

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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**ISA**   
International Socialist Alternative

# WORKERS RISING



## In this issue:

Housing Emergency | Youth for Socialism | BC Solidarity, 1983 | Chile Revolution & Coup, 1973



# ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

## What We Stand For

### The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and the environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Defend wages:** unions should demand Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** for a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **For fighting, democratic unions** run by and for the members to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **Take into public ownership key sectors of the economy** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

**Join Socialist Alternative** to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



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an organization with members active on six continents.  
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## International School for Revolutionary Socialism

*Josh Wigmore*

For one week in July, delegates from Socialist Alternative Canada joined over two hundred International Socialist Alternative (ISA) members in Belgium for the ISA World School. There were socialists from 23 countries and six continents in attendance. The school featured a comprehensive program of plenary meetings and smaller discussions, not to mention the hugely valuable informal face-to-face discussions that it is possible to have with comrades from every corner of the globe.

Delegates discussed the multiple overlapping crises facing the world today in the age of disorder. Commissions discussed how we intervene and develop our program for climate change, women's rights, LGBTQ+, including transgender rights. Other commissions dealt with the situation in different regions of the world — Africa, China, US, and Eastern Europe.

This school was organized to mark 100 years since the founding of the Left Opposition and Trotskyism. Delegates discussed this history and the continued relevance of these methods today, including the theory of permanent revolution, the transitional program, the rise of Stalinism and how to fight it.

The ISA believes in the need for a strong politically organized and international working-class movement to overthrow capitalism. Delegates discussed how to build the ISA as a force for strengthening the movements of the working class, and how we have grown in the past year, through the formation of sections in new countries and by the huge qualitative and quantitative growth we've seen in existing sections.

Members of Socialist Alternative Canada are proud to be part of the ISA and help build a real World Party of revolutionary socialism. Join us! ★



*Over 200 ISA members gather in Belgium for the World School*

# We Demand a Socialist Alternative

Aden Andreassen and Grace Bodie

Young people today experience extreme housing insecurity, rising food prices and tuition, and the threat of unemployment or gig jobs. According to Statistics Canada, over 55 percent of Canadians aged 15-34 are uncertain about being able to afford rent or housing. More students are graduating with debt and are faced with poor and precarious job prospects.

Increasingly, students are forced to juggle two part-time jobs and a full course load while still barely making ends meet. Yet big corporations, such as large grocery chains and oil and gas companies, are raking in record-breaking profits. After another summer of “record-breaking heat,” youth are told to keep supporting the political parties who say they are acting on climate change, yet everything is getting worse.

It’s clear to most young people that the world is falling apart and that the prospects for their future are bleak. But none of the established political parties are calling for the radical break from the status quo that is needed. Young people feel alienated from electoral politics because there is no official way for their voice to be heard.

Influential figures like Jordan Peterson and Andrew Tate resonate with a minority, especially young men, who are told that their problems are personal, and that they can reclaim their status supposedly “lost” to women, racialized and LGBTQI+ people. These people are loud, they pose a real danger, but they are a minority. Most young people are learning that the crises they face are rooted in economic inequality and the domination of society by billionaires and corporations, and they understand the need to support oppressed people fighting for their rights and their lives.

Traditional left-wing organizations, like the NDP, are not providing a clear political alternative to mobilize young people in collective action against the billionaires and their failing system. This leaves many young people feeling isolated and demoralized and makes them open to the ideas of the “anti-woke” right.

Young people are searching for other ways to fight back and to change the world. Climate strikes, solidarity rallies with BLM and Iran’s Women, Life, Freedom protests, and pipeline and old-growth logging protests in Canada all demonstrate this. Polls show that more young people support “socialism” over “capitalism.”

Young workers are forming new unions at Starbucks and Amazon, and are increasingly rejecting bad tentative



SAY members walked the picket line with longshore workers

agreements, showing their willingness to fight. Grad students and teaching assistants are joining unions (including TSSU at Simon Fraser University), and striking on campuses across the country to win recognition and compensation for the incredibly important but under-valued work that they do.

Members of Socialist Alternative Youth (SAY) understand that these problems of exploitation and oppression are connected. Rising rents, prices, unemployment, and the oppression of women and LGBTQI+ people, racism and colonial violence, all stem from capitalism: a system where the productive powers of society are appropriated by a minority — the bosses and the owners — to produce profits for themselves, rather than to serve the collective needs of the majority of society. Capitalism is not the natural state of human society: it hasn’t always existed, and it won’t continue to exist forever.

The working class is the source of all profits in society, and by using our power, a multi-racial, multi-gender, united working-class movement can fight back against all forms of exploitation and oppression. Together we can organize a socialist system where human needs are put before profit. Socialist Alternative Youth shows up for climate strikes and workers’ picket lines. We stand with queer youth at Pride, with Indigenous people defending their territories, and with movements against sexual violence, racism, and caste oppression. We seek to link these struggles together with the workers’ movement and argue for the program that is needed to win a socialist future.

It’s overwhelming to take on the world as individuals, but we are stronger together. We invite you to join the fight for our future: join Socialist Alternative Youth! ★

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# Alberta's Smith Tilts at Windmills

Davis Hay

It has been a long summer of massive fires and dangerous blankets of smoke across the country, all driven by climate change. Fires in Alberta started in May. Yet Danielle Smith's UCP government has imposed a seven-month moratorium on all renewable energy development in Alberta. The decision halts the renewables boom and affects \$33 billion in investment and up to 24,000 future jobs, according to the Pembina Institute. The excuse is to avoid "end of life" problems with renewables.

Nothing about the "end of life" problems of fossil fuels — the huge poisonous tailing ponds around Fort McMurray, the at least 10,000 (and rising) abandoned and orphaned oil wells, or the \$268 million that oil and gas companies owe municipal governments in unpaid taxes.

Smith's move should surprise no one as she was a registered oil and gas lobbyist until 10 months before becoming premier. She has an ideological opposition to renewable energy, saying, "We don't need a just transition in Alberta because we don't intend to transition away from oil and gas." Yet a switch to renewables becomes ever more urgent with the daily impacts of climate change and dread of what the future holds. Renewables also provide more jobs with less pollution than fossil fuels.

She wasn't just an oil lobbyist, but also president of the Alberta Enterprise Group, representing 100 companies including oilsands and private health companies. Now their former president is our premier — so whose interests is she going to look out for? Not the working class. She is not interested in climate, environment, and new jobs.



Alberta Health workers continue to face understaffing and overwork



## Federal Liberals Also Failing

Trudeau and the Liberals brought in a second carbon tax on July 1, which the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) said will cost the average household in Alberta \$1,157 by 2030. The original carbon tax is also increasing yearly until 2030. The Liberals claim that most households will receive more in rebates than they pay in taxes, yet the PBO found that most households in Alberta and other provinces will see a net loss. More crucially, carbon taxes are an ineffective response to climate change and are just part of the Liberals' greenwashing. These taxes have made life more expensive for the working class while the Liberals continue to expand fossil-fuel production. For all the apparent bickering that goes on between the provincial and federal governments around renewable energy and the climate, they are on the same page about expanding fossil fuels. The Liberals approved the Bay Du Nord project (temporarily paused by the company), which will drill 200,000 barrels a day off Newfoundland's coast. They're spending over \$30 billion to build the Trans Mountain pipeline. If the Liberals were serious about the climate, these projects would have been off the table and the \$30 billion would be invested in renewable energy.

## Health Care

In a sudden turn, the Alberta government has decided to reacquire all medical lab services from DynaLIFE after the failed privatization plan led to long wait times for routine tests. This demonstrates the failings of private health care. No doubt, instead of expropriating the privatized assets, given DynaLIFE's failures, Albertans will pay a hefty cost to get back what was theirs. In spite of this debacle, Smith will continue to look for ways to privatize health care, such as allowing private clinics to charge for services. Meanwhile, hospitals throughout Alberta continue to experience gaps in emergency services due to a lack of nurses and physicians. Smith promised to fix the health care system within 90 days but has done nothing — things are getting worse.

During the election, Smith promised much but has so far done little and delivered nothing. Smith and the UCP will continue to posture against the federal government, to make it look like they're "fighting for Alberta," but won't actually do anything useful. The NDP failed to beat the UCP because it appeared moderate instead of fighting for real social gains, a climate program and jobs. Workers need a fighting party. ★



# Toronto Rent Strikes

Andrew Johnson

The rent is too damn high, and tenant resistance has risen with it. Facing unaffordable rent hikes, some are using what little leverage they have over landlords: refusing to pay rent until their demands are met.

On June 1, around two hundred residents of the building at 22 King Street in York South-Weston in northwest Toronto went on a rent strike. Now in its fourth month, their coordinated action is a response to successive Above Guideline Increases (AGIs) by the landlord, Dream Unlimited Inc.

In Ontario, the guideline is set at 2.5 percent increase for 2023, but landlords can apply for further rent increases for renovations or retrofitting. Landlords use this loophole to jack up prices and squeeze even more out of tenants.

Dream holds over 26,000 rental units across Canada and the US. They increased their revenue by 36 percent in 2022. The building at 22 King has seen six AGIs in the past decade, more than any other in the city.

Theresa Henry, a retired grandmother who lives on a fixed income, has been a resident since 2019. “I have to choose between getting something for my grandkids and having food,” she said. Henry regularly visits a nearby food bank, in a province that has seen a sharp increase in their use since the pandemic. She says she often sees other tenants there.

Living in this working-class building in a working-class neighbourhood, many residents work night shifts. At a recent strike meeting, a tenant complained he was unable to rest during the day due to the noise of renovations. When he phoned the landlord to complain, the company told him to get a hotel. When he asked if the company would pay for it, they refused.

In July, a neighbouring building joined the rent strike with around fifty tenants participating. Anthony, a resident there since 2021, said he decided to take a stand after seeing pregnant mothers forced to climb stairs to their apartments while the elevators were out of order for months.



Toronto tenants organize a rent strike

The building was built in 2018, the same year premier Doug Ford’s conservative government repealed rent control. There is currently no limit to yearly rent increases for any rental unit completed after November 2018. Tenants reported receiving notices for rent increases of up to eighteen percent.

Residents who can’t afford the increases are forced to move or endure a lengthy litigation process through the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), which regularly sides with property owners. Faced with a drawn-out legal battle, potential damage to their credit score and eviction, most either move or simply pay the higher rent, sacrificing other needs.

In a neighborhood with a high proportion of recent immigrants, many tenants are foreign students or workers hoping for permanent residency, unsure of their rights as tenants and afraid to rock the boat. Some, especially older residents, support the strike morally but are too proud to stop paying rent.

As well as participating in periodic rallies and community events like barbecues and movie nights to raise awareness and support, the rent strikers hold weekly lobby meetings and canvass their buildings regularly. Volunteers keep a detailed record of interactions with other tenants, including a number system to gauge support levels from week to week.

While canvassers hand out flyers with strike updates and information, the building’s private security has followed and harassed them, as well as removing flyers and solidarity posters from tenants’ front doors. The company sent letters to striking tenants threatening legal action and eviction, which they promptly returned in person to the company’s office.

Landlords care about one thing: making money. The profit motive must be removed from the rental market. This requires action to protect current renters, with strong rent control that stops landlords from jacking up rents on existing tenants or between tenancies, often due to eviction of tenants on spurious grounds.

Municipal socialism begins with democratic control and ownership of affordable housing. ★



Images: Andrew Johnson

# Defeating Caste Oppression

Chris Fofonoff

The monstrous oppression of caste has inflicted squalour, humiliation, and early death upon billions of South Asians for over 2,000 years. But fighters have always risen up, from the radical egalitarian Veerashaiva anti-establishment movement to today's followers of B. R. Ambedkar, chief drafter of India's 1947 constitution. That document, though severely limited by its capitalist constraints, does explicitly ban caste discrimination — a significant victory for Ambedkar in his struggle against the pro-caste Mahatma Gandhi.

It's with those modern-day fighters against oppression that Socialist Alternative has been proud to work since earlier this year, in an effort to force BC's provincial government to ensure that employers and institutions cannot directly discriminate against oppressed-caste people such as Dalits or Mazhabis, but also are liable if they neglect to stop such oppression — from slurs to withheld raises to assaults — when it takes place under their purview.

To that end, Socialist Alternative, the Ambedkar International Social Reform Organization, the Poetic Justice Foundation, and others have gained several thousand petition signatures, promoted our campaign at street festivals, gurdwaras, protests, and a June rally in Surrey. We've won the support of the teachers' unions of Surrey and New



Rally to ban caste discrimination in Surrey, BC

Westminster as well as the New Westminster & District Labour Council and are urgently seeking the endorsement of other unions as well. It's imperative that unions help to lead on issues of oppression, and this is a perfect opportunity.

Though our campaign was interrupted by the urgent need for solidarity with BC longshore workers, conversations on the picket line about caste oppression with strikers, of both South Asian and other backgrounds, showed their eagerness to fight against this scourge both at and outside their workplace.

An oppressive system of over two millennia's length won't be defeated in a day. But Socialist Alternative and our allies will keep up this fight against discrimination until it's won, and casteism and all other oppressions are finally defeated. ★

## Can the NDP Win in Manitoba?

Manitoba goes to the polls in early October, with the opportunity to kick out the failing Conservative government after seven years in office. The Tory leader, Heather Stefanson, is the least popular provincial leader, in large part due to the crisis of the health care system made worse by the government holding down wages. The Conservatives' 2023 budget cut taxes, which mainly benefited the wealthy. Public services, including road maintenance and health, have faced increased privatization. The government has increased so-called public-private partnerships, even though two-thirds of the province opposes them. These are basically public subsidies to private corporations to provide poorer quality construction and services.

For over two years, the NDP held a comfortable lead in the opinion polls but, as the election nears, the gap is narrowing. There is a real concern that the NDP will repeat the mistakes it made in Alberta that allowed the conservatives to get re-elected. In that election, the NDP tried to attract former

conservative voters and further moderated their platform in a failed attempt to do so.

Manitoba's NDP, led by Wab Kinew, seems to have similarly modest aims. It has said it will cut some taxes and not increase any — not even on big business or the rich. Its big headline promise is to hire more doctors and nurses — a much needed lifeline to the struggling health system.

People in Manitoba, as elsewhere, are fed up and angry with the world today — they want change. The NDP should tap into the mood, which is especially powerful among young people, and campaign on bold policies that will bring fundamental change and improvements. Otherwise, there is a real risk of the NDP allowing the conservatives to win again.

The NDP's road to victory platform could include:

- A plan to end child poverty, the worst in any Canadian province for many years.
- Reversing the unpopular privatizations of the past several years.
- Providing good public services, especially in under-served rural and northern Manitoba.
- Reverse the tax cuts for the rich. Increase the taxes on the rich and big corporations. ★



## What Makes Me Angry: Who's Next on the Burn Pile?

Larry Hyink

Thanks to global warming, the summer of 2023 has treated the world to the spectacle of a glorious future that lies in store for us. Fires in Europe, in Africa, a heatwave in the Andes ... during a South American winter, and of course the incineration of Lahaina on Maui and Enterprise, NWT, and the forced evacuation of 70 percent of NWT's population.

Stay tuned, 'cause summer's not over.

Really lucky places like Hay River, NWT and parts of Nova Scotia get to experience massive floods and massive fires, all in the same year!

Meanwhile, oil behemoths post record profits, the oil industry lobbyist installed as premier of Alberta bans the expansion of renewable energy projects, and the next global climate summit will be chaired by the head of the United Arab Emirates' national oil company, all while global emissions continue to rise and more and more of our planet is tossed onto the burn pile in the interest of corporate profits.

Of course, this is explained by pro-capitalist pundits as necessary. After all we'll still need oil during the "transition," or "we" just can't give up our cars, or what will happen to "jobs" if we move too quickly.

The fountain of soothing BS is unending, trying to mask the fact that there is no real plan for a "transition" and "we" can't give up our cars without some other form of reliable transportation and the "jobs" only matter if they make profits for the one percent.

The fact is, relying on a system based on allowing the greediest to make decisions from air-conditioned boardrooms is screwing over everyone and everything else on the planet. Nothing will get done to stop the climate catastrophe without dumping a system that has a "duty" to "shareholders" to maximize profit. It's a system where even so-called Green Parties end up supporting crap like expanding coal mining.

The only real solution is Socialism, which places the welfare of humanity and the ecosystems that support humanity above the greed of a privileged handful of pampered clowns moving from air-conditioned limo to air-conditioned boardroom without having to experience the reality of the world they've created.

Our choices are stark. Either a Socialist Alternative or wait our turn to be tossed on the burn pile. ★

## The Life of a... Working Student

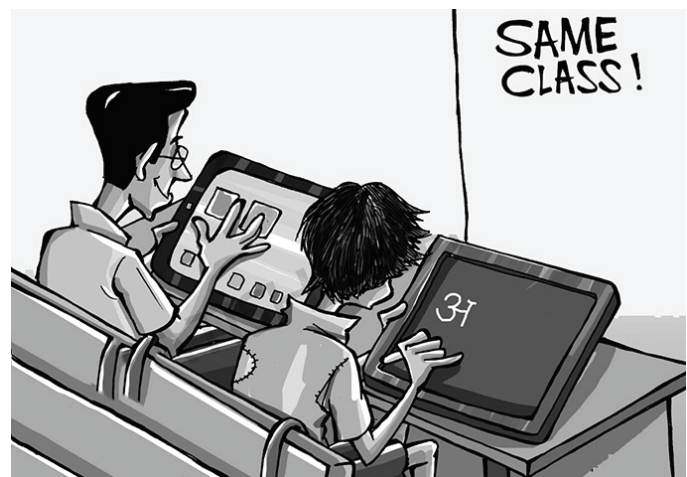
Anonymous

As summer ends, I'm stressing over finding affordable housing near my university. This only slightly dampens my excitement about the new semester as I truly love the field I'm studying.

Still, financial struggles always hang over me and hamper my education. Seeing the student loan drop into my bank account feels liberating, but sadly it's not enough to cover rent. I'm working part-time at a café to make up the difference, which accounts for most of my time outside class. Going from an early shift to class, I often try to find a seat where the professor won't notice if I fall asleep during the lecture. Other days, going from an early class to a full day shift, I'm starving and exhausted after work with only a few hours to complete assignments by midnight.

I'm sitting on the bus on my way home, feeling frustrated at the underfunded suburban transit system. I have to schedule an hour for this commute, that's just a 5-minute drive if I could afford a car. Texting my friend from class, he's already finished the reading and tonight's assignment, and is now inviting me out for a drink. Back when we first met, he offered me a ride home, explaining his parents didn't *buy* him this car, he's not *that* rich, it was only a hand-me-down after his dad bought a new Tesla.

We became close friends, and I enjoy visiting his nice new apartment (paid for by his parents). I'm not jealous about the situation; I know he got lucky in the lottery of birth. Sometimes I wonder how life would be if I was in his family... but then feel guilty knowing how hard my parents worked to make ends meet. It's a relief to escape my tight schedule for a drink sometimes and hear about all the sports and parties I'm missing out on. At least I can live vicariously through my rich friend, who can afford to reap all the benefits of the university experience. ★



# Workers Rising

*Tim Heffernan and Bill Hopwood*

The rising cost of living, boosted by high interest rates, continues to hit workers hard. In Canada and around the world there has been an upturn in strikes. As Mick Lynch, a British union leader, stated, “The working class is back, and we refuse to be poor anymore.”

In Canada over two million working days were lost in strikes in 2022, the most since 2009. So far, 2023 is set to beat this. This upturn in action is partly driven by the soaring cost of living, as well as by a general feeling of being undervalued by the bosses, especially after the experiences of working during COVID.

Strike ballots regularly win majorities of over 90 percent as workers demand better pay and conditions, and they expect their union’s leadership to fight for that. In several notable cases, tentative agreements (TA) recommended by union leaders have been rejected by the membership as they tell their officials to go back to the bargaining table and do better.

Toronto’s 3,700 Metro grocery workers, organized by Unifor, voted 100 percent for strike action! This followed the bargaining committee unanimously recommending a four-year deal, with an endorsement from Unifor’s president Lana Payne: “This is a milestone agreement that underscores Unifor’s deep commitment to grocery workers in the retail sector and our important work to advance their workplace rights.” The membership didn’t agree, they rejected the TA and went on strike, with widespread public support. They saw record profits, up 26 percent from a year ago. The courts stopped them from picketing the warehouses. As we go to print, they are voting on a new agreement.

## Longshore in BC Resist Attacks

The 7,400 longshore workers in BC in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) successfully resisted an attempt by the employers, aided by the federal government, to restrict the right to strike and weaken the union. The membership voted 99.24 percent for strike action that started on July 1. As well as pay, key concerns were the employers’ attack on jobs through automation and the contracting out of maintenance work that had been done by ILWU members.

The employers never took negotiations seriously, walking away multiple times. They, both the shipping lines and the port operators, made record profits during COVID, but still wanted to weaken the union through contracting out. They, supported by big business across Canada, demanded that the federal Liberals intervene. The government did intervene. Although it did not invoke back-to-work legislation, the threat hung in the air.

On July 12, the federal Liberal labour Minister gave ILWU and the employers 24 hours to accept or reject his proposals, which leaned to supporting the employer on three out of four points. The ILWU’s bargaining committee suspended pickets while it democratically decided on the proposal. The larger and more representative delegates’ caucus rejected the proposal as it did not address job security. ILWU re-started the pickets, only for the government to declare them “illegal,” although the strike had not been ended.

Again, the pickets were suspended, and more negotiations followed, resulting in a second proposal that was rejected in a vote of the membership. Finally, the employer got the message and added language to protect jobs. While this was being voted on, the government again interfered, issuing a warning to the union’s leadership.

The employers and the government do not like union democracy. They are unhappy that union members have a say in their own contracts, which reflects their class outlook and how they believe society should be run.

The union membership stood solid in face of all the threats and eventually won a better contract.

## Strikes Across Canada

Strikes aren’t confined to the major urban areas. In Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, a 130-day strike of 13 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada working at the Iqaluit Housing Authority (IHA) ended with a significant improvement in pay. The IHA used scabs, but this failed to defeat the workers.

In Manitoba, 1,400 workers at the publicly-owned Liquor Mart started a strike on July 19 after being without a contract for over a year. The employers offered a two percent wage increase each year, with a signing bonus for some workers. A new tentative agreement was accepted at the end of August.

A common thread in many strikes is that workers demand respect, after being described as “essential workers” when they worked throughout COVID. While the corporations, such as shipping and grocery stores, made record profits, the workers risked their lives and health to keep society going. While grocery companies introduced “hero pay” of a \$2-an-hour increase, it was rapidly cancelled as soon as the first wave subsided. As many workers said, they went from “heroes” to “zeroes.” In Manitoba, the union president stated that workers deserve fair wages “after working through the pandemic and a slew of violent thefts.”

Windsor Salt workers, 250 members of Unifor, rejected a first tentative agreement and, after being on strike since February, accepted a much improved second offer.





*Windsor Salt workers on strike*

Another significant Ontario strike, recently concluded after 41 days, was at Hamilton's National Steel Car, involving 1,400 workers at a rail manufacturing plant. They were fighting for wage increases as well as improvements to the terrible safety conditions at the plant. Three workers have died on the job in recent years and in July National Steel Car was fined \$140,000 for failing to maintain safe working conditions. Although there was a low strike vote the workers stood solid. "We went out with only a 52 percent majority ... but our presence on the picket line was 100 percent," said the union local's president. The new contract has a 13 percent wage increase over three years, with six percent in the first year, a \$1,000 signing bonus, and improved health and safety benefits.

### Cost of Living Hurts

Canada's overall inflation in 2022 was 6.8 percent, with food and housing costs rising more. Rents are up 21 percent in the last two years, and mortgages are soaring due to the huge increase in interest rates by the Bank of Canada from 0.25 percent in 2022 to 5 percent now. Some headline pay increases may look impressive but as inflation continues these gains can rapidly disappear.

Workers need to return to the idea of cost-of-living Adjustments (COLA) in all their contracts, which were common in the late 1970s. These provide an automatic increase in pay in line with the cost of living.

### Build Union Power

In the cases of Metro, Windsor Salt and ILWU, workers have not been afraid to reject the recommendations of their union leaderships by voting down bad tentative agreements. This is significant for asserting internal union democracy and for showing that the members are not mere rubber stampers for the union leadership.

However, union leaders should be more attuned to the members' determination and energy and provide bold, strong direction. Many strikes are lasting longer than they did a few years ago, both because workers want better contracts, and because the employers are resisting their demands.

This autumn there are major negotiations by Québec's public sector and Ontario teachers. Unifor autoworkers voted 98 percent for strike action as they gear up for negotiations with the big three automakers. In these cases, and in other looming struggles, workers will need to stand strong to overcome the bosses' greed.

Socialist Alternative supports:

- Fighting, democratic unions run by and for the membership to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- Full-time union officials and representatives to be elected regularly from the membership, subject to recall, and to receive the same wages as those they represent.
- Unions to play a leading role in building broader movements for social change.
- Unions to organize the unorganized with bold campaigns and solidarity in struggles. ★



*Socialist Alternative members before mass ILWU rally*

### Socialist Alternative Stood with ILWU

Throughout the ILWU struggle Socialist Alternative in Metro Vancouver was in full support of the workers. Our members were on the picket line for all 13 days. We published 8 articles covering the strike on our website and most of them were also published on the website of International Socialist Alternative. We produced a special four-page wrap-around to our magazine entitled Solidarity with ILWU.

# We Want to be Safe

Allie Pev

Envision a night out with friends. It's after dark. You may choose to consume substances. You dance and meet new people, free of unwanted touching, comments or pressure to do anything you don't consent to. Then you return home safely and affordably via walking, public transit, taxi or rideshare.

This is an extremely rare experience for working-class women and LGBTQ+ people worldwide. What should be a carefree, enjoyable experience is darkened by the high likelihood of being harmed. A Canadian Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (2018) found one in three women experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public that year.

Robust, safe, affordable public transit systems are declining in major cities and access to public transportation is nearly non-existent in smaller and rural communities. This means late-night transportation options are taxis, expensive rideshare platforms or hitchhiking. Social media is filled with women's experiences being sexually harassed and/or unwillingly confined within drivers' vehicles, and with sharing tips on how to stay safe when traveling alone with a male driver. Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people are disproportionately impacted. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry demanded all governments "ensure that adequate plans and funding are put into place for safe and affordable transit and transportation services and infrastructure for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people living in remote or rural communities."

Hospitality is a hotbed of workplace sexual harassment. If you've worked in any customer service position, you've most likely heard the motto, "the customer is always right," leaving many workers, mostly women (82 percent of food and beverage servers in BC are women), vulnerable to the



unwanted comments and physical contact of customers, with little to no intervention of management so as not to risk sales or "a scene" in front of other customers. A Western University and Canadian Labour Congress report found 44 percent of workers experienced at least one workplace behaviour or practice of sexual harassment and violence in the last two years. This type of violent misogyny is encouraged online through figures like Andrew Tate. Despite this harm, corporate social media is more than willing to profit from toxic content.

Whether it be social media, nightlife, transportation or infrastructure, there isn't an area of society under capitalism that doesn't negatively affect the safety of women, disproportionately impacting working-class women, women of colour and the LGBTQ+ community.

The world is shaped by the profit motive of the capitalist system. Society is built to satisfy the bosses' bottom lines, irrespective of safety, working conditions, accessibility and meaningful enjoyment.

The increasing privatization of energy in South Africa points to the devastating effects on women's safety. During the darkness of loadshedding (planned blackouts), women have to walk home through dark streets after work or with their children from after-school activities.

Well-lit streets and accessible transit are just beginning steps to improve safety for women and LGBTQ+ people, but these alone won't end misogyny, sexism and transphobia.

The contradictions of capitalism are sharpening: the cost-of-living crisis worsens, polarization deepens, and the anti-feminist backlash is growing. The ruling class uses divide-and-rule tactics to control and crush resistance. To an extent, this has been successful, and layers of the working class fall prey to simplistic, dangerous answers of the far right.

As socialists, we must point to the source of women's and LGBTQ+ people's oppression: capitalism.

A program of demands aimed at addressing the real, pressing needs of working-class women and LGBTQ+ people includes safer streets and bars, unions that protect workers from predatory behaviour and media that doesn't profit off the spread of virulent ideology. Only a mass movement of the multi-gender, multi-racial working class can bring about these changes. ★



# Chile: Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Ray Goerke

On September 11, 1973, soldiers stormed the Chilean presidential palace where Salvador Allende, the democratically elected president of Chile, was giving a farewell speech live on radio. This was the last public act of Allende's life and the end of a government that inspired workers and socialists around the world.

Following the coup, Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship tortured and executed workers and socialists. As President of Chile he imposed brutal austerity economics, making Chile "the birthplace of neoliberalism."

## The Socialist Government

Allende, a member of the Socialist Party, narrowly won the 1970 presidential election as part of the Popular Unity (UP) coalition. His government immediately introduced higher wages and free school meals, nationalized US-owned copper mines, and announced a plan for nationalizing the 100 largest companies.

These reforms, popular with the Chilean working class, terrified the Chilean and international capitalists because they demonstrated a democratic socialist alternative to capitalism. The UP made significant gains in the 1971 and 1973 elections and the workers and peasants organized. Workers took control of factories and established cordones industriales: democratically elected councils that coordinated production and ensured food and supplies across the country. Peasants occupied the large private estates.

The Chilean ruling class ramped up economic sabotage and prepared a military coup. Supported by US imperialism and its allies, including Canada, there were multiple coup attempts.

Allende, advised by the Communist Party, refused the workers' demand for arms to defend themselves and the government, and ignored warnings from the ranks of the armed forces about the coup plans. He was determined to follow the constitution and not to interfere with the military. But in matters of life and death, what is the point in following the "rules" when you know the enemy will cheat?

As a last-ditch attempt to appease the right, Allende appointed Pinochet to head the military! Pinochet used this position to lead the coup that overthrew Allende.

## Learning the Right Lessons

Allende is a hero of the Latin American left and socialists around the world; he gave his life for the working class and for socialism. Without diminishing his genuine intentions, socialists must learn from his and the UP's errors.



*Salvador Allende addresses a crowd of supporters.*

The working class was well organized, the middle class was divided and wavering, and the capitalist class was unable to rule as they had done before. A socialist revolution was possible, and the workers' organizations were ready to carry it out. But Allende and his main advisors held the working class back.

Allende thought the military and the capitalist class would abide by democratic votes and allow socialist change through parliament. But the organized workers understood that the capitalists would not respect the constitution and that the military leaders were on the bosses' side. The workers were desperately pushing to go on the offensive against the counter-revolution.

The function of the state, including the military and the constitution, is to maintain the supremacy of the ruling class. The state is not neutral — it cannot be used by every class equally. Chile showed that parliamentary majorities alone are not enough to win socialism. The ruling class will ditch democracy when capitalism is threatened. Decisive action by workers' organizations is necessary to defeat these inevitable attacks. Marxists learned this from the Paris Commune of 1871.

US imperialism supported the counter revolution in Chile. Allende's socialist government could have prepared to defend itself. Defeating reaction is no easy task, but in 1918-1922 the Russian working class did just that, with determined organization, heroic sacrifice, and international solidarity.

As the US was losing the war in Vietnam and faced a strong anti-war movement, it would have been almost impossible to send troops to Chile. Many soldiers would have refused to fight as they were doing in Vietnam.

Socialists honour the sacrifices and achievements of the Chilean working class and Allende's genuine efforts to fight for socialism. But the movement must learn the lessons of this defeat. Revolutionary leadership must understand the role of the state, and the power of the working class to defend itself and organize society. There are no shortcuts to securing a better future for humanity. ★

# New Cold War: Brought to You By Capitalism

*Martin LeBrun and Harland Bird*

Capitalism won the first Cold War. But in its triumph, it has only demonstrated its failures all the more clearly. Now, a mere thirty years after the fall of the USSR, climate change is ravaging the planet and another Cold War has broken out — this one centring around an imperialist rivalry between today's two biggest capitalist powers: the US and China. This conflict is not about competing economic and social systems, nor is it about "authoritarianism" vs "democracy" (US imperialism has never cared about democracy, as the people of Yemen, Bolivia, Vietnam, and others could attest to). As both regimes face growing economic and political problems, they use this conflict over access to markets, resources and profits to also whip up nationalism. The new inter-imperialist Cold War and the massive increase in arms spending worldwide confirms that war is part of the package of capitalism: as long as there is capitalism, there will be war.

There is a constant risk of escalation into a direct confrontation between the world's two best-funded militaries (US \$877 billion; China \$292 billion) — a nightmare scenario for poor and working people everywhere. Dangerous developments in the South China Sea have underscored this reality. On August 5, the Chinese Coast Guard blocked and fired water cannons at Philippine boats in an attempt to prevent them from supplying troops stationed on a disputed atoll. The US has a mutual defence treaty with the Philippines, so this ongoing dispute is one of many potential flashpoints.

On August 18, China staged military drills around Taiwan after that country's vice president visited the US. In July, the US announced a \$345 million weapons package for Taiwan because, as the US Deputy Defence Secretary stated, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has taught the US that it has to stockpile weapons in Taiwan now, "before an attack begins."



## The Formation of Competing Imperialist Blocs

The Ukraine War — itself a product of the New Cold War and China's President Xi's "no-limit friendship" with Russia — continues to push China and Russia together. The two countries staged joint military drills in the Sea of Japan in late July, and economic sanctions against Russia have boosted their bilateral trade, which has increased by 40 percent over the last 18 months, with Chinese exports to Russia up 75 percent.

This is a lifeline for Putin, but also for Xi, as China's once-meteoritic economic growth has begun to stagnate after its property market crash revealed underlying structural weaknesses. China's transformation from the workshop of the neoliberal world into an independent competitor to the US began a process of economic decoupling. From January to May 2023, China's trade with the US shrank by 12 percent and with Taiwan by over 25 percent. The rest of the world, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, is being drawn into one or the other of two competing economic and military blocs. The expansion of the increasingly anti-American BRICS group (which now includes Iran) is one result of this, as is the expansion of NATO to include Sweden and Finland. The consolidation of the blocs in turn sharpens the inter-imperialist tensions that are creating them — a downward spiral that could drag the world into war.

In the neocolonial world there is ambivalence towards US and Western imperialism. Although the US has offered to provide free, new, US-made military hardware and ammunition to any Latin American country willing to send its soviet-era stockpiles to Ukraine, none have yet accepted this offer. Many governments have illusions in China and Russia as alternatives to US imperialism. The July 26 military coup in Niger produced an anti-West, Russia-friendly government. In Myanmar, China and Russia continue to arm the military dictatorship, which is murdering ethnic minorities, workers, and students fighting for self-determination.

The working class globally should reject dangerous illusions in and false choices between "lesser evil" imperialists. The only force that can set free oppressed nations and end the exploitation of workers is the international working class fighting for socialism! ★

**For more information on China: [chinaworker.info/en/](http://chinaworker.info/en/)**



## US: Workers Strike Back

*Greyson Van Arsdale, Socialist Alternative US*

Organized labour in the US — both new organizing efforts and within existing unions — continues to be the main expression of the working class as it rediscovers its strength. The wave of organizing campaigns in 2022, including some early successes at Starbucks and Amazon, continue with a major campaign at Amazon's Kentucky air hub.

The Writers Guild of America has been on strike since early May and were joined by the Screen Actors Guild in mid-July. Hollywood and beyond is shut down by over 170,000 striking workers. The contract of 150,000 United Auto Workers at the “Big Three” automakers (GM, Stellantis and Ford) expires in mid-September. Members voted overwhelmingly for strike action and the union has staked out some correctly bold demands, including a 46 percent wage increase and a reduced working week with no loss in pay.

However, inherent in the situation is the bosses' absolute opposition. As the idea of unionizing has rapidly gained support (71 percent of the populace now says they support unions, the same amount as those who consider themselves football fans), the bosses know that every inch they give will embolden workers to fight for more. Workers must be prepared to use their most powerful weapon, the strike, to wrench the goods away from the bosses, and use militant tactics that will maximize the impact on the bosses' profits.

This is why Socialist Alternative, alongside activists in Workers Strike Back and rank-and-file UPS workers, advocated for a “No” vote of Teamsters on the proposed contract and to fight for more. In 2022, UPS made \$13 billion in profits on total revenue of \$100 billion and expects to beat this in 2023. A strike would have cost the company anywhere from \$80 million to \$170 million a day.

The union leadership went all out to successfully get the contract accepted. The contract contains some potentially enormous concessions, such as on Sunday working and continued divisions between full- and part-time workers. Socialist Alternative will work with others to rebuild a fighting opposition movement in the Teamsters. We need to get organized to fight for what UPS workers deserve, not settle for what the bosses will accept.



*Writers and actors are on strike in the US*



*Amazon workers in Northern Kentucky are organizing a union*

### Looking Towards 2024

Looming over society is the impending 2024 Presidential election. With the Republican Party dominated by Trump and Trumpism, and the Democratic Party shutting down all opposition to Biden's re-election, the grim reality is that 2024 may be a 2020 rerun. Neither candidate is popular, and both are absolutely committed to protecting the interests of the US ruling class — including by continuing the new cold war between the US and China. Biden never introduced the promised \$15 minimum wage, he legislated railway workers back to work and has largely kept Trump's huge tax cuts for the billionaires.

Trump's multiple indictments, including for plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 election, are only the tip of the iceberg of his crimes. These include his inhuman treatment of immigrants at the US southern border, which Biden has for the most part continued. The charges against Trump reflect major sections of the US ruling class's desperation to avoid a second Trump presidency. However, so far, the indictments have only whipped up Trump's base, reinforcing their view that the “deep state” is targeting their favoured candidate.

In this situation, the independent campaign of Cornel West, a prominent Black activist and academic, has much potential. He is running for the Green Party's nomination on a platform that is similar to Bernie Sanders', including Medicare For All and a Green New Deal. He opposes the war in Ukraine and sending arms, which puts him in stark contrast to the so-called progressives in the House who have mostly fallen in line behind Biden's warmongering.

If West runs all the way to the general election and uses his campaign to launch a movement to win his demands, he could provide an important step towards building an independent workers' party and challenge capitalism's domination of US politics. ★

**For more information on Socialist Alternative in the US: [www.socialistalternative.org/](http://www.socialistalternative.org/)**

# Solidarity 1983: BC's Near Revolution

Pete Marlowe and Leslie Kemp

It seemed so close. All across British Columbia that summer and fall, forty years ago now, it felt that a province-wide General Strike was at hand, and that the right-wing provincial government, and their capitalist puppet masters, were teetering, and ready to topple.

It was on July 7, 1983, that the recently and narrowly re-elected Social Credit government of Bill Bennett unleashed a torrent of neoliberal legislation, 26 bills in a single day, gutting workers' rights, renters' protections, and funding for social programs.

Eight days later, the union-based Operation Solidarity was born. At a convention of labour organizations, a ten-point plan and a million-dollar war chest were agreed upon. Tens of thousands demonstrated in Vancouver and Victoria, and thousands in every city and town across the province, demanding the repeal of all 26 bills. The Solidarity Coalition, representing a broad spectrum of social movements, faith groups, the unemployed, tenants and others opposing the brutal government attack, formed on August 3 with funding from Operation Solidarity. Provincial cabinet offices were occupied, and on October 15, sixty thousand marched past the Socreds' annual convention at the Hotel Vancouver.

That was barely two weeks before the threatened witching hour, at midnight on October 31, when the Government Employees Union contract would expire, and firings without cause would begin.

A series of escalating strikes were held, starting with 30,000 teachers. With plans afoot for dozens of other unions that would have seen at least 200,000 on strike the week of Monday, November 14, marching toward a General Strike, some on the union side of the unwieldy movement began walking on cold feet.

After secret talks between the BC Federation of Labour and the province, on the Sunday before the unfateful Monday, the Fed dispatched Jack Munro, head of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA), to negotiate one-on-one with the premier in Kelowna.



Late that night, the pair announced they had reached an agreement. The Kelowna Accord would rescind one of the 26 bills, amend another, and promise to consult on human and tenants' rights.

And nothing else.

The Accord was never put to a vote, neither of union members, nor of Operation Solidarity or the Solidarity Coalition, but the movement was effectively over.

From the beginning, it was clear that Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition, while sharing the goal of getting all the bills rescinded, held different perspectives. Many unions were first and foremost concerned with the impact of the bills on their members, while the bills' impact on human rights and on women, gays and lesbians and tenants were of utmost concern to the diverse members of the Coalition. A few union leaders had a broader view and were willing to strike. They understood that the entire working class, including their members' families and friends, would be affected by the draconian measures of the government bills, but the small core of leaders at the BC Fed were dismissive of the Coalition's concerns. They were adamantly opposed to using labour power to fight on social issues, and wanted, at all costs, to avoid a general strike that could bring down the government, with uncertain consequences, whether it was successful or not.

In the immediate aftermath, many, perhaps the majority of British Columbians, felt an enormous sense of betrayal at the hijacking of the mass movement by a few unaccountable union leaders, a sense that has echoed down the decades as one of the many divisions among the left. The sellout paved the way to further attacks on workers over the years and to the rise of neoliberalism in Canada.

But some saw a tantalizing potential in the hastily mobilized movement, as groups who previously had no contact now came to some understanding of each others' issues. Today there appears to be hope that these connections may finally bear fruit, as a re-energized working class finds support from middle-class activists.

There are still questions to be asked, and lessons to be learned, from the events (and non-events) of 1983, so that, next time, solidarity among all workers can be maintained, both during the struggle, and after the victory. ★





# Housing Emergency

Bill Hopwood

Homelessness is soaring even in small towns. Rents are through the roof, up 21 percent in the last two years. Mortgages are unaffordable as the Bank of Canada jacks up interest rates.

This is the inevitable result of relying on the “market” to provide homes. The latest failure is Montréal’s requirement for developers to either provide affordable housing in all new buildings or pay a levy. None of the 150 projects built since the requirement was introduced included affordable homes. Developers don’t want low-income people spoiling their profits. The market cannot fix the disaster the market caused.

For decades, the Canadian government provided funds to build non-profit, public or co-operative homes. Public, or social, housing alone averaged around 20,000 units a year. In the 1990s, the federal Liberals ended support for building affordable homes and handed housing over to the developers, with the current disastrous outcome. If Canada had continued supporting housing as was done in the 1970s and 1980s there would be an additional 600,000 units of social housing, plus more co-ops and non-profit homes.

For the past 30 years the public sector has helped private developers make money. Cities support gentrification that drives up rents and makes people homeless. Provinces have weak or no rent controls, another gift to the big landlords and developers.

After decades of neglect, politicians and experts are suddenly running around talking about the problem. But



mostly their “solutions” are more gifts to developers – grant bigger subsidies, cut rules on safety and environment, and sell off public land (no doubt at bargain prices).

Canada has over one million empty homes. What is needed is not more expensive properties but affordable and good quality rental homes. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation recently stated that two million rental units, beyond those planned, are needed by 2030. This is an emergency.

Socialist Alternative’s policies put people’s need for homes before the profits of big business.

- Protect renters with strong rent control.
- A crash program of building public housing, using union labour, funded by municipal, provincial and federal governments through taxes on mansions, the rich and corporate profits, not working-class people.
- The big property and construction corporations need to be publicly owned and democratically controlled. ★

## Capitalism's Highway to Hell: A Socialist Plan for Jobs and A Healthy Planet *(continued from back page)*

including 60,000 in London and 35,000 against a coal mine in Germany. Protests are planned in Canada and around the world between September 15 and 17. Socialist Alternative will be there.

### Building the Socialist Alternative

The climate juggernaut, driven by capitalism, will not be stopped without changing the driver, by ending capitalism. This seems a daunting task, but the alternative is to give up and accept a climate hell.

The working class is the vast majority of humanity, producing most of the world’s goods, food and wealth and providing the services of society. We have the power to remove the capital class from the driver’s seat.

A convergence of the climate movement with working-class struggles offers a way forward. Already climate activists call for strikes and argue for “system change not climate change” and that “climate struggle is class struggle.” Climate activists have joined picket lines.

Immediate calls to action should include ending all government subsidies of fossil fuel companies, and all investment in fossil fuels by public organizations and workers’ pension funds, with the money redirected to good green jobs.

Some have talked of a climate action program similar to the direction of industry during WWII. However, to do this for the climate and jobs requires the public ownership of the key sectors of the economy, with democratic control and planning. This would allow the full use of society’s resources and human skills to transition to clean energy, upgrade buildings to save energy, create high quality public transit and long-distance freight, and develop green and healthy cities. It would also allow for global cooperation to meet the pressing human needs in Canada and internationally. There would be many good union jobs in the planned transformation of society.

We can create a world in which life is infinitely richer, and natural resources are not wasted. Workers of the world unite! We have our only home to save! ★



# CAPITALISM'S HIGHWAY TO HELL

## A Socialist Plan for Jobs and A Healthy Planet

*Bill Hopwood*

This has been a summer of hell for Canadians and across the northern hemisphere. Fire has burned over 15 million hectares of Canada, the size of Bangladesh and more than twice the worst previous record. Over 200,000 people evacuated their homes. Poisonous smoke filled the skies for months. Much of the prairie's farmland is gripped by drought. Torrential rains flooded Nova Scotia after devastating fires.

July was the hottest month on record around the world. For years there have been warnings that climate change would bring this devastation. The warnings are that it will get worse unless there is a dramatic change of course. Yet big business and their politicians are accelerating down this highway to hell as they pump out more fossil fuels.

It was Justin "climate action can't wait" Trudeau who directed billions of public dollars, as well as RCMP enforcers, to ensure construction of new pipelines. It was the "radical" former Greenpeace activist Steven Guilbeault who approved massive new

deep-sea oil drilling projects that will last decades into the future. RBC, the world's biggest funder of fossil fuel development, says "climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time."

From finance to manufacturing, construction to marketing, corporations engage in willful greenwashing. Capitalism's priority is maximum profits. They hide behind talk of jobs, but the fossil fuel industry is shedding jobs. The new jobs are firefighters, first responders, house builders and others who respond to the climate disasters, mostly paid for by our taxes. Judge big business and politicians by their actions not their words. They are failing humanity.

### Resistance

People are refusing to take this road to disaster. We will not go gently into that night of climate disaster or despair. Indigenous and tribal peoples in the Americas, Australia, India, and Africa, and brave activists around the world, are all working to change direction. Some have given their lives in this struggle.

There have been some victories. The Northern Gateway pipeline across BC and Energy East to the Atlantic were stopped. There have been big environment demos in Europe ... *(continued on p. 15)*

