How can we save the planet?

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We need an anti-imperialist ecology

China’s trying, but can’t do it alone

“This isn’t over”: CUPW
The Trudeau Liberals forced postal workers to end their strike late last year, but the issues at stake still remain, and their union promises that this struggle is far from over.

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UN on peasant rights
A youth representative of the National Farmers’ Union was in New York when the General Assembly voted to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants.

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Another new party???
The Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance Party is the latest populist party to emerge in response to public discontent, but it certainly poses no challenge to the system.

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Tech workers unite
Technology and game workers are growing in numbers, and starting to organize and speak out on issues like contract insecurity, sexual harassment, and the ethics of the industry they work in.

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China can’t save the world from climate change by itself

By John Goodman, People’s World

With all the problems in the world—trade tensions, political instability, angry populisms, and the constant reminder to forget about the mother of all threats, climate change. Sure, other grievances can seem insurmountable, but it’s unlikely any of them will simply wipe out humanity as we know it. So how are things looking on the climate front? Previous years saw CO2 emissions actually staying flat, though this by itself would not be enough to stop exactly matching the environmental consequences. But 2017 and 2018 have seen a rise in emissions of 2.6 and 2.7 percent respectively, according to a report released early last month by the Global Carbon Project. Bad news, by any measure.

News stories about these numbers are followed by the finger at China, since the country had a projected emissions increase of 1.2 percent in 2018. This makes sense, given its size. China has the world’s largest population and is in the process of industrializing and reaping the benefits of economic growth. But it has done so by burning more fuel, slowly changing as it moves to a more diversified, service-oriented economy. What some might not know is when emissions are looked at on a per-capita basis, China is closer to the bottom of the list below Germany, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. At the very top is the US, with America actually kicking the can further down the road. The Marxist historian Art Preis wrote that “at no time since 1950 has the US, despite its enormous economic might, been able to prevent any country from industrializing and reaping the benefits of economic growth.”

I think China would be the first to admit more needs to be done if we are to avert apocalypse. Some parts of the country were unable to meet their reduction targets this year, and renewed vigor will be required if the twin scourges of pollution and emissions are to be eradicated. New sources of energy will have to be found, and coal use in particular must be phased out entirely. This is a direction that China is now heading in, as concerns about the dangers of climate change are more prominent.

Climate change is a political problem and can only be solved by political solutions. We have been forced to fight it as individuals, from being told not to eat meat, to driving less, to some sort of individualist solution. Meanwhile the real culprits get away with it. This is merely the ruling class escaping their responsibility. The only solution lies in a change of political and economic system. We must only challenge environmental catastrophe at the national level. China has tackled pollution by increasing the amount of number of energy companies in state ownership. Last year the president, Xi Jinping, called for an “ecological civilization” in his address to the national congress of the Chinese Communist Party.

Socialist Cuba has pioneered advances in environmentally sustainable agriculture, with a tenth of the land and resources protected as part of a 100-year plan to protect the country from climate change.

These are just some examples of what a sovereign, independent country can do, where the world’s largest polluter. It is the world’s largest polluter. But China is also doing all it can, with the understanding that deep, smoggy skies. This showed, people would say, the country didn’t care about the environment. Now, after China has taken steps to fix the problem, they make the same accusation anyway. It seems there’s no way for the country to please its detractors.

China is doing all it can, contrary to what naysayers claim. But climate change mitigation is an international effort, and needs international participation. Though it is a big country in terms of economics, geography, and population, China cannot go it alone—nor can it make up for the inaction of other, far more developed nations. Group efforts are stymied if one party is simply refuse to pitch in. There is no way for the country to please its detractors.

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UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants adopted by General Assembly

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP) has been formally adopted by the 39th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, by a vote of 121 in favour to 8 against, with 54 abstentions.

This ratification formally introduces the Declaration as a UN human rights instrument, and will be used as a tool to continue the struggle for the recognition of peasant rights worldwide. La Via Campesina (LVC) and its key contributors in bringing the Declaration from the grassroots level to the international stage.

La Via Campesina (a Spanish phrase meaning “the campesino way” or “the peasants’ way”) was founded in 1993 by farmers’ organizations from Europe, Latin America, North America, Central America and Africa. It describes itself as “an international movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, women, rural workers, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, America, and Europe”.

As a coalition of 182 organizations in 81 countries, LVC advocates family-farmed sustainable agriculture, and was the group that coined the term “food sovereignty.” It has campaigned to defend farmer’s seeds, to stop violence against women, to recognize the rights of the peasants, and for agrarian reform.

The National Farmers Union of Canada (NFU) and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) were among the key contributors to the adoption of the Declaration, which it calls “...an exciting and truly groundbreaking moment for La Via Campesina. To have an internationally recognized instrument at the highest level of governance that was written by and for peasants from every continent is a tremendous achievement. To have a tool such as this to support our continued work at the grassroots level is invaluable.”

MacPherson also took part in a delegation of LVC peasant organizatiors which promised to support prior to the adoption of the Declaration.

In a commentary on the NFU website (www.nfu.ca) she adds, “This Declaration sends an important message that our livelihoods matter and our small-scale food production methods are vital for a sustainable future. Not only does it have the potential to serve farmers, but also rural communities and consumers, because society as a whole will benefit when peasants rights are realized. The non-binding nature of the Declaration presents a challenge, but it will still be an incredibly potent tool for organizations to use in grassroots organizing and the legal system. Just as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the standard for human rights law, we hope that UNDROP can serve as the foundation.”

Canada was among the 54 countries which abstained, claiming to have concerns with collective rights, and saying that priority issues identified in the Declaration are addressed through other human rights instruments and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The issue of collective rights was raised by many countries, arguing that they are not recognized under international law and are not recognized by any of the core international human rights treaties.

"Now that the declaration is a recognized international instrument," says MacPherson, “LVC and its allies will work to build implementation strategies that fit into a broad spectrum of national and regional contexts. LVC will lobby to build an international human rights framework that addresses this serious challenge, but it will still be an incredibly potent tool for organizations to use in grassroots organizing and the legal system. Just as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the standard for human rights law, we hope that UNDROP can serve as the foundation.”

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Inequality: a widening problem

Statistics released in January prove that income inequality is widening in Canada, despite the relatively low unemployment rate of recent years. (Those faulty figures are largely based on inflating the total considered as “working”, and by consequently leaving hundreds of thousands of jobless people out of workforce totals... but that’s another story.)

We won’t see the latest Canadian corporate earnings numbers on the front page of print dailies, since such publicity might spark a revival of the Occupy movement. Reports from the first three quarters of 2018 reveal that corporate profits hit a staggering $40 billion over that period, heading towards an annual total of $320 billion, similar to 2017. These numbers smash all previous profit levels, including most of the last 15 years during which profits were locked away or not enough to cover their bills and debt payments, and 51 per cent “feel the pinch of interest rate increases”. Despite this, 45 per cent of those surveyed say they need to go further into debt to pay living expenses.

150 years ago, Karl Marx gave us a roadmap for this deadly trip. The only question is how soon the crisis will hit, and how badly it will affect millions of families. With a federal election just months away, it’s time to think outside the capitalist box; read more on that.

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Doug Ford flirts with private health care at his peril

By Natalie Mehra, reprinted from the Toronto Star, January 14, 2019

Although it was not once mentioned in last spring’s provincial election campaign, or a direct attack on the cornerstone of our public health care system, the Canada Health Act, which guarantees coverage to all Ontarians under the principle of universal access to health services and stop privatization.

Amidst the smoke here as it should have been avoided. The very first act of the Ford government was to cap-and-trade and implement tax giveaways that overwhelmingly benefit high income earners and corporations will cost approximately $22 billion. That’s $22 billion less for health, education, roads, transit, housing, parks and so on: among the most severe cuts in our history. We anticipate these cuts to start in cement after the federal election. They will almost certainly result in privatization, if we do not stop them.

February is Black History Month: Who was Viola Desmond?

Viola Desmond was a Halifax entrepreneur who challenged segregation rules in Nova Scotia the 1940s. While visiting New Glasgow, she developed car troubles and decided to see a movie while her car was repaired. She bought a ticket, entered the theatre and took a seat on the main floor, but was ejected. She was immediately condemned by the corporate media and politicians, as though his comment was too outrageous or “insulting to” the “noble” white man.

In this context, China’s Ambassador to Canada, Lu Shaye, wrote in the media and politicians, as though his comment was too outrageous or “insulting to” the “noble” white man.

In October, we invited Premier Doug Ford to a rally at the Ontario Health Coalition on the day that began the end of his career. We anticipate these cuts to start in cement after the federal election. They will almost certainly result in privatization, if we do not stop them.

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For example, costs can amount to hundreds of dollars per month.

Ford’s election pledges to axe cap-and-trade, rollback greenhouse gas emissions, and stop privatization. The only question is how soon the crisis will hit, and how badly it will affect millions of families. With a federal election just months away, it’s time to think outside the capitalist box; read more on that.

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P^^^^^^^ PowerPoint, 19/02/01, for example, will expire with this issue, Feb. 1-14, 2019. Send your renewal today!
All form, no substance: the NL Alliance Party

Sean Burton, January 2019

Right-wing populism is nothing new to Canadian politics. Maxime Bernier’s split from the federal Conservative party is but another recent example of reactionaries creating a new party when what was apparently not reactionary enough already existed.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a conservative split of its own, and that of the federal Progressive Conservative party. Despite having been, at one point in time, a “temporary measure.”

The guiding principles listed on their website are also more than a little troubling. They talk about equal representation for all the people of the province, the usual statement about honesty, transparency, accountability, freedom, democracy, and so on. And a point that they will promote our long-term economic interests by being “fiscally responsible with the people’s money.” Given the previous alignment of Pelley with the conservatives, the latter should come as no surprise. That truly translates into business as usual on bread and butter matters, though it is a obvious attempt at saying “See, we’d never overspend on something like Muskrat Falls!”

Pelley has also recently made some comments about his new definitely-not-a-party alliance that might be construed as a platform. Speaking to a small gathering at a hotel in St. John’s on January 7, Pelley put forward six points: (1) a free vote on all matters of the day, (2) an all-MHA table discussion of major issues within a ten-second rule, (3) changing house rules to encourage good decorum and punish bad manners, (4) extending the right of every government position, (5) recall legislation, and finally (6) a cut in on-going tax avoidance for all companies receiving government money would be made public. All of these points are a direct response to popular demands, some of which stem from highly-planned events. Notable in the past year has been the dismissal from caucus of MHAs Eddie Joyce and Dale Kirby as a result of bullying and harassment complaints from other MHAs. Furthermore, since the legalization of cannabis, production in this province was contracted out to Ontario-based companies, and a large number of suspiciously coincidental jobs being lost in the St. John’s area for a very light industry. It sounds like nothing but a number to its name bought the land shortly before that deal, and there have been allegations that those involved with said company have close ties with local political figures. In the truth, it has gotten people suspicious.

Despite these six points are not bad ideas; one might wonder about how public sector unions would feel about point four, but at least recall legislation is a definite necessity. But again, these are all matters of format. What does it matter how cordially our federal MHAs work together when the policies they are making are still in defence of a system that does not fundamentally care whether people are living in square houses, decent infrastructure in both rural and urban areas, or energy-efficient buildings?

The NL Alliance as it offers nothing of substance. It may play to the likes of those who are currently being proposed parties (whether it calls itself a party or not!) in the face of the colonialism-based, and certainly the right to recall elected officials. More independents is not something like people coming together to form policy and simply force issues, seeking to promote a right-wing agenda. This photo from ndp.ca is from a 2016 rally in St. John’s.

Bank Imbalance: life in Canada still a lopsided “tale of two banks”

That old, well-loved union song “The Banks Are Made Of Marble” still applies. At present, of course, the banks are now more often made of glass and steel.

But of course that is just fluff. As often happens, populist forces in Newfoundland and Labrador are attempting to tap into public anger against neoliberal policies, seeking to promote a right-wing agenda. This photo from theIndependent.ca is from a 2016 rally in St. John’s.

There is even to be an “all party” committee on democratic reform established at some point this year.

That the farmer sweated for silver
And we’d share those vaults of marble
With a guard at every door
Got no work fer you no more.

That discontent has at times boiled over into significant events. Notable in the past year are the proposed parties (whether it calls itself a party or not!) in the face of the colonialism-based, and certainly the right to recall elected officials. More independents is not something like people coming together to form policy and simply force issues, seeking to promote a right-wing agenda. This photo from ndp.ca is from a 2016 rally in St. John’s.

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The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNCHRC) has ruled that Canada continues to discriminate against First Nations women and their descendants by denying them the same entitlement to full s. 6(1)(a) status under the Indian Act as First Nations men and their descendants. The Committee ruled on Jan. 14 that Canada is obliged to remove the discrimination and to ensure that all First Nations women and their descendants are granted status on the same footing as First Nations men and their descendants.

Sharon McIvor who filed the petition with the UNHRC that resulted in this ruling, said “This decision is a game-changer for First Nations women, and for Canada. If the Government of Canada fulfills its obligations and finally treats First Nations women as equally, it will be a new day for us, for our communities and for Canada. First Nations women have been fighting against this discrimination in the courts and at the UN since 1970. I hope that Canada will now bring this devastating discrimination to an end.”

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated that more than 270,000 women and their descendants would be newly entitled to Indian status of 6(1)(a) status were granted to them on the same footing as Indian men and their descendants.

“This is evidence of how profound and damaging the discrimination is,” said Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University. “Sex discrimination in the Indian Act has been a very effective tool of assimilation, denying First Nations women and their descendants out of the pool of status Indians to whom the Government of Canada owes recognition and benefits.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, “Canada has clung to the sex discrimination in the Indian Act despite years of struggle against it by Indigenous women and their allies, in courts, at the UN, and in Parliament when amendments were being debated. Canada admitted in 2017 that the discrimination continues, and it put provisions into Bill S-3 that would eliminate the discrimination, but it never brought those provisions into force. Canada knows how to fix the discrimination. It just needs to do it.”

On September 21, 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau told the United Nations General Assembly that “the world expects Canada to adhere strictly to international human rights standards...and that’s what we are doing. This is what we all expect: that Canada will live up to its human rights obligations and look forward to the Government of Canada’s response.”

Several other analysts analyzed the UNHRC ruling at a Jan. 16 news conference hosted by the BC Union of Indian Chiefs.

How The Government Decided Who and Was Not An ‘Indian’

To qualify as a ‘Status Indian’ under the Indian Act you needed to be a member of a Band, the child of a ‘Status Indian’ or married to a ‘Status Indian’. Under the Act, women became dependent on their fathers from birth and were also an important day to unite First Nations women, and make heterogeneous mandatory. If a woman married a man who had ‘Status’ and was a member of a different band she and her descendants could not become a member of his band. A woman married a ‘Non Status’ indigenous man or a non-indigenous man and she all and of her descendants lost their “Status” in perpetuity. A woman’s status was lost and women’s votes were removed from the register and were denied access to their communities and their cultures through these provisions of the Act. Later amendments saw women marrying non-status men losing their rights to being forcibly disenfranchised if they were widowed or abandoned by their spouse. As a woman’s status was intrinsically tied to her husband, the fall of that relationship left women with no access to their adopted bands and reserves and without the legal standing to reign their birth community.

“The fight for gender equality is a constant and profoundly and damaging the same footing as First Nations men and their descendants,” said Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University.

The Women’s March protests which began in 2017 can play a vital role in building stronger popular resistance. But a narrow focus on one-day annual protests is not enough. The tendency for too much organizing and planning of these Marches also limits the scope of the emerging fight against the entire web of anti-Indian Act sex discrimination, and the corporatization of the Indian Act sex discrimination, is brought together, actively intervening to demand full equality rights, the better. The women’s movement can count on the Communist Party to fight for women’s and gender equality rights before, during and after the 2019 federal election. The Communist Party of Canada will campaign for Full Gender Equality NOW!*, including the following demands:

* Restore funding for women’s equality programs.
* Close the wage gap – legislate full pay and employment equity.
* Fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, including justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.
* Guarantee accessible and publicly funded abortion and reproductive health services in every province and territory.
* Create a pan-Canadian childcare policy.
* Repeal Bill C-36 - stop the corporate attack on women's rights and women’s rights workers.
* Protect women’s rights to EI maternity coverage; expand parental benefits to 52 weeks.
* End all forms of violence against women and provide adequate funding for crisis centres and transition houses.
* Repeal Bill C-36 - stop the corporate attack on women’s rights and women’s rights workers.
* No to Islamophobia! End the wars in the Middle East, zero tolerance for Islamophobic and gendered violence, and increase immigration and refugee quotas.
* Stop Canada’s Safe Third Country Agreement, which disproportionately penalizes and hinders poverty and violence.”
LA teachers in historic strike for better schools

**PV Vancouver Bureau, with files from TruthDig reporter Sonali Kolhatkar and The Atlantic’s Alia Wong**

After working without a contract for more than a year, Los Angeles public school teachers began a historic strike on Jan. 14, their first in 30 years. Members of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) gave their union a 98 percent strike mandate, after contract negotiations with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) dragged on for almost two years.

The UTLA reports that 30,000 of its members signed in on picket lines across the city, at over 900 school sites. More than 10,000 parents, students and community members joined on the picket lines in its first two days, and over 50,000 people march to the district offices demanding action.

The fight by L.A. teachers is symbolic of a bigger struggle in the United States to maintain and expand quality public education and to secure the rights of teachers, support staff, students, and parents within that system.

During 2018, teachers held successful strikes for wage increases in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Colorado, and Arizona. In Chicago, Los Angeles, where the LAUSD has offered a 6 percent raise over two years, teachers are demanding better education for their 600,000 students, who are mainly non-white. They want to use the library have to wait whenever they can. Students who need medical attention are attending schools where nurses are on staff for only one or two days a week. Teachers interviewed by Truthdig said, “It’s absolutely not about teacher salaries. That is the last thing that we are looking at.”

L.A. School Superintendent Austin Beutner is described by media outlets as “a former investment banker with no history in the U.S. education sector.”

There are widespread fears that Beutner’s real agenda is to dismantle and privatize the school district. The LAUSD insists on keeping resources that the public system relies on, but without being held to the same level of transparency and accountability. LAUSD teachers have good reason to be angry about how the district is treating their students.

The district may have lost millions of dollars because a majority of students did not attend school on the first day or two of the strike (the district’s funding depends on attendance rates). But each day educators are on the picket line, they lose pay. Union members turned down the modest pay raise they were offered, holding out instead for concessions centered on student welfare.

First-grade teacher Louise McConr told Truthdig, “It’s absolutely not about teacher salaries.” She recently moved and now teaches at a school in a middle-class community, a transition that exposed her to just how uneven public-school resources can be. Despite the strike and the vulnerability kids have no reliable place to go during the day. Schools remain open, serving meals to eligible children and offering before- and after-school programs, and relying on volunteers, substitute teachers, and non-school education employees to offer some instruction and extracurricular support to students.

But despite these important goodwill actions, the strike means more stress for hundreds of thousands of low-income families, as they look for child-care options in a sprawling city where traffic congestion is rampant and public transportation can be unreliable. While the district sits on its massive surplus, students are missing out on valuable learning opportunities.

Some teachers told Truthdig that they are striking to set an example for their students, so students can recognize their own agency to change things. Roxana Duhals told Alia Wong that she’s modeling for her students the values that she’d wished she’d learned at school.

“I think even our young people have learned to accept and normalize your condition,” she says. Her mission is to inspire her students to question the status quo, and ask, “Why is this happening? Why should we accept it?”

### Solidarity with Teachers’ strikes in USA

PAME (All Workers Militant Front) of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), has expressed its solidarity to the fight of teachers in the USA.

In a January 17 statement, PAME said, “A strike by teachers in each country is a struggle of the whole working class. This struggle is the best way for youth and the young generation and this lesson is precisely taught by teachers who, in the midst of the principles of solidarity, friendship and struggle for the progress of humanity, against a system that wants the children of the working class uneducated or semi-educated. The most important lesson to the students is given by the teachers who are striking.”

"PAME expresses its solidarity with the Los Angeles Teachers’ Strike and supports their righteous demands."
Mass firings after Bangladesh strikes

Bangladesh factories making clothes and footwear sacked hundreds of workers after more than a week of strikes and protests over the country’s $30-billion clothing industry is the world’s second-largest employer of garments workers at 4,500 factories make garments for global retail giants H&M, Walmart and many others. Protests by thousands of employees over low wages led to the dismissal of about 850 million.

The government had proposed a difficult solution of confrontation with the IMF and has chosen the General Labour Union (UGTT) to mediate. The government has refused to raise the minimum hourly pay set for 2019 by 426-day sit-in, the longest protest staged by a recent wave of protests against the low pay and working conditions.

The labor strife traced back to 2010, when Sami Tahri, deputy secretary-general of the UGTT, said that the government proposed would mean longer shifts and slow returns to work.

Women in Switzerland are 416.469.2446  |  info@cpc-pcc.ca  |  communist-party.ca

Workers at German carmaker Audi’s plant in the Hungarian city of Gyor held a two-hour warning strike on Jan. 15, trying to force the company to narrow the wage gap between its employees and those in Western and eastern regions. Audi, a unit of Volkswagen AG, employs 2,000 workers in the central European country.

Audi said it had received nearly 3,700 letters from workers and their families, who demand a 10% pay hike, asking to address a strategy to improve the financing of the quality postal service. The agreement projects a wage increase of 11.74%, and a marked increase in part-time work over the past 20 years: from 26.3% to 36.9%. This puts Switzerland second in Europe for part-time work, behind the Netherlands, where 50.7% of the population is full-time. Germany (28.2%), France (18.8%) and Italy (18.7%) all have lower levels of part-time work. The trend of losing employment and increasing precarious work continues, according to the latest figures from the Federal Statistical Office.

Since March 2018, trade unions in the Swiss post office (Correos) have held intensive work stoppages, protests, and strikes over the refusal of the Universal Postal Service, and to defend the common interests of all workers. The negotiations peaked last November 30, with a general strike. In mid-December, the trade unions achieved one of the best collective agreements in Correos’ history.

Since 1949. was the start of a struggle that marked a major turning point for the labour movement. JOIN THE FIGHT! BUILD THE STRUGGLE!

Tunisia’s biggest labour union staged a nationwide strike on January 17 to protest against the government’s refusal to raise the salaries of 670,000 public sector workers.

The strikes were called by the General Labour Union (UGTT) to protest the government’s refusal to raise the salaries of 670,000 public sector workers. The UGTT staged a nationwide strike on January 17 to protest against the government’s refusal to raise the salaries of 670,000 public sector workers.

Women in Switzerland are three times more likely to work reduced hours, while taking care of young children being the most frequent reason. But the proportion of males taking on part-time jobs has been increasing quickly.

New Zealand junior doctors walk out

Nearly 80 percent of junior doctors across New Zealand walked off work at public hospitals, after a breakdown in talks with the government over working conditions.

The New Zealand Resident Doctors’ Association (NZRDA) was the start of a four-month strike by asbestos miners in Quebec, a struggle that marked a major turning point for the labour movement.
From India to Los Angeles: workers greet 2019 with wave of demonstrations

We present here highlights of this commentary by Vijay Prashad, director of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research. To access the dossier, interview, and reports referred to in this article, readers can visit www.tricontinental.org.

Over two days—Jan. 8 and 9—more than 160 million workers went on strike in India. This has been the largest general strike in the world. The workers, exhausted by almost three decades of neoliberal policies and by the attack on their rights, came onto the streets to make their case that the powerful workplace democracy, blockades on train tracks and on national highways closed down sections of the country.

In Bengaluru, information technology workers joined the strike. In Harimach Prades workers gathered to demand an end to precarious employment in government service. Workers from a broad range of sectors, from manufacturing to health care, joined the strike. There was also a response from the government.

In Kerala, almost the entire workforce went on strike. This strike day is in line with the powerful Women’s Wall was built across the state on Jan. 1.

Morocco, Sudan, Nicaragua and Los Angeles

This two-day strike comes as workers around the world greeted 2019 under a wave of demonstrations—from the “month of anger” launched in Morocco by trade unions, to the protests in Sudan over rising prices; from the teachers’ strike in Los Angeles, to the potential general strike in Nigeria over wages. An International Trade Union Confederation report from last year showed that more countries are excluding workers from labour protections, and nearly a quarter of complaints are not addressed. In the last count — excluding migrant workers and public sector employees and others from the rights afforded to them. There is also evidence that the attack is becoming more forceful. Women and workplace democracy will continue despite the unrest amongst workers.

India: rising inequality

Brinda Karat, a leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), reflects in our opening report: “In the wake of the record of the current far-right government in India, the BJP; and on the challenges before the left to produce an alternative agenda to put before the people in the April 2019 general election. Karat offers a sharp assessment of the attacks on women and the denigration of the project of women’s emancipation in India:

Over the past several decades, women have gained rights and entered spaces to work and to live. They have established their talents, their skills, their presence in a number of spheres. There has been a backlash against this everywhere. The culture of patriarchy is shaped by extreme misogyny — or a strong feeling in sections of society that women have a specific place and anyone who crosses the boundary is liable to be punished. These cultural walls behind which women and girls are expected to live (with some exceptions) are stronger than the high walls of a prison. When a woman is raped, she is blamed for entering public space, for being a free citizen, for the clothes she wears, for the person she speaks to, for the place and time where she was. It is the woman who is held responsible for the crime. That is the character of the misogyny.”

Karat’s interview goes into the analysis of the 2019 general election under the government of Narendra Modi. For example, she says, “*Because of India’s government policies, agrarian distress and the powerlessness of women farmers committed suicide every year of this government’s rule. Unemployment has also increased. * India stands out for its stance under Modi’s rule. Just 1 percent of the population holds 68 percent of all household wealth, an almost uninterrupted growth over the last five years. On the other hand, according to the government’s socio-economic survey, over 90 percent of India’s people have an income of less than 10,000 rupees, or $143, a year. It is not axiomatic that high inequality and social distress lead to a progressive politics. In such a context, it is as likely that the culture of working-class solidarity will be used to produce social violence, generating the seeds of a counter-drivers and counter-institutions.”

To that end, Karat makes the case that the left in India—also elsewhere—needs to engage with these issues and challenge these cultures.

Cultures promoted by capitalism carry a capitalistic message and promote and glorify individualism and promote individualistic solutions. All these advance the depoliticization of a whole generation of young people. This capitalism is the culture that teaches us how to find the most effective ways of taking our message to the youth. In Brazil, Bolsonaro’s exploitation is intensified through the caste system and vice versa. Brazil struggles fiercely against the caste system and caste oppression and to link such struggles with the fight against capitalism in terms of struggles and goals is also a challenge. Trade unions and other class organizations certainly have to be more assertive and attentive to these aspects.

The left, Karat suggests, needs to enter fully into the struggle to overthrow the culture of a regime. Questions of dignity as well as discrimination are fundamental to the development of a progressive politics. No emancipatory movement can turn its back on any form of social hierarchy. The democratic impulse must work its way into the most rigid of cultural forms.

Karat offers a clear-headed assessment of the challenges for the left in India’s upcoming elections.

Brazil under Bolsonaro

Meanwhile, from Brazil, João Pedro Stedile looks back at the Brazilian election that elected the racist Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency. Stedile’s interview explains the current, ugly context in Brazil. Bolsonaro has rapidly proved correct all the concerns about his politics. Stedile believes that the only antidote to Bolsonaro is a vibrant working-class movement; rooted not only in the countryside but also in the urban periphery.

Meanwhile, our Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research team in São Paulo: André Cardoso, Cristiane Tiemi and Olivia Carlineo—have a full report on the Brazilian economy for 2019. A new law drops the minimum wage while another set of decrees directly attacks Brazil’s indigenous communities. The department in charge of indigenous rights, or FUNAI, will lose its oversight to the ministry of agriculture, which is dominated by agricultural, logging and mining business interests. Bolsonaro’s Minister of Agriculture Teresa Cristina Dias was the leader of the agricultural business lobby in the Congress. Sonia Guajajara, the leader of the National Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, or APIB, said after Bolsonaro’s decisions: “We are the first to be attacked. We have to be the first to react.”

Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, journalist, commentator and Marxist intellectual. He is the Executive Director of Tricontinental Institute for Social Research.

The Kerala Women’s Wall

The south Indian state of Kerala has long been a beacon of progressive politics. For much of the past 60 years (including since 2016), Kerala has led the country in labour rights and welfare, as well as gender equality across gender, caste and class lines. On January 1, five million formed a “human wall” over 620 km across Kerala to uphold gender equality from all walks of life: workers, actors, politicians, government employees, homemakers; young and old — stood shoulder to shoulder for nearly an hour. Thousands of men also stood in solidarity, forming a parallel human wall. This “women’s wall” was part of a much longer fight for women’s equality that found itself in the spotlight after India’s Supreme Court allowed women of all ages to enter Sabarimala temple, overturning a 1973 court judgment which permitted the famous Hindu temple to bar women of menstruating age to enter or pray. Despite being made legal, several women who tried to enter Sabarimala were physically assaulted, threatened and denied entry. After the success of the “wall”, two women were finally able to enter Sabarimala, entering the shrine around 3:30 am and meeting with no protest from other devotees present at the time. The temple, however, held “purification rituals” after they left, before opening the doors to other devotees. Kerala’s progressives consider this a first step towards tackling a centuries-old social system.

“Lima Group” interference in Venezuela

PV Vanguard Bureau

The so-called “Lima Group” of 12 Latin American states and Holland plus Canada has escalated its attempts to intervene in Venezuela’s internal politics, claiming that President Maduro is not the country’s legitimate leader and even announcing new economic sanctions.

Solidarity groups warn that this bloc’s stance reflects the hostility of the extreme right wing forces in Latin America, in which case, the new Bolsonaro administration is now playing a central role in trying to eradicate the region’s progressive politics in the region.

Maduro was re-elected as president in May 2018 with 68 percent of the vote. The Lima Group has demanded that he step down, or rather than begin his second term.

However, Mexico’s new President Andrés Manuel Obrador refused to support the Lima Group statement. Instead, he declared that Latin American and the Caribbean affairs, Maximiliano Reyes, has advanced peaceful dialogue and diplomacy towards Venezuela.

Domínguez said the Lima Group statement was “absolutely in line with the US aim of regime change,” a key objective of US foreign policy towards Bolivia and Venezuelan since 1999 now massively intensified under Donald Trump and ex-USA director, Mike Pompeo, current US State Secretary.”

He described the Lima Group’s stance as “probably one of the most shameful acts of abject servility to Uncle Sam committed by the regional oligarchies.”

In another indication of the intensifying efforts to overthrow the government by any means possible, the Bolivarian Armed Forces of Venezuela has repelled an attempted attack on their facilities in Caracas.

The Ministry of Defense reported that the situation occurred at 2:50 am local time on Jan. 21. “A small group of assailants assigned to the zone comando No. 43 of the Bolivarian National Guard, are betraying their oath of allegiance to the Homeland and its institutions,” said Captain Gerson Soto Martínez, commander of the Macaro police coordination post.

From their post, the assailants “moved on two military vehicles, 30 km away from the Bolívar region,” said the minister of Defense. Meanwhile, from Brazil, João Pedro Stedile looks back at the Brazilian election that elected the racist Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency. Stedile’s interview explains the current, ugly context in Brazil. Bolsonaro has rapidly proved correct all the concerns about his politics. Stedile believes that the only antidote to Bolsonaro is a vibrant working-class movement; rooted not only in the countryside but also in the urban periphery.

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Scene from the Jan. 8-9 general strike across India.
“It’s high time Brecht got read and enjoyed as he deserves.”

Playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) is one of the most significant Marxist literary figures of the last century, and it appears appropriate that a new edition of his collected poems has just been published at a time when the centenary of the historical assassination of Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht is being marked. The project, joint undertaking by David Constantine and Tom Kuhn is a highly welcome contribution to the Brecht’s study and enjoyment in English. Salford-born Constantine, a highly regarded poet in his own right, is an award-winning translator and short-story writer. In this interview with the Morning Star, the world’s only English-language socialist daily newspaper, he answers questions about this major project and the pleasures and pains of translating poetry.

How would you describe the process of translating poetry and what are its frustrations and joys?

It’s the attempt — doomed to failure — to get across exactly what the foreign poem says, in a form of your own. It’s doomed to failure because translation is an act of service — you serve the foreign text — and to write a poem you need full autonomy.

Still, it is well worth trying. You always fall short. But the joy of it is colossal — translation is the closest form of close reading. You get to love the foreign poet better, more exactly, when you translate.

Would you describe Brecht as “obscurant”?

I wouldn’t say so. He is difficult sometimes, when the subject demands it. And he writes very testingly — he wants to alert the reader to something important, make him or her think and feel more deeply and more exactly. Has he influenced you as a poet? Yes, as has Holderlin. Both wanted, in Brecht’s phrase, “circumstances to surprise themselves.” Both were greatly disappointed. So I. M. And in the actual making of things, I’ve learned a great deal from both.

What areas of his work are particularly appealing?

He is immensely various. That is the appeal. There are poems in all his modes and voices I shouldn’t be without.

We live in troubled times. Does Brecht offer messages for us?

Very much so. There has always been a vast, significant war everywhere somewhere on Earth since 1914 and a massive and systematic injustice, a good deal of it in our own land of Hope and Glory.

The markets work as they always have — for many — as they seem to many — as they did to Brecht — quite And a very poor and the rich get richer.

Brecht and his family became Communists as a result of his political awareness. They came home to a rubbed city. More or less closely we know about things like that. He’s a poet — not the only one — we can read with our atrocious times in mind.

Eпитaph 1919

So now Red Rosa has also passed away.

Where she lies none can say.

She told the truth to the poor,

that’s why

The rich decided she had to die.

— Bertolt Brecht

The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht is published by WW Norton and Company.

New issue of The Spark! now available

Issue 629 of The Spark!, the theoretical and discussion bulletin of the Communist Party of Canada, is now in print. This issue contains a broad range of articles, from topics like “free trade” to Stephen Hawking to oppression of women and racialized peoples. Featured on the cover is “NAFTA to USMCA: Darla Vader to Vol’demort”, an insightful analysis of the trade deals. Author Fred Jones looks at changing negotiated last year, comments on the original author and the new deal are worse than outright rejection.

Without a revolutionary theory there cannot be a revolutionary movement.

Vladimir Lenin

“Surviving R. Kelly”

“Surviving R. Kelly”, a new documentary by filmmaker and hip-hop writer, dream hampton, looks at the career of best-selling R&B crooner R. Kelly, who has been the subject of allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct since the mid-90s. This 5-part series aired on Lifetime Television in early January, garnered record viewing numbers for the network and has reignited calls for streaming services, radio stations and the company itself to disassociate themselves from the singer. The film’s chronological narrative of Kelly’s life is accompanied by interviews with survivors, including backup dancers and singers who have accused Kelly of physical and emotional abuse. Andrea Kelly, his wife of 13 years and mother of his three children. Testimonies range from psychological abuse and physical assault to the rape of underage girls. Activists with #MuteRKelly, #MeToo, and Time’s Up renewed calls for pop superstar Lady Gaga to apologize for a 2013 collaboration with the singer. “Do What U Want (With My Body)” appeared on her chart-topping album “ArtRop”. Gaga’s January 10th Twitter apology followed the airing of the film. She stated: “I stood by these women 100%’s, believe them, know they’re suffering and in pain, and feel strongly that their voices should be heard and taken seriously. I’m sorry, both for my poor judgement when I was young, and for not speaking out sooner.” Journalist Michelle Zarecziai, a staff writer with People’s World, observes in a January 8th article that the fact that the majority of Kelly’s victims are young Black women “dramatically changes the scope of the conversation”. Zarecziai notes that, while Black women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence, rape, and homicide, they’re being left behind “at a critical point in the conversation revolving around silence and sexuality”.

In his interview with dream hampton, a Black feminist intellectual whose writings and films explore contemporary culture in the USA. For more info:

www.dreamhampton.com

Spotify favours A-list pop stars

Since it was launched in 2008, the Swedish music streaming platform, Spotify, has become the largest platform for the consumption of music bymillions of listeners. With the global streaming market now worth $15 billion, the company is the biggest company in the world, and has successfully challenged digital download platforms. While music streaming companies have been attacked by some parties for the revenue generated by streaming, others argue that the streaming industry is an important avenue for new artists and independent music. Spotify has faced criticism for its treatment of artists, with many musicians and fans calling for fairer pay for artists. In 2014, the streaming platform was criticized for giving too much money to popular artists, while ignoring lesser-known artists. In 2015, the streaming service was accused of underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2016, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2017, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2018, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2019, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2020, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2021, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2022, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2023, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2024, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2025, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2026, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2027, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2028, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2029, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream. In 2030, the streaming service was criticized for underpaying artists, with some earning less than $100 per stream.

Top Topic Celebrates 80 years

British folk music label Topic Records is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. The label, which grew out of the Communist Party-affiliated Workers’ Music Association, is the world’s oldest independent record label. Topic began as a mail-order operation that offered left-wing political music and recordings from the USA. It expanded after World War II, when two key figures – singers Ewan MacColl and A.L. Lloyd (both communists) – became heavily involved. The label’s name, MacColl and Lloyd, was picked by two people who did much to prepare the way for the folk music revival of the sixties. That urge was manifested in dozens of Topic releases by two of the most influential artists in the folk revival, Pete Seeger and Eliza Carthy, who are all on the line-up for the label’s 80th anniversary concert. Pentangle, June Tabor, Dick Gaughan, Anne Briggs, Martin Carthy, and the Watersons. Topic Records continues to flourish. During this anniversary year, in addition to the new release dedicated to its 80th anniversary, Topic Records will release a series of expanded, deluxe reissues of landmark albums. In late May Topic will release “Vision and Revison: The First 80 Years of Topic Records” – a double CD featuring prominent contemporary British folk artists, each performing a song chosen from the label’s back catalogue. For more info: www.topicrecords.co.uk.
Ford “putting students first” … to the chopping block

By Sean Burton

In memory of Chris Youé 1948-2018

It was with deep sadness that we in the Sally and Chuck Davis Club of the University of Canada learned of the death of our long time friend and comrade, Dr. Chris Youé, on Nov. 27 at his daughter’s home in Amherst, Nova Scotia.

Born in the UK in 1948, Chris pursued an academic career in Atlantic Canada, specializing in African history. Chris was for many years an important member of the Canadian Association for African Studies and deeply involved in its publication, the Canadian Journal of African Studies. Chris was a Professor of History at Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John’s for over thirty years, and is remembered by students and colleagues for his dedication and compassionate support going beyond academics. He served on the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association (MUNFA) executive and was a member of their negotiating team during the strike in 2000. He was also a charismatic speaker, able to hold an audience’s attention and deliver his message eloquently.

Chris was passionate about social justice, and as a member of the Communist League of Newfoundland and Labrador parties participated in various campaigns and demonstrations over the years, and served as the public face of the CPC. In the difficult days of the 1990s, when the Party struggled against legalization and legal challenges, Chris remained a committed communist. Even when comrades Sally and Chuck Davis passed away, Chris was among those who kept a communist presence in Newfoundland and Labrador going, however small.

Comrade Chris was my first real contact with the party when I joined in high school. It was just a few emails back and forth, but we did meet in person a couple of times; once when he delivered a history lecture at Grenfell College in Corner Brook, and another when we got together at his home in St. John’s for a few beers and lively political discussion. We certainly saw each other much more when we finally managed to set up a new club in St. John’s in 2015. When I think back, I remember mainly Chris’ love of soccer and of music. It is a great regret that I was never able to see him perform live, when he was a generous host, and meetings and general gatherings at his home will be deeply missed.

Though his illness progressed over the year, it was difficult to imagine him not being successful, because there was such hope for a medical procedure that would significantly prolong his life. My last meeting with Chris was at a hospital in St. John’s in late December. He was a fighter, and despite it all, he remained outwardly his positive, upbeat self. His greatest wish was to at least see his daughter’s home in Amherst, Nova Scotia.

Peter Miller, a student activist at University of Windsor, points to the need for a militant, mass resistance against the Ford government. He also doubt that Ford’s government will not respond to reason, nor to simple debates at Queen’s Park. Only a broad united fightback from students and labour allies. Students also organized rallies against this funding levels. The province as well including in London, Windsor and Toronto.

Peter McKeen, Ontario Communist leader Dave McKeen told People’s Voice, “This announcement is an attack in its own right, but it’s also a trial balloon to see how far this government can go in terms of privatization, attacking democratic right, and undermining universality. It doesn’t take much to see how making student fees and various kinds of on-campus groups to oppose the cuts and promote progressive PSE reforms.

One big question, though, is how much support this resistance will get from labour leadership. Ontario Communist leader Dave McKeen told People’s Voice, “This announcement is an attack in its own right, but it’s also a trial balloon to see how far this government can go in terms of privatization, attacking democratic right, and undermining universality. It doesn’t take much to see how making student fees and various kinds of on-campus groups to oppose the cuts and promote progressive PSE reforms.

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Tech and game workers are organising

By Nicola Lawlor, Irish Socialist Voice, 12 March 2019

The past year or two have seen a number of big developments in the tech and game industry for the workers in those industries. We see the growing numbers of tech and game workers who are organised collectively and to have their voice heard on such things as contract insecurity, sexual harassment, and the ethics of the industry they work in.

Previously within Marxian circles there was some debate about whether or not these types of workers should be considered workers at all. The debate revolved around the difference between physical and mental labour, and what is classified as productive or non-productive labour. The debate has somewhat settled down to a consensus that jobs that are a combination of physical and mental labour, and also that capitalist accumulation regime has changed so significantly that what has been considered unproductive capital is now a core part of profit-creation, and therefore those creating that unproductive capital is now a class-consciousness are no longer the preserve of white-collar workers. While class-consciousness and collective thinking about technology in various national contexts are no longer the preserve of white-collar workers. Class-consciousness is embedded in particular social relationships and institutions. An important consideration that underlies the debate about new technology at work is that decisions that influence the implementation of new technology in various national settings are part of a continuing process of change which will be very likely to constrain future choices and to set a trajectory for the work-place of the future.

A number of shocking incidents this year capture this issue of human control, purpose and influence over technology. In March 2018 the first pedestrian was killed by a driverless Uber car. This technology is being trialled in the typical Silicon Valley mentality of the “move fast and break things” culture of capitalist innovation. In this example, however, the tragic question is a number of examples of how humans and political-economic-military power are used to shape and determine technology, and a far more complex way than simply saying “in technology” to the damage of our jobs. This is also the context in which tech and game workers are organise globally into unions and other movements. The Google example is a good place to begin. When it became known to Google employees that the company was profiting from building technology that would help the US military to kill people, many Google employees began rallying against it. Chat groups were set up, petitions were signed and many senior employees resigned. This collectively organised pressure forced Google to cut support for projects aimed at tackling harassment and discrimination, including the right representation in meetings. The Google walkout burst a bubble that the company had carefully tried to preserve. It project itself as a great place to work, with employees so happy that you can tell a fair number of a trade union is more a collective of Google employees. However, following the walkout there was a significant shift in the language used on social media towards more use of “employers” over “Google” and also increasingly union-like language, such as “collective” to technology and “support work,” which are more like traditional trade union rallying cries. Since then there has been the emergence of the tech and game workers’ Coalition, which has been formed of concerned about conditions of employment and also the ethics of the work in. While not a union, it did bravely support trade unions on number of large campaigns. A number of firms in Silicon Valley and so have certainly nailed their colours to the mast, in the eyes of their employers at least.

Globally, game workers are also becoming active and are more explicitly organising in trade unions, though not always conventionally. The international movement Game Workers Unite (www.gameworkersunite.org) encourages prospective workers to establish branches and engage in local activity, with a significant amount of autonomy to link with other unions locally, or to register as a trade union in accordance with local laws. The Independent Union of Great Britain and is actively campaigning and organising workers globally.

The Office Block, a podcast by the Financial Services Union in Ireland, recently interviewed game workers on their efforts; it’s worth listening to. (https://www.episode3-can-tech-workers-unite-we-go-deep-into-the-downstairs.html)

Workers’ struggle can take many forms, and always a combination of the deliberate and the accidental. And the best of these struggles evolve and expand over time. The tech and game industry, though often seen as being immune to collective organisation, can do so too. The organisational forms that struggle, both inside and outside workplaces, can do so too. Many of our existing union structures were shaped by the industrial class struggles of the early twentieth century. For unions to retain their power in the 21st Century, the majority of working-class mobilisation they must evolve, shape and be shaped by the struggle of workers today and its present-day forms.

800 million could lose jobs to automation

Up to 800 million global workers will lose their jobs by 2030 and be replaced by robotic automation, a report from a British consultancy firm has found. The study of 46 countries and 800 occupations by the McKinsey Global Institute found that up to one in three of the global workforce will be affected. One-third of the workforce in richer nations like Germany and the US may need to retrain for other jobs, with machine operators and food workers hit hardest.

Poorer countries with less money to invest in automation will not be affected as much, according to McKinsey. India will only have about 4% of jobs replaced by emerging automation.

Jobs requiring human interaction such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and bartenders are seen as less prone to automation. Specialised lower-skilled jobs, such as gardening and care work, will also be less affected by automation, the study predicts.

In the US alone, 39 to 73 million jobs may be eliminated by 2030, based on projections of those displaced workers may be able to easily transfer to other industries. In the UK, 20% of current jobs will be automated over the same period, the authors forecast. Jobs carried out in logistics, brokerage, paralegal and accounting, and some back-office staff are especially vulnerable to automation.

The authors foresee a transition on the scale of the early 1900s when millions of global industrial workers were replaced by machines, but they caution that new technology will yield new types of jobs, similar to the introduction of the personal computer in the 1980s which led to new forms of work. The support urges governments to enact major retraining plans.

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