walking away after a hundred year history of manufacturing makes no sense.

“Last February, the Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra truck lines successfully launched following a $500 million transformation that made Oshawa the only plant in Canada capable of building both cars and trucks. “General Motors does not accept the closure of the plant as a foregone conclusion,” said Dias. “Oshawa has been in this situation before with no product on the horizon and we were able to successfully make the case for continued operations. We will vigorously fight again to maintain those good-paying jobs.”

The union stresses that GM registered $6 billion US in profits in the first three quarters of 2018, and North America is responsible for 90 per cent of GM’s global profit. For each direct job, it is estimated that there are 7 spin off jobs that are key to the local economy.

Meeting in Toronto over the Nov. 24-25 weekend, delegates elected from across the country held a successful convention of the Canadian Peace Congress, which has formed new chapters in several cities over the past few months. The Congress elected Miguel Figueroa as President, and adopted an important resolution for unity in the struggle for peace. Plans for 2019 include action around the NATO summit taking place in early April in Washington DC, and a campaign to put peace and disarmament on the agenda for all political parties in the federal election next October.

Speakers at the Peace Congress convention included Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, independent peace activist and journalist Eva Bartlett, US Peace Council organizational secretary Baham Azan, anti-war lawyer Christopher Black, Canadian Voice of Woman executive member Tamara Lorincz, and YCL Canada leader Adrien Welch. Look for a full report in the January issue of PV.
Withdraw back-to-work legislation
Negotiate, don’t Legislate!

On Nov. 23, the federal Liberal government introduced back-to-work legislation against the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

In response, the Communist Party of Canada demanded the government withdraw the legislation and the enabling bill to speed its passage, which was being pushed through Parliament as this issue of People’s Voice went to press.

The CPC statement said: “The union has been forced to strike as a result of the employer’s refusal to negotiate a fair contract that takes into account pay equity for women workers, health and safety, staffing, over-burdening, job security, a reduction in precarious employment, pay for all hours worked, and a better work-life balance for postal workers.”

“By stalling, Canada Post hoped that the government would introduce back to work legislation, and undermine the union’s bargaining position. But this is the same bargaining strategy by the employer, and an illegal practice in Canada. It is the employers’ bad faith bargaining that has forced postal workers onto the picket lines.”

“In Canada Post, and the Canadian government that are responsible for the current 5 week rotating strikes, and years of poor labour relations in the post office before that.

The Tories planned to privatize the Post Office and were encouraging Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra to take a hard line with employees in the last sets of negotiations leading to a strike in 2011. Is this the same strategy being driven by the Liberals today? The workers – and the public – have a right to know.

“Canada Post is a crown corporation and should set an example in collective bargaining with its employees. Instead, it has become the example of bad faith bargaining, backed first by the Tories, and now by the Liberals.

The government claims its legislation is protecting the public interest. But in fact it’s protecting corporate profits as one of the biggest buyers of the year begins November 23. In this, there is no difference between the back to work legislation introduced by the Harper government in 2011 and the legislation introduced today by the Liberals. They both look after the corporations and the wealthy.

“In 2016, the Tories’ back to work law was found to be unconstitutional. The Liberals may well suffer the same fate. The public will not be so forgiving however, nor will the labour movement in 2019.

“The Communist Party stands four square with striking postal workers and their union, CPUP. Withdraw back to work legislation now! Negotiate! Don’t legislate!”

Canada fails to meet “Specific Claims” deadline

The following Open Letter was sent on Nov. 26 to Carolyn Bennett, Federal Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, and Northern Affairs, by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, https://www. ubcic.bc.ca/.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs writes today to present the findings of a review carried out by the BC Specific Claims Working Group on your government’s repeated failure to meet its legislative timelines to assess specific claims and notify Indigenous Nations about the missed timelines and the resulting impacts on their claims.

In the fall of 2016 the Office of the Auditor General determined that the Department of Indigenous Affairs was grossly mismanaging the specific claims process by introducing multiple barriers that hindered Indigenous Nations’ access to the process and impeded the resolution of claims. Significantly, the OAG cited poor and misleading communications as one of Canada’s key failures. Neglecting to adequately inform Indigenous Nations about the missed timelines continues the of your government’s department promised to address in response to the OAG’s report.

Indigenous people’s right to redress for these and other land-based historical wrongs is articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and is a cornerstone of Crown-Indigenous reconciliation.

“The Specific Claims Tribunal Act came into force in 2008, our expectation was that the federal government would adhere to the law; it was one significant instance of accountability in a process still characterized by an indefensible, systemic conflict of interest. In recent years your government has also proposed measures that would effectively circumvent your statutory obligations under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 (Rights and Recognition tables are a case in point).

Non-compliance with legislation enacted to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples on Canada and safeguard our access to justice, as well as failing to communicate openly with Indigenous Nations when this occurs contradicts every public commitment your government has made regarding reconciliation and repairing your relationship with Indigenous Nations. We urge you to take immediate steps to develop an action-oriented plan to implement the recommendations outlined in the BCSCWG’s report.

On behalf of the UBCIC, Grand Chief Stewart Phillips (President), Chief Robert Chamberlin (Vice-President) and Kukpi7 Judy Wilson (Secretary-Treasurer).

Liberal Government betrays Postal Workers with back-to-work legislation

OTTAWA - The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is exploring all options to fight the back-to-work legislation fast-tracked through the House of Commons early this morning [Nov. 23] which will send our members back to the same old unresolved problems in the post office.

“Postal workers will not accept another violation of our right to free collective bargaining,” says Mike Palecek, CUPW National President. “It’s not just a matter of our Charter rights. This bill legislates continued injuries, unpaid work, gender inequality, and general dishonesty and disrespect.”

Going back to work under the old collective agreements means that between now and the holidays:

- At least 315 disabling injuries will happen to postal workers;
- Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMC) will work roughly 250,000 hours without pay;
- Urban postal workers will work thousands of hours of forced overtime.
- RSMCs will continue to be treated, as Canada Post calls it, with “equity but not equality”.

Prior to this round of collective bargaining, the Trudeau Liberal government had claimed to be a champion for the labour movement, but through this fast-tracked legislation, it is clear that it has turned its back on postal workers.

“We condemn this hypocritical act by a government that promised to defend workers’ rights, claimed to stand for equality for women, and claimed to stand for expanding and defending the middle class,” says Palecek. “It’s unacceptable for any government to violate workers’ Charter rights. Shame on the government, who promised us better.”

Canada Post workers and their allies staged sit-ins and occupations across the country at federal ministers’ offices, and said they won’t leave until the legislation is rejected. At least five occupations took place, including at the offices of Fisheries and Oceans Minister Jonathan Wilkinson in North Vancouver, Finance Minister Bill Morneau in Toronto, Environment Minister Catherine McKenna in Ottawa, and Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains in Mississauga.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and his wife Joan at a rally.
GM layoffs: the brutality of capitalism

GM is closing auto plants across North America, shocking autoworkers and their families, and the communities they built. This includes 2800 workers in Oshawa, Ontario, who face permanent layoffs next year unless a massive struggle to save their jobs can be mounted. But the news was good for a relative handful of “winners,” the shareholders whose GM stocks immediately rose five percent.

That certainly helps explain the tepid response by Liberal PM Justin Trudeau and his cabinet. Despite their claims to moral integrity, Canada’s “natural ruling party” is in fact one of the two favoured parties of the corporate ruling class in this country. (Guess the other one?) When capitalist profits and stock market values are at stake, there is no need to see the interests of the wealthy and powerful, including US-based automakers or big energy monopolies. To protect seats in Parliament, the Liberals will use their government as a stock phrases expressing sympathy and shell out some compensation to laid-off GM workers. But nobody should believe that the Liberals (or Ontario Premier Doug Ford) are ever on the side of the working class in this or any other issue.

The underlying motivation for such capitalist business decisions is not personal; corporations ruthlessly strive to increase profits by holding down wages, reducing other input costs, and by squeezing rivals in the struggle for market share. GM says it plans to invest in “greener” and self-driving “autonomous” vehicles. In other words, millions of jobs will continue to be wiped out by the shift to robots. In a socialist society, this trend would mean shorter work hours with no loss in pay, along with full employment and strong social programs, and a planned approach to reduce carbs of emissions. As we fight to block these GM layoffs, that’s the future we need to aim for.

General Motors announcement that it will permanently close its Oshawa car plant is a declaration of war on Canadian autoworkers and on automobile manufacturing in Canada. The Big Three automakers will use the new NAFTA 2.0 agreement to shift their plants south to Mexico where wages are $4 an hour or less - a fraction of what workers in Canada are paid. This is what GM is doing with its Oshawa plant, despite the fact that this plant has won international awards for its quality and productivity repetitively. This US transnational corporation is pulling up stakes because it can. Because the Canadian and Ontario governments won’t lift a finger to stop it. Because GM’s greed knows no bounds and it’s quite willing to super-exploit workers in Mexico who will never be able to buy the cars they make while starving workers in Canada who have created the enormous wealth and profits that GM has ferried out of Oshawa since 1918 and since 1953 in this particular plant.

The Auto Pact protected auto jobs in Canada for over 35 years until the World Trade Organization struck it down in 2008. The 2008 economic meltdown, the bottom facilitated by corporate executives.

And the massive concessions forced on autoworkers in the wake of the 2008 economic meltdown, combined with massive tax breaks from the federal and provincial governments, mean nationalization of GM’s Canadian operations should be without any corporate compensation.

Further we call on the government to ensure the USMCA agreement and refuse to ratify the deal that will cause more closures and more misery for workers in Canada, the US and Mexico.

We also call for plant closure legislation with teeth that will force corporations to show just cause before public tribunals with the power to stop closures, and jail corporate executives.

The Communist Party stands with Unifor Local 222 workers who today downed tools and walked off the job in the first protests against GM’s closure announcement. The fight for GM workers is the fight for all workers in the auto sector, including auto parts and assembly, and the millions of spin-off jobs whose livelihoods depend on auto plants and production in Canada.

It’s a fight for sovereignty and independence that the federal government must take up and act to make a new government that will act to protect workers’ jobs, manufacturing, and the public interest in Canada. GM’s greed and thirst for more profits than the expense of Canadian autoworkers and the Canadian economy demands decisive action from the federal and provincial governments to stop this corporation in its tracks.


EDITORIALS

A world in pain: there is a cure

As we enter the final weeks of 2018, there are many reasons to worry about the future of our planet: unchecked climate change, violent armed conflicts, massive poverty and hunger, economic inequality and the growth of big states, the arms race. That won’t happen until movements that care about the arms race. That won’t happen until movements that care about the future begin to speak out strongly against militarism and war.

It’s true that tackling these multiple crises will be complicated, but the facts are clear. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that it will be impossible to meet the targets unless we sharply reduce emissions within 15 years. Our species’ and that of all life on earth is at stake.

It’s time to stop the clock on these transnational corporations. The federal government must be forced by the united action of labour and in social, political and community allies, to stop the closure of the Oshawa plant, and stop this race to the bottom facilitated by corporate migrations to the low-waged, non-union, continental south. Militant workers’ actions combined with mass, united independent political action led by Unifor, its sister unions in the CLC, and its community allies can turn the tables on GM and force them back.

The Communist Party demands federal and provincial governments intervene to stop the closure now, or failing that, to nationalize GM’s operations in Canada, transform it into a crown corporation under public ownership and democratic control. A publicly owned corporation could produce a Canadian car that’s environmentally sustainable and affordable, as part of a public transportation policy that meets the needs of the Canadian public and provides good, value-added manufacturing jobs for workers.

The Communist Party demands federal government and Parliament to denationalize GM’s operations in Canada, transform it into a crown corporation under public ownership and democratic control. It’s time to stop the clock on these transnational corporations. The federal government must be forced by the united action of labour and in social, political and community allies, to stop the closure of the Oshawa plant, and stop this race to the bottom facilitated by corporate migrations to the low-waged, non-union, continental south. Militant workers’ actions combined with mass, united independent political action led by Unifor, its sister unions in the CLC, and its community allies can turn the tables on GM and force them back.

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(Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Nov. 27, 2018).
The news that the Conservative government has cancelled plans for a French-language university and wants to axe the office of the province's French-language commissioner, François Boilée, has sparked protests in several cities, as well as consideration of legal challenges. Franco-Ontarians have been campaigning to establish such a university for decades, in line with their constitutional rights which guarantee access to French language education at all levels. More than 620,000 Franco-Ontarians are represented by 160 francophone organizations across the province. The plan to shut down the Francophone university already has a board of governors and was slated to open in 2020. The following statement was issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada.

Under cover of an economic update, the Ontario government has announced it will cancel a long-promised French-language university, slash spending on French-language services, and dissolve the French-Language Services Commissioner in Ontario.

This is an attack on the rights of French-speaking minorities in Ontario to education and government services in French and, if it’s not reversed, is a threat to Francophone communities across the country. We demand the federal government step up to protect minority language rights in the province and use its federal authority to compel the Ontario government to reverse course.

The new Tory government in Ontario has already demonstrated its willingness to trample the civil and democratic rights of citizens to elect local governments and school boards, even threatening to use the not-withstanding clause to stop it. They have attacked the pay, working conditions and bargaining rights of workers to free collective bargaining with back-to-work legislation issued just 3 months after taking office. They have rolled back the $15 minimum wage set for January 2019, and reversed labour law reforms protecting workers from greedy employers. They have attacked the poor by canceling the basic income project and then followed up by slashing a minor 3% increase in social assistance payments - lower than the inflation rate. It is these same students who are demanding the implementation of all tuition fees and related fees, but also the removal of all football that.

Now the Ontario Tories have lined up with the far-right “People’s Alliance Party” in New Brunswick, which campaigned during this year’s election to roll-back the rights of Acadians to education and services in French, and which now holds the balance of power in the NB provincial government. The federal government must also step up to protect the language and education rights of Acadians, and recognize that Francophone rights are already under attack or threatened across Canada.

The demand of compensation for internship is in line with the struggle for free education. We demand that no student have to pay anything to study, which includes not only the abolition of all tuition fees and related fees, but also the removal of all financial barriers that restrict access to studies. This is why we also demand the implementation of a student living allowance.

We call on labour and the Comité des Étudiants de l’Université de Montréal, the Student Federations (FECQ and FEUQ) negotiated separately with the government while ASSE found itself alone in the street. The success of the intern strike is based on the consistent work of several activists for two years, and also on an appetite on the part of students towards the mobilisation. This grassroots mobilization is essential to strengthening the solidarities developed by the movement for the end of unpaid internships seems to indicate that the Quebec student movement is getting its momentum back. However, while the question of an unlimited general strike in February 2019 is being raised, it is disturbing to note that the two largest student federations in Quebec are not involved in the fight and prefer to negotiate with the minister on the issue. This situation is similar in many respects to the one prevailing in 2008 when the strike movement failed, despite a strong mobilization at the grassroots level.

The debate over free internships is raging not only in Quebec, but across North America and beyond. A score of million internships a year are offered in the U.S. but over half are unpaid. These include positions in the White House and working on Hollywood films. The same is true at international bodies like the World Health Organization. Not all are mandated as part of school course work, some are billed as networking opportunities or a way to get a foot in the door of an enterprise, or as part of abusive employment practices. The federal Liberal government pledged to crack down on unpaid internships in federally regulated workplaces, in the new rules but is no longer the third of the inspection, the finding is designated for 4000 students and the fees are in fact scholarships rather than real compensation that would come from the employer. The New Minister of Education is only commissioning research to investigate if certain internships need to be paid. This hypocrisy is all the more blatant as the Quebec state is one of the major employers using unpaid interns.

During the Ontario election the Tories promised to support French language education, and the French language university that Francophones have waited for so long. The government’s “about-turn” is not a change of heart, but a shift from a prosperous and right-wing populist government that is riddled with anti-French chauvinism to the far-right federal Tories’ xenophobic and Islamophobic stances in Ottawa. We call on labour and the progressive and democratic movements to step up to defend the rights of Francophones in Ontario and across Canada, by demanding the Ontario government reverse its racist and chauvinist policy and by demanding the federal government protect Francophone and minority rights using its federal authority and powers to do so.

When the civil and democratic rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked. This is an attack on the rights of some are attacked, the civil and democratic rights of all are attacked.
By Ben Chacko, www.morningstaronline.co.uk

Hundreds of labour movement activists packed Hamilton House in central London on Nov. 22 to demand a Brexit that serves working people.

Economists, trade unionists and socialist campaigners rejected Theresa May’s deal with Brussels and said the left’s priority must be to fight for a general election to return a left-led Labour government which would negotiate a new deal.

Unison North West regional convener Paula Barker, speaking in a personal capacity, said the left should be “wary of those pushing Labour towards a second vote. Many who voted leave had never voted before. Labour must not ignore working-class communities.”

IPPR research fellow Grace Blakeley said it was vital any deal with the EU allowed Labour to “implement everything the party has democratically agreed to do.”

“We must go back to the EU and say: ‘We need a deal that allows expansive state intervention in the economy. We want limits on the mobility of capital. The deal on the table now will not allow a government to pursue a socialist agenda.’”

She warned against a “failure to see through the veil of liberal institutions to the power relations behind them, which is a failure to understand capitalism itself. The EU is a mechanism for the enforcement of a particular set of power relations.”

Throughout the negotiations the EU had prioritised maintaining restrictions on public ownership and state aid in Britain, she argued, saying EU chiefs might be worried about being undercut by London on corporation tax but “they are much more worried about a socialist UK off the coast demonstrating what socialism looks like to millions of disenfranchised citizens across Europe.”

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said it was vital to remember that “coming out of the EU will allow us to rebud manufacturing, protect seafarers and nationalise rail.” Staying in would prevent all of this: “The reality is that the EU is a bosses club and my union has given up on expecting it to be anything else.”

Labour MP Graham Stringer agreed: “If we want nationalised rail we have to leave. If we want to stop the Royal Mail privatisation we have to leave. If we can’t make those decisions, we don’t really live in a democracy. The answer is a general election as soon as possible.”

Brexit should be understood as a “delayed reaction to 2008” and is an opportunity the left cannot afford to miss, Guardian editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger told the People’s Brexit meeting.

The global financial crash demonstrated that the neoliberal economic model was bankrupt, he argued, but the left had failed to seize the moment and allowed the right to accelerate cuts, privatisations and attacks on working-class people.

“We have a second chance to get it right. If we don’t, history will never forgive us. Everything Tony Benn said has come true.”

The EU is a zone of low growth, high unemployment, austerity economics run on monetarist lines. And it is an economic disaster zone. Why is the left still backing for fascism marketers? Friction to [capitalists] means trade unions, it means controls on capital. I’m in favour of more friction – not less.”

Communist Party of Britain general secretary Robert Griffiths said expecting the “unselected and largely unaccountable” European Commission to protect workers’ rights went against its entire record and assumed “the labour movement is completely powerless, as if the rights we fought for were given us by the EU. I don’t believe in flying the white flag. Let’s fly the red flag.”

And former Syriza MP Costas Lapavitsas said was “amazed” at the presentation of the EU as stable, prosperous and democratic in.”

Conflict between the core and the periphery was intensifying “in existential institutional crisis” across the bloc, which had worked for decades to “dopoliticalise economic and social policy in Europe. Vote for who you like, but the same policies will be applied. Democratic deficit? The EU is a democratic abyss.”

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Canada plays shameful role in Venezuelan killings

Statement by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Nov. 17-18, 2018

The Communist Party of Canada condemns the recent assassination of two campesino leaders and members of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV). On Oct. 31 in Nueva Bolivia, Merida State, PCV Central Committee member Luis Fajardo and his brother-in-law, Javier Aldana, were killed by a burst of gunfire from a moving car. Both men had been active in defence of campesino rights, but the authorities ignored the serious threats against Luis Fajardo and his family. We call for a prompt and thorough investigation of this crime, including the role of large landholders and corrupt personnel of the National Guardians and politicians. President Maduro and Attorney General Tarek William Saab must take swift action to ensure that justice is served in this case.

There is an emerging pattern of violence against activists in the Nueva Bolivia area, such as the failed assassination attempt against PCV campesino leader Robinson Garcia, who came under fire from several motorcyclists on October 9. Luis Fajardo was sparrowheading the claims of some 250 campesino families to the Cano Rico ranch, which they have occupied to use while waiting for legal adjudication of the lands.

This region has seen intense land struggles by small farmers, but despite earlier promises, the Venezuelan authorities have failed to respond adequately when large landholders use deadly force by paramilitary gangs.

The Communist Party of Canada also condemns the shameful role of the Canadian federal government, which plays a leading role in the US-led imperialist campaign to isolate the Bolivarian Revolution and the democratically-elected Maduro government. Most recently, Canada refused to allow Venezuelan citizens in this country to cast a ballot in national elections, and has so far blocked a visa for Venezuelan vice-minister Carlos Ron, who has been invited on a speaking tour to several Canadian cities.

The Liberal government is clearly acting on behalf of big capital, especially the Canadian-based resource companies which are aggressively pushing for new investments and bigger profits throughout the entire region of Latin America. The escalating wave of threats and sanctions against governments which refuse to yield to imperialist demands is intended to create economic and social chaos in countries such as Venezuela. This strategy aims to prepare the conditions for “regime change” tactics such as “regime change” in Venezuela, such as the massacre of Luis Fajardo and Javier Aldana, the Colombian government also bears responsibility for their murders. We demand that the Liberal government end its efforts to prepare a new round of military intervention in Venezuela, which is a clear violation of the sovereignty and independence of Venezuela.

U.S. may add Venezuela to “terrorism” list

According to a Washington Post report, the White House is considering including Venezuela in its list of countries which claims “have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism,” including Iran, Sudan, North Korea and Syria. The prospect has been described as “absurd” by Venezuelan authorities.

The Post quotes anonymous State Department sources as external emails which indicate that no final decision has been made, and that the State Department has requested feedback from government agencies such as the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, and USAID. If enacted, the move could signal further sanctions or even a “military option” against Caracas, recently proposed by U.S. officials.

In September, US Senators Marco Rubio, John Cornyn and Cory Gardner lobbied Senate Committee Mike Pompeo to include Venezuela on the list. In a letter, the senators claimed that “Venezuela is not fully cooperating with US anti-terrorism efforts,” and that “Maduro has helped and backed terrorists (…) cooperating for many years with [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] FARC and [the National Liberation Army of the same country] ELN, as well as other narco terrorists.” The latter also alleges links to Lenin’s military group, Hezbollah. This legislation has been floated several times in the past, with no supporting evidence. 

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Packed People’s Brexit meeting demands UK general election in Venezuelan killings

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Ejemplo de lucha contra el autoritarismo en defensa del campesinado frente a los talatentientes funcionarios corruptos y la ineficiencia institucional.
PAME leads militant strike across Greece

As the economic and social crisis in Greece continues, the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) continues to spearhead working class resistance against the neoliberal austerity policies of the Syriza-ANEL government.

PAME called a militant strike across the country on November 28, raising a number of important demands: immediate increases in wages, in pensions, in social benefits; cancellation of laws that abolish collective bargaining rights; raise the minimum monthly wage to €751 (about $1252 Can.) for all.

As part of its struggle, PAME has called on unions throughout the country to hold General Assemblies to strengthen and expand them. The struggle processes the strike wave against the policies of the governments and employers. All unions are being urged to take part in the struggle, to organize strike preparations and take initiatives in every industry, region and workplace.

The draft state budget for 2019 and the achievement of new “blood-stained” fiscal surpluses, says PAME, once again attack the people and offer a significant reduction in wages for business groups. This is in practice the true meaning of “regularity” and “development” mentioned by the government: development for more profits for the big employers, through workers exploitation, without rights.

The minimum things offered by the government and the main opposition party over the pre-election period do not change the life of the great majority of the people, who suffer from higher taxes and constant blows to their incomes. None of the about 700 “memorandum” laws adopted by the Greek parliament to qualify IMF-EU loans has been abolished, only pledges to change these laws in decades not the near future.

It is time for the workers to take the spotlight, says PAME, calling for a united and coordinated struggle, not waiting and tolerance. “Let us respond to the lies and illusions of the SYRIZA-ANEL government and the main opposition party of Neo Dimokratia,” says PAME: “No one will solve the problems created by the anti-worker policies of their governments since the beginning of the crisis, unless a massive, decisive struggle is organized to put our own needs ahead of the profits of the few.”

Exposing the “lies and the propaganda of the government,” PAME says that “they claim that they will increase the minimum wage, but the truth is that the government and the other parties that voted for the third memorandum (PASSOK, ND, SYRIZA), voted also against the proposal of 503 trade unions to increase the minimum wage to 751€.

In essence, they implement the law which abolishes the collective bargaining, and the government together with the respective minister will determine the minimum wage according to the criteria of “productivity”, “competitiveness”, employment and “unemployment”, thus the entire reactionary framework that has crashed and keeps crushing wages.”

PAME goes on to blast the “continuing mockery of the government” as a provocation against pensioners, who have been hit with 21 reductions in pensions under the “memorandum” regime. Similarly, the policies of the government and the banks have hit hard at families, many of whom have had their homes seized.

At the same time, the SYRIZA-ANEL government has been “upgrading” the Greek-US defence cooperation, with higher risks for the people, involving the country and its infrastructure and Armed Forces in the dangerous war plans of imperialism.

“This policy puts our country even deeper in the control of the energy monopolies,” warns PAME. “We are even more involved in the competition among the great imperialist poles that do not hesitate to resolve their differences through war, destruction, killings and uprooting.”

Calling for the militant strike on November 28, PAME says, “No surrender to the minimum, to their miserable wages, to the badly paid work of the short-term employment programs, to unemployment - only our own struggle, militant action, the reconstruction of the trade union movement, the social alliance can overturn the barbaric anti-popular policies, in order to put our own needs forward!”

The demands of the Nov. 28 strike include:

- Cancellation of the law, which abolishes the collective bargaining.
- Minimum salary to €751 for all.
- Stable and permanent work for all.
- Increases in wages, pensions and social benefits.
- Public Universal Compulsory Social Security. Minimum pension at 600 euros, or 80% of the minimum salary.
- No auction of a family’s primary residence.
- Investment in anti-seismic, anti-flood and fireproof shielding infrastructure, “so that we do not die when it rains, or get burnt by wildfires during the summer.”
- No involvement in the imperialist plans and wars of NATO and the EU. “Do not allow our country to become an aircraft carrier for interventions. We have the same problems, the same concerns, the same needs as neighbouring peoples.”

Emergency resolution adopted by the 55th Congress, Communist Party of Britain, Nov. 17, 2018, on the Draft Agreement between the British Government and the EU negotiators.

This Congress condemns the attempt of the Conservative government to impose the 14 November Agreement with the European Union on this country and calls on the trade union and labour movement to mobilize all possible opposition to it.

This Agreement will prevent our country from adopting any radical programme that would reassert workers’ rights, require firms to adopt mandatory sectoral collective bargaining, and enable industrial regeneration through state aid and the comprehensive public ownership of utilities. It will halt any advance towards Popular Sovereignty and block the Labour Party from carrying through an electoral mandate for progressive change in the interests of working people.

The Draft Agreement maintains all current EU legislation until 2021, establishes a permanent Single Customs Territory for the island of Ireland that will be subject to all current EU prohibitions on state aid and public ownership and sets a Common Objective to be ratified in a subsequent agreement, of extending such an arrangement to Britain.

Under the Agreement our country will be subject to the EU Customs Union until 2021, including the extraterritorial provisions of CETA, and be unable to negotiated other treaties thereafter if the Common Objective is agreed. It is a charter for big business, and as set out by the government’s Business Advisory Council, and principally designed to protect financial services.

PAME calls a militant strike for November 28, 2018, to publicize the proposal of 503 trade unions to increase the minimum monthly wage to €751.

CP Britain condemns Nov. 14 agreement with European Union

People's Voice | December 1-31, 2018 | 7
Korean labour pushes back

Tens of thousands of workers launched a half-day strike across South Korea on Nov. 21, accusing the government of failing to take pro-labour policies in the face of deepening economic woes. Activists who put down tools - including some in the car industry - rallied in Seoul, and smaller strikes erupted in the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Almost 10,000 gathered at a rally, wearing red headbands, chanting slogans and waving banners, as they marched to the government's home affairs ministry building nearby. The KCTU estimated 160,000 affiliated workers joined the walkout nationwide.

A government move to introduce greater flexibility to the maximum 52-hour work week - to adjust to fluctuations in demand - has particularly angered workers. Protesters also called for President Moon Jae-in to deliver on a promise to raise the minimum wage from 7,530 won ($6.66) to 10,000 won ($8.85) by 2022.

"Since President Moon Jae-in came to power, the policies on labour have gone backwards," Jung Su-nam, KCTU spokesperson. "If this situation doesn't change, we are willing to make another strike to make things right."

Earlier in November, Jae-in sacked his top two economic officials, as the world's 11th-largest economy struggles with slowing growth, rising unemployment and persistent income gaps. These difficulties have translated into its rate rising at 52 percent - a drop of 13 percent over five weeks, according to Gallup Korea.

General strike across Tunisia

In the wake of a general strike across the public sector on November 22, the newly formed Tunisian trade union federation launched a challenge from a powerful left-wing labour syndicate that emerged as the largest, and most influential grass roots organisation after the 2011 overthrow of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

The General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), with more than 3 million members (about 5 per cent of Tunisia's total population), and a branch in every sector, has been engaged in a months-long stand-off with the government over the need to increase workers' wages and industrial sector.

The International Monetary Fund and other lenders have urged Tunisia to remove subsidies on public sector cuts, including a wage freeze and the sale of state-owned banks. The Union has included the country's budget deficit.

Public bodies have accumulated a year and a half billion and the government is hoping to make workers pay the costs, by curbing public spending from 15 per cent of the

annual budget to 12.5 per cent by 2020. The UGTT warns the move will "jeopardize the quality of public services."

The UGTT says it is committed to defending the rights of public sector employees, who deserve a wage increase in light of growing politicisation, a drop in the value of the Tunisian dinar, and an increase in taxes. "This strike comes after all opportunities for dialogue were exhausted and negotiations failed, resulting in no agreement on the need for wage increases in the public sector," the UGTT said.

A previous nationwide strike scheduled for October 24 was cancelled after promises from the government that it would not sell state-owned companies. The challenge mounted by the UGTT underscores an increasingly volatile situation, before scheduled municipal and parliamentary elections scheduled for next year. It also throws into question the government's ability to effectively deal with growing discontent over a strained economy.

According to government data, unemployment is at about 15 per cent, and close to double that figure in more deprived interior regions, with the young, especially graduates, hit the hardest. Throughout Tunisia, inflation is currently over 7 per cent, ratcheting up the cost of living as the IMF maintains pressure to allow the Tunisian Dinar to fall still further.

The Tunisian government has been crippled by rivalries within a ruling coalition comprised of the moderate Islamist Ennahda and the secular Nidaa Tounes parties.

"Stop pinkwashing" - NZ hotel workers

Union members at SkyCity Hotel in Auckland, New Zealand, say they will march in next year's Auckland Pride Parade despite the company pulling its support. SkyCity announced it would not participate in the parade after the Pride board banned police from marching in uniform and asked them to wear T-shirts instead.

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Paid leave for domestic violence survivors

Public sector unions in the Asia-Pacific region have launched a campaign for universal paid leave for survivors of domestic discrimination or violence. As part of the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women (25 Nov), trade unions are demanding governments and employers take stronger action to end sexual harassment and gender based violence.

While the #MeToo movement has drawn global attention to the prevalence of sexual harassment, particularly in high profile industries, less attention has been given to the role employers and labour laws must have in providing safe workplaces. Effective workplace laws and policies can both stop workplace harassment and provide support for survivors of domestic violence, said Kate Lappin, Regional Secretary of Public Services International.

A particular focus of the campaign is the demand for paid domestic violence leave, to allow survivors to attend to legal and medical help, find housing and open new bank accounts, without having to worry about returning to a violent environment once their jobs. Paid domestic violence leave helps change discriminatory social norms and attitudes by breaking the cycle of violence against women.

Women aged 15-64 years old, in 3 women will experience a form of violence, WHO statistics show. In 2019, there was a violent relationship costs $18,000 and 141 hours on average.

In 2019, they became the second country to legislate for paid domestic violence leave this year. The Philippines introduced the right 14 years ago through its Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. Paid domestic violence leave is included in the draft ILO Convention and Recommendation on Violence Against Women and Men in the World of Work.

But a number of governments and many employer representatives want to water down or stop provisions to stop violence and harassment” said Annie Enriquez Geron, General Secretary of the Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK) in the Philippines. “We know that there still attempts to weaken the proposed rules and we won’t stand for that.”

"16 Days Against Gender-based Violence" Australian unions will mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence starting Nov. 25. This comes as the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) survey on sexual harassment in the workplace is in progression.

The preliminary results of the ACTU’s survey showed that more than 1 in 2 women have been sexually harassed at work.

The union movement is calling for employers to take a role in proactively preventing sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, as well as campaigning to bring sexual harassment into the industrial relations system, removing the need for people who experience harassment to go through a lengthy and expensive court process.

ACTU President Michele O’Neil said, “The 16 days of activism come at a critical time in the campaign to address the systemic issue of gender based violence. Employers have a huge role to play in ending sexual harassment. This is a systemic issue in the workplace and we need our employers on the right side of this.

We need to give everyone who is sexually harassed at work a safe, effective and independent recourse. No one should have to weigh the cost of holding perpetrators to account. The entire union movement is committed to this campaign, we have to change the rules on sexual harassment. We know that employers are working in environments which are not safe, this needs to end.”

COSATU welcomes National Minimum Wage

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has welcomed several pro-worker legislative acts, including the National Minimum Wage and other demands first raised in the historic Freedom Charter of the 1950s.

The federation says the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Acts will see wages rise for almost half all workers, or 6.4 million, and domestic workers’ wages will be fast-tracked to the NMW within two years, a major cash injection into workers’ pockets and a badly needed stimulus in the local economy.

The federation says the Labour Laws Amendment Act will see collective agreements extended to outsourced workers where unions are deemed sufficiently representative but not yet 51%. It will strengthen the #MeToo picket and strike, and take measures against employers who refuse to negotiate with the union.

Under the Labour Laws Amendment Act, workers will have a minimum of 10 days paid parental and paternity leave when a child is born, and 10 weeks leave when adopting a child 2 years and younger. Other gains include longer unemployment benefits, and improved maternity leave rules.

Calling this “the most progressive reforms of the labour regime since 1995”, COSATU says its next steps will be to “replicate the #MeToo and living wage, a National Health Insurance, comprehensive social security, free tertiary education for all workers and their children, safe and accessible public transport, land reform, and tenure security for farm workers.”

December 18 is United Nations International Migrants Day

JOIN THE FIGHT BUILD THE STRUGGLE!
Amazon workers launch Black Friday strikes and protests

By Kimball Cardou

Facing punishing performance targets, jobite hazards, and anti-union hostility, Amazon warehouse workers across Europe set loose a wave of protests and strikes at the e-commerce giant on Black Friday, November 23.

Unions in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom said thousands of workers demonstrated outside of Amazon’s “fulfillment centres” during the busiest online shopping days of the year. After the United States, Germany and the UK are Amazon’s second and third biggest markets, respectively.

“Amazon’s refusal to negotiate with unions is not only a violation of workers’ rights, it is dangerous. By not addressing workers concerns, hazards remain, and the injuries continue,” said Carmen Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union. “Next week delivery should not mean a lifetime of pain for Amazon workers.”

The labour rights actions took place in at least nine facilities:

• Germany: Amazon workers, members of ver.di, walked off the job at the Bad Hersfeld facility at 8:30 am.

• Italy: Italian labour union FILCAMS Cgil announced a “state of agitation” and Black Friday solidarity actions at several Amazon facilities.

• Spain: The Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) led a strike of 1,500 worker and ver.di member. “You pay you off and replace you with temporary workers with less pay you off and replace you with temporary workers with less terms and conditions.”

Elsewhere, chronic pain is too common. “I’ve seen too many people starting healthy and now having their second or third surgery already,” said Andreja Schmidtkeuz, a German Amazon worker and verdi member. “You start at the company healthy and leave it as a broken human.”

A leading international aid group says that an estimated 85,000 Yemeni children under the age of five may have died from starvation and disease since the outbreak of the country’s civil war in 2015. That would bring the numbers of the country’s civil war in 2015.

The war has given rise to the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Three-quarters of Yemen’s people require life-saving assistance and as many as 12 million are at risk of starvation. Tens of thousands of people are believed to have been killed in the fighting. Save the Children blamed the widespread starvation on a Saudi-led blockade that was tightened a year ago after the rebels fired a ballistic missile at the Saudi capital, Riyadh. The charity also cited recent fighting in and around the port city of Hodeidah, through which much international emergency aid is delivered.

The coalition has been attempting to retake Hodeidah since last summer, with its forces now five kilometers from the port, through which much international emergency aid is delivered. Shortly before resuming their offensive, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, whose military intervention accounts largely for the civilian suffering, pledged $500 million in aid to assist millions of Yemenis at risk of starvation.

The cynical Saudi announcement follows days after UN World Food Programme head David Beasley visited Yemen before telling the UN Security Council that as many as 12 million of the 28 million Yemenis “are just one step away from famine.”

UN envoy Martin Griffiths announced on Nov. 16 that both sides had agreed to attend peace talks in Sweden “soon,” with Yemeni officials suggesting that talks would take place on November 29.

US “precision weapons” in the war against Yemen

As part of the $110-billion deal brokered in May 2017 by Donald Trump, Saudi Arabia is purchasing precision arms worth $7 billion in a move that runs counter to the Yemen war’s civilians. Raytheon and Boeing are the two defense contractors selected to produce precision-guided munitions. The Saudi military also purchased US-made tanks, artillery, helicopters and light close air support as well as intelligence-gathering aircraft, and anti-missile systems such as Patriot and THAAD.

Raytheon publicly says airstrike groups have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure on multiple occasions, indicating that the problem lies in the Saudi-led-coalition’s rules of engagement rather than non-possession of better and more precise arms. Raytheon has long been producing the Paveway IV laser-guided bombs, marketed as munitions meant to revolutionize “tactical air-to-ground warfare by delivering increased ‘smart bomb’ accuracy.” Whether Raytheon product, the Excalibur precision artillery shell, is used by the US, Swedish, Canadian, Australian and Dutch militaries.

Other rights groups say airstrikes have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure on multiple occasions, including 119 of the heavy assault variety equipped with 105 millimetre cannons. The $15 billion deal was initiated under the Harper Tories, and then given final approval after the Trudeau Liberals were elected in 2015.
In many ways, Lee’s prominence was something that today’s pop culture still doesn’t fully do not enjoy, and that’s very much a symptom of Marvel’s capitalistic parent company. Disney, the comics giant runs like a well-oiled machine, it does so at the cost of treating its workers like so many cogs, and perhaps the most glaring fact about Lee’s fame is that he was likely the last to truly enjoy it on such a level.

Like some of his characters, Lee himself came from a working-class background, the son of Romanian-born Jewish immigrants living in New York. He worked part-time jobs writing obituaries like this one, as well as press releases for the National Tuberculosis Centre. His entry into comics began when he became an assistant in 1939 at Timely Comics, Marvel’s predecessor. “In those days, the artists dipped the pen in ink,” he said, “so I had to make sure the inks were well mixed. I went down and got them their lunch, and when proofreading, I erased the pencils from the finished pages for them.”

Afterward, he served in the US Army for a time as a member of the Signal Corps, fixing telephone poles and other communications equipment by hangers-on who were after his money. Unauthorised cheques were written from Lee’s bank account without his knowledge, and $1.4 million disappeared in a complex wire-transfer transaction. Moreover, Lee’s bodyguard Mac Anderson reportedly threatened Lee and his daughter, prompting allegations of elder abuse. It would seem that the comic figure’s final days were coloured by legal battles and exploitation by others, something which, if true, deserves to be addressed.

Keya Morgan, a memorabilia collector and close friend of Lee, commented, “Stan’s wife passed away, and within a day, I saw all the vultures circle around him. When you’re at your weakest and somebody kicks you – especially when you’re a 95-year-old man – you have to have someone standing by him to help keep him on his feet.”

Nevertheless, Lee was and remains beloved by fans. “Stan was an icon in his field,” said a family statement. “His fans loved him and his desire to interact with them. He loved his fans and treated them with the same respect and love they gave him. He worked tirelessly his whole life creating great characters for the world to enjoy. He wanted us to shape our imagination and for all of us to use it make the world a better place. His legacy will live on forever.”

National Ballet visits Russia

At a time when diplomatic relations between Canada and Russia are at their lowest point in decades, it’s encouraging to see one of this country’s elite cultural institutions accept an invitation from its artistic peers in the land that gave us The Nutcracker Suite.

The National Ballet of Canada was in Moscow and St. Petersburg October 15-19 at the invitation of Russia’s pre-eminent ballerina, Diana Vishneva. Vishneva was invited to participate in Context, an international festival of modern dance, directed and curated by Vishneva. The Canadians prepared three new works for their sold-out premiere at the Stanislavsky Theatre in Moscow and the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. Two were by Canadians: Being and Nothingness by Quebec-born principal dancer Guillaume Côté, and Emergence by Crystal Pite. Artistic director Karen Kain was, for decades, Canada’s most acclaimed ballerina. She first visited Russia in the seventies and has returned many times. Kain believes that politics aren’t relevant to the National Ballet’s tour. “I think art transcends politics,” she says. “We share this art form that we all love.”

Artists fight for streaming royalties

Streaming now accounts for 75% of music industry revenue, far outstripping revenue from CD sales, digital downloads, and broadcasting, but artists are increasingly getting shortchanged. A report from the International Confederation of Authors and Composers (CISAC) shows that while digital royalty revenues have nearly tripled in the last five years, they are still only 13% of total industry royalty revenues, far below collections from older platforms. One might reasonably expect the digital share of total artist royalty revenues to be 75%. But today’s musicians are pitted against the likes of Google Music and YouTube and are not able to make a living, let alone receive payments, all of whom make super-profits by shortchanging artists. Change is coming, but slowly. In September 2018, the European Parliament supported new EU Copyright Directive on the digital market. In response, CISAC president Jean-Michel Jarre declared: “Europe has now recognized that it is time for change. It is not acceptable for the law to shield large tech monopolies and sustain a systemic injustice in the process of creators.” Paris-based CISAC is a non-profit international collective management organization with 239 affiliated artist societies representing more than 20 million creators worldwide.

Rihanna takes on Trump

Superstar pop singer Robyn Fenty, better known as Rihanna, is taking steps to ensure that President Donald Trump will no longer be able to play her music at his MAGA rallies. After learning on November 5 that her song “Don’t Stop the Music” was broadcast on the PA at a Trump rally in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Rihanna had her lawyers send a cease and desist letter to Trump’s White House counsel. She quickly followed that up with another legal action on October 12 her publishing rights company, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI), announced that it had sent its own letter revoking Trump’s licensing agreement to play Rihanna’s music at his rallies. Trump’s campaign had previously paid a blanket licensing fee to BMI for use of all of its catalogue. BMI has now removed Rihanna’s works from the list of artists included in the deal. In addition, she is a citizen of Barbados, who has dominated pop charts for much of the past 12 years, is not the first artist to take action against Trump for the appropriation of their music at his rallies. Grammy-winning rapper Pharell Williams, hard rock singer Steven Tyler (Aerosmith) and the Prince Estate have all filed cease and desist letters.

The Nutcracker Suite

Waters joins Palestinian musicians

British rock star, Roger Waters, long an advocate for BDS and Palestinian rights, is now collaborating with Palestinian musicians. Early this year, after President Trump decided to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, Waters recorded a song in protest with Palestinian group Le Trio Joubran. The result was “Supremacy,” a stinging attack on eastern music as represent of Water’s “Penultimate Speech of the ‘Red Indian’ to the White Man,” accompanied by a stark video of Waters’s disembodied face. Dominican singer, Lesly Guerra, called out the song’s “colonialism everywhere.” Last month, the Joubran brothers – Samir, Wissam, and Adnan – released their sixth studio album, The Long March, which includes a second cover of The Beatles’ “Carry That Weight” (words and music by Waters) is dedicated to the four children from the Bakers family – Mohammad Ramaz, Ahed Atef, Zakaary Atef, and Ismail Mahmoud – who were murdered by Israeli forces on a beach in Gaza during Israel’s assault on the enclave in 2014. The Joubran brothers are virtuosic oud players who come from a long line of Palestinian musicians. Their brilliant playing and determined commitment has made them a symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance. For info: https://tribalnoise.org
The temperature’s dropping as we near the holiday season, but the year ahead is shaping up to be very hot indeed! Protest and demonstrations are spreading across the country. Students fighting for free and affordable education and up-to-date sex education, minimum wage workers demanding $15 and fairness, the public campaigns for Pharmacare, tenants’ rent strikes and demands for affordable housing and real rent controls, Black student against growing public pressure for an end to the exclusionary regime change for real action on climate change, and for trade deals that benefit the working class and anticipate and reactionary governments.

Workers are also fighting back in militant and militant. One might think that bigwigs in Calgary have forgotten the Calgary Winter Games. It also spoke volumes that Evan Woolley, the clown-prince darling of the 1988 Winter Olympics, has become so disenchanted with the Catholic Church that he would love the luxury of not having to go to Mass for fear of the IOC to make a Hail Mary pass.
November 11th, the 100th anniversary of the armistice when ended the First World War, saw events held in cities across North America and Europe, with military parades, wreath-laying speeches by politicians. These events invariably praised the “heroism and sacrifices of our armed forces” including the 60,000 from Canada who died in the trenches of Europe. This commentary by Dominic Alexander in Counterfire debunks the myths spread by politicians and historians to whitewash “the war to end all wars”.

“The war was fought in defence of democracy” This is contradicted by the basic facts. Germany had universal manhood suffrage while in Britain, including Ireland, some 40% of men still did not qualify for the vote. In Germany also, there was no national war party to justify the war on the grounds that it was being fought to defend civilised values against a brutal, militaristic state, in the form of Russian autocracy.

“Britain (and Canada) went to war due to a treaty obligation to defend the neutrality of Belgium” There was no clear and accepted obligation on Britain to do this, and, in fact, before the Belgian issue appeared, the war party in the cabinet was already pushing for British intervention on the entirely different ground that there were naval obligations to France. These obligations had been developed in secret arrangements between the military of both countries, and were never subject to any kind of democratic accountability. The Germans even offered guarantees over Belgian neutrality, which Britain refused to consider at all.

“German aggression was the driving force for war” However aggressive the German leadership may have been in 1914, the British establishment was at least as determined to take the opportunity to go to war with its imperial rival. At one point the Foreign Office even seized on imaginary German incursions into French soil to justify a British declaration of war on Germany. The declaration letter had to be retrieved from the German ambassador and rewritten when it was discovered that the stories were false. The enthusiasm of the British ruling class for war undermines any justification for it based on German aggression.

“Germany had started a naval arms race with Britain” Imperialist competition between the two states over markets and resources preceded the arms race in the 15 years before the war. Britain’s naval power was the vital element in its ability to restrict German access to market resources across the world. Unless Britain was willing to allow Germany to expand economically, the logic of capitalist competition meant that Germany was bound to challenge British naval supremacy. The latent violence of the leading imperial nation is always the context for aggressive challenges to the status quo on the part of rising powers.

“German imperialism was uniquely vicious and had to be challenged” The atrocities committed against the Herero people in Namibia were indeed terrible crimes, but were hardly unique compared to the horrors committed by all those involved in the rubber industry in the Belgian Congo, to take but one example. Also, European opinion had only a few years before 1914 been horrified by the brutality of another colonial power when it was engaged in ruthlessly expanding its dominance over indigenous states in Africa. This was Britain in its wars of aggression against the Boer states in South Africa, during which concentration camps were first used in order to control a civilian population.

“Public opinion was united in favour of the war, as shown by images of cheering crowds in 1914” It is now usually admitted that the degree of enthusiasm for the war was strictly limited, and the evidence is that people in general did not dare order them into combat. The evidence for widespread cynicism about war, the government, the military leadership, and grave doubts about the purpose of the war, cannot be dismissed by the revisionists. In so far as soldiers carried on willingly fighting the war, the explanation needs to be sought in the habituation to obedience, as well as the threat of court-martial executions. There is no need to invoke either fervid nationalism or any kind of deep psychological blood-lust as explanations.

“The military leadership, notably General Haig, was not a bunch of incompetent ‘donkeys’” Attempts to rehabilitate the likes of General Haig, founder on some of the basic facts about the tactics he relentlessly employed. Repeated infantry attacks on opposing trenches consistently failed to gain any clear advantage, while causing colossal casualties. On the first day of the battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916, 57,000 troops out of 200,000 were killed or wounded. Despite the continuing carnage on an incredible scale, Haig carried on ordering further attacks. When any hope of a breakthrough against the German lines was clearly lost, the purpose of the battle was said to be to attrit the enemy purely and simple. The plan was to kill more German troops than the British lost. Since there was no way of reliably measuring the casualties on the other side, Haig relied on estimating it through the losses of his own side. On this basis he began to be angered when the army suffered too few losses, as when he complained that one division in September had lost under a thousand men. There can be no defence for this kind of disregard of human life.

“Patriotic” WW1 propaganda poster used in Canada

The war opened up a period of endemic economic dislocation, and catastrophe created in Britain there was a decade of industrial decline and high unemployment. The high British Depression. In effect, it was only the Second World War which brought the major capitalist powers out of the slump. The First World War saw the point at which capitalism became addicted to war and to a permanent arms economy. The war demonstrated the capacity of capitalism to create industrialised waste, carnage and destruction on a colossal scale. The remembrance of the war is appropriately a time for mourning the horror, the loss and the waste of it all, but it should also provoke a determination to resist our rulers’ insistence on promoting war to further their interests. War can achieve nothing other than to create the conditions for further wars.

People’s Voice has, ever since its ending, remembered the First World War as a time of horrendous and futile misery and slaughter, as epitomising political and military leaders’ incompetence and humanity’s evident disregard of human life. That popular judgement, which has helped turn common opinion against war in general, was correct, and we must let the war mongers dismiss this instance of the wisdom of ordinary people.