

Communist Party of Canada

Political Report to the Central Committee

February 13-14, 2021

Our Centenary Year Begins

- 1) This Central Committee is meeting on the eve of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Communist Party of Canada in May 1921. We will celebrate 100 years of struggle for fundamental change and for socialism in Canada. We will celebrate a history which is in fact, a history of working class struggle in this country, from coast to coast to coast. We will recognize and remember the Party's founding meeting of 22 delegates including Tim Buck, Florence Custance, and Tom Burpee who became the Party's first General Secretary. It was a founding meeting that took place in the secrecy of a Guelph barn because the Communist Party had been declared illegal under the War Measures Act, even before it was born.
- 2) We remember the first 650 Communist Party members who built our Party including Beckie Buhay, Mike Buhay, Bella Hall Gould, John Boychuk, Tom Hill, Matthew Popovich, and Bill Kolisnyk who became the first Communist elected to public office in North America when he took his seat on Winnipeg's city council in 1926, and again in 1928. Many of those founding members, and the thousands who joined after them, were in the forefront – often in the leadership - of the struggles to build industrial unions, to build public sector unions, and class-struggle trade unionism across the country.
- 3) We recognize the sections of the Party built in the first immigrant communities: the Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Finnish, Icelandic, Yugoslav, Hungarian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian communities, and later in the Italian, Greek, Latin American, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and South African communities. They came to Canada to escape persecution, war, exploitation and oppression, and threw their lot in with the Communists fighting for a country and a world free of war, exploitation and oppression.
- 4) We remember the Canadian Labour Party, which brought together communists, socialists and left wing workers in a federated party of labour during the 1920s, that had wide support in the working class before it was disbanded by social reformists in 1929.
- 5) We recognize those in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion who fought and died in Spain to aid the Republican cause and stop fascism before it engulfed the world. We will remember Comrade Norman Bethune, who developed the Mobile Blood Transfusion Unit saving the lives of thousands on battlefields of Spain, before moving on to treat the wounded in Mao's Eighth Route Army fighting fascism in China.

- 6) We remember the Workers' Unity League, and those like Slim Evans who led and marched in the On to Ottawa Trek which fought for and won unemployment insurance for workers across Canada.
- 7) We remember the eight Party leaders- Tim Buck, Matthew Popovich, Tom McEwen, Tom Hill, John Boychuk, Sam Carr, Tom Cacic, and Malcolm Bruce, who were imprisoned under Section 98 for "seditious conspiracy" by RB Bennet in 1931 because the Canadian ruling class was afraid of the Party's growing influence among working people across the country. We remember Tim Buck who spoke sense to unemployed workers riding the rails, from the top of boxcars, and to garment workers in the free-speech struggles on Spadina Avenue in Toronto.
- 8) We remember A. E. Smith and the Canadian Labour Defence League who defended workers arrested for union and political work, including stopping evictions, foreclosures and deportations. We remember Annie Buller who was jailed with a year's hard labour for organizing striking miners in Estevan, and Jeanne Corbin who was jailed for 3 years for her work as a Workers' Unity League organizer in the Noranda Miners' strike.
- 9) We remember the 25,000 strong meeting at Maple Leaf Gardens when Tim was released from the Kingston Pen after being shot at in an assassination attempt by prison guards. Four thousand met the train bringing Tim from Kingston and marched from Union Station to the Gardens, but the venue was too small and eight thousand over-flowed into the streets outside.
- 10) We remember those were interned during the early years of World War II, and all those who fought for a united front against fascism in Europe and the world. We remember Camp X where many Communists volunteered to be secretly trained before being dropped behind the fascist lines in occupied Europe. Many died while working with the partisans.
- 11) We remember the role played by Communists in the 1945 Ford strike in Windsor, and in the 1946 steel strike in Hamilton -strikes that won the Rand Formula and the right of workers to belong to a union in Canada. We remember J.B. McLachlin, George MacEachern, Dick Steele, Sam Scarlett, Cyril Prince, Bruce Magnuson, Homer Stevens, George Harris, the McClure brothers, Harry Hunter, Harry Hamburg, Dick Steele, Jan Lakeman, Lil Illomaki, Jim Litterick, Harold Pritchett, Harvey Murphy, Ross Russell, Val Bjarnason, and many other comrades who organized Mine-Mill, USWA, IWA, IBEW, UE, CSU,UFAWU, UAW, and many other unions in Canada.
- 12) We remember Grace Hartman who was the first woman to lead a national union in North America (CUPE), and who spent 2 months in jail in defence of the right of public sector workers to strike.
- 13) We recognize Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris who organized Indigenous and Metis people in Alberta and Saskatchewan from the 1920s to the 1960s.

- 14) We remember the comrades in Quebec who were jailed by Duplessis under the Padlock Law, and by Trudeau under the War Measures Act. We recognize Sam and Jeannette Walsh who led the PCQ for many years, and Jean Pare who was a Party leader, a militant trade unionist, and a UE leader, in Quebec. We remember those comrades from across Canada who joined Quebec delegates on the floor of the 1972 CLC Convention to win the labour movement to finally recognize that Quebec was a nation in Canada.
- 15) We remember those who were interned by Mackenzie King, and who were blacklisted during St. Laurent's term for their union and political activities, and for their work for peace collecting a million signatures for the first Stockholm Appeal during the Cold War. We remember Jeanne Vautour who was Secretary of the Canadian Peace Congress and an organizer of the Ban the Bomb campaigns, and Lil Green and many others, who worked tirelessly in the years-long campaign to end the war in Vietnam and end Canada's complicity.
- 16) We remember all those comrades who worked to build the Hands Off Soviet Russia Committees, the anti Vietnam War movement, the solidarity movements with the ANC in South Africa, with the Cuba Solidarity Committees, the Tools for Peace campaign for Nicaragua, solidarity with Grenada, and the movements in solidarity with those struggling for national liberation from colonialism and imperialism, which continue today in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe, and in North America.
- 17) We remember Margaret Fairley who edited various cultural and political journals published by the Party, and who was a well-known Canadian writer. We remember Stanley Ryerson who wrote Unequal Union, the seminal work on Quebec and the national question, and Oscar and Toby Ryan who were authors and critics. We remember Norman Freed who edited the journal Communist Viewpoint, and the Editors of the Communist press who published during periods of illegality as well as legality, including Tom McEwen, long-time Pacific Tribune editor, Jim Leech, Editor of the Canadian Tribune, and Kimball Cariou who edited People's Voice for its first 26 years.
- 18) We remember Florence Theodore, the first woman to lead a political party in Canada, who was leader of the Communist Party in Saskatchewan in 1942. We remember Helen Burpee, the first woman Chartered Account – and revolutionary – in Canada. We remember Alice Buck, who secured thousands of votes during several election campaigns in Toronto. We remember Nan McDonald who led the Party's work in the struggle for women's equality rights, and represented the Party in the National Action Committee on the Status of Women during the critical years of the 1970s and 80s.
- 19) We recognize all those Communists who were elected to public office, including MPs Fred Rose and Dorise Nielsen, Provincial Parliamentarians Bill Kardash, A. A. MacLeod and J. B. Salsberg, and dozens of Communists elected to municipal councils and school boards across Canada, including Bill Kolisnyk, Joe Zuken, Joe Forkin, Jacob Penner, Peggy Chun, and Mary Kardash in Winnipeg; John Harry, elected Reeve of Westlock, AB; Stewart Smith, Helen Anderson Coulson, John Boyd, Oscar Kogan, Sam Walsh, Edna May Ryerson, Ruth Weir, John Weir, Pat Case,

Elizabeth Hill, Stan Nemiroff, Howard Kaplan, and Liz Rowley in Toronto; and Bert Nilson, George McKnight, Mark Mosher, Charlie Stewart, Harry Rankin, Bruce Yorke, Pauline Weinstein, Dorothy Lynas, Jane Bouey, in BC.

- 20) We remember our victories in the four year struggle against liquidation in 1988-92, and recognize the role of Emil Bjarnason, Rod Doran, Paul Bjarnason, Kimball Cariou, Bill and Mary Kardash, John and Maggie Bizzell, Chris Frazer, Sam Hammond, John Humphrey, Issam Mansour, Liz Rowley, and Miguel Figueroa, among many others who fought for a revolutionary Communist Party and socialism.
- 21) We remember our historic 10 year campaign to remove the most draconian and unconstitutional sections of the Canada Elections Act in Canada – laws that were intended to break the Communist Party and steal its assets, to ban smaller and newer parties, and to limit Parliamentary elections to the three parties already in office.
- 22)** We remember Party leaders Tom Burpee, Tim Buck, Leslie Morris, Bill Kashtan, and Miguel Figueroa, Provincial leaders Bill Bennett, Nigel Morgan, Jan Lakeman, Bill Tuomi, Bill Ross, Bill Stewart, Liz Rowley, PCQ leaders Sam Walsh and Pierre Fontaine, and Alf Dewhurst, Bruce Magnuson, Jack Philips, Sam Carr, John Boychuk, Matthew Popovich, Max Dolgoy, Misha Cohen, Mel Doig, John Weir, Alice Buck, Bill Sydney, and many others, too numerous to mention here. We stand on their shoulders and we build on their work, in this second century that will build socialism in Canada.
- 23) We have a long and proud history of struggle for the emancipation of working people in Canada, and around the world. We are a party of action. We are a party with a proud past, and a bright future. We are Canada's party of socialism.

The Pandemic's Second Wave and Growing Toll

- 24) A century after the end of the Spanish Flu pandemic, the world is reeling from the Coronavirus pandemic, which has now infected over 100 million people worldwide, and killed over 2 million. With new, more contagious strains, rates of infection and death are growing exponentially, in a race against the clock and the inoculation of the world's peoples with the new vaccines. The US has the highest number of infections at 25 million, and 427,000 deaths. India is second with 10 million infected and 154,000 deaths. And Brazil is third with just under 9 million infected and 219,000 deaths. And the numbers are growing exponentially in the global south, where the majority of humanity lives, many in deep poverty and with limited, or no access to healthcare.
- 25) On January 26, Canada's infection rate has surpassed the 760,000 mark, with over 19,500 deaths.

- 26) The advanced capitalist countries are in danger of seeing their healthcare systems overwhelmed – as happened in Italy and Spain last spring, while in the rest of the world, the mostly private healthcare systems of many countries are already overwhelmed. In Peru the healthcare system is in a state of collapse. This is the result of cuts to public healthcare systems, private for-profit healthcare systems, and government responses to the pandemic which was slow, contradictory, and focused on flattening the curve rather than the urgent action needed to eradicate the virus. The result is high levels of infection and deaths in the capitalist countries, compared to the socialist countries where rates of infection and deaths are much lower relative to population. In every capitalist country, the pandemic has hit hardest at the poor, the homeless, the elderly, Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, frontline workers in healthcare, and in essential services such as food production and distribution, grocery stores, transportation, childcare, education, sanitation, construction, many of whom are women and low-paid and precarious workers. The new strains of COVID are now also infecting children, and are highly contagious.
- 27) In contrast, socialist Cuba's infection rate is 22,614, with just 200 deaths. Vietnam's infection rate is 1151, with 35 deaths. Laos has just 44 infections, and no deaths. China has 89,197 infections and 4,636 deaths. Both Cuba and China have worked on vaccine development, have taken quick action to protect their populations from COVID-19 spread, using their healthcare systems to treat their own populations, as well as sending teams of doctors and nurses to treat COVID-19 cases all over the world. For this reason, Cuban doctors and nurses working in the Henry Reeves Medical Brigade have been nominated for the Nobel peace prize. This is an honour and recognition of Cuba's outstanding humanism and internationalism, which we enthusiastically endorse and applaud.
- 28) Vaccine 'nationalism' as it has been dubbed by the WHO, has resulted in the advanced capitalist countries like Canada buying up huge quantities of the new vaccines well beyond the needs of the population, in the process denying access to the vaccines by countries with some of the highest infection and death rates in the world. The underlying issue is commodification of the vaccine. If it were not a commodity, but a human right, the vaccine could be reproduced in the labs in every country, and distributed free to the public.
- 29) Canada has bought six times the number of doses required to vaccinate the entire population. This politically motivated act to secure access at any cost, never mind the consequences, has still not secured access as the US has blocked exports and the EU may do the same, until their own needs are met. Further, distribution of the vaccines that have arrived has been poorly planned, increasing vaccine skepticism. If variants proliferate unchecked, there will be many more deaths over a period of years, not months.
- 30) This underlines the need for a domestic pharmaceutical industry in Canada that is publicly owned and democratically controlled, and that can do the research and produce the drugs Canadians need, when they need it, in the amounts required, and at no cost to patients. Before the Mulroney government sold off the publicly owned Connaught Laboratories in the 1980s, Canada had a publicly owned pharmaceutical company that provided vaccines and developed them as well, including the Salk vaccine for polio. If it had not been privatized, Canada would

have a guaranteed supply of vaccines for the country. It's time we nationalized the pharmaceutical industry in Canada, making it part of Medicare along with long-term care, dental and vision care, and mental health care. It's long past time to end massive pharmaceutical profiteering, and instead make drugs and vaccines available at cost through Canada's Medicare system.

- 31) Likewise, the shortages of medical equipment, including ventilators and PPE, in Canada, has demonstrated the folly of free trade agreements that exported large parts of our manufacturing jobs and capacity, leaving Canada dependent on the US and world markets for access to essential medical supplies that at the height of the shortage, were sold off to the highest bidder before they were even deplaned at Canadian airports. Plants that were transformed to produce PPE in Canada at the height of the pandemic should be publicly owned and made permanent so that Canada will never again be dependent on imports of essential PPE and medical supplies.
- 32) More pandemics are coming. We need to be prepared, and that must include a publicly owned pharmaceutical industry in Canada. This is the time to nationalize Big Pharma in Canada, and put it under democratic control. This is what pharmacare should look like. Further, we need a publicly owned corporation to manufacture essential medical equipment and supplies for Canadian hospitals and the public healthcare system. And we need to increase healthcare funding across the board to provide the quality healthcare services across the country that are guaranteed in the Canada Health Act. This also means reversing privatization and expanding Medicare.
- 33) We also need to take preventative action, to slow future pandemics, by recognizing the links between the environmental crisis and the upsurge of new diseases and pandemics. The development of chemical and biological weapons by the US, and the manipulation of genetic material in the food chain by corporations whose only goal is increased profits, threatens humanity and the planet. Future pandemics may not be treatable, or not in time to save billions of lives.
- 34) While the World Health Organization calls for vaccine equity through COVAX, the World Trade Organization insists the vaccine patents not be waived (as proposed by South Africa and India), ensuring massive profits for the big pharmaceutical companies, hundreds of thousands more deaths, and more pandemic 'waves' washing across the globe.
- 35) COVAX on the other hand is an agreement by participating countries that they will not take more doses than will vaccinate 20% of their population, until all countries receive that amount. Canada is a signer to the agreement, while perversely buying up huge supplies of vaccines at the same time. The WHO aims to equitably distribute 2 billion doses by the end of 2021. This is an objective that we support, and that medical professionals say is essential to eradicate the pandemic.
- 36) The pandemic, and the WTO's efforts to guarantee big profits for the pharmaceutical companies from the vaccines that are so urgently needed by the world's peoples, is a scorching expose of just how barbaric capitalism is, in its most virulent end-stage.

- 37) We fight for universal, free, and equitable access to the vaccines across the globe, and for universal public healthcare services that should include long-term care, mental healthcare, vision and dental care, and pharmacare, all delivered with high Canada-wide standards. We fight for PPE and a minimum of 14 days paid sick leave per year for all workers, for the right to refuse unsafe work, and for full-time employment at decent wages and working conditions in unionized workplaces. This is the minimum. Lives are on the line. The choice in healthcare couldn't be much clearer.
- 38) Indeed this crisis has exposed the greedy, rotten core of capitalism. Anti-capitalist sentiments are growing in Canada and around the world, while support for socialism and socialist ideas are continuing to grow.
- 39) That is why anti-communism is being stoked politically and ideologically, in an attempt to inoculate working people from embracing the increasingly evident ethical and moral superiority of socialism over a vicious and immoral capitalist system, that increasingly relies on force and violence at home, as well as abroad.

The US Election and Attempted Coup

- 40) The attempted coup d'état by Trump, supported by a significant section of Republican voters and elected officials, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, militias, para-militaries, some police and military, and promoted by social media conspiracy sites and Q-Anon, was a warning to working people in the US and around the globe, that US imperialism's foreign policy had found its way home, as Fidel Castro predicted it would.
- 41) While all the facts are still coming to light, it's clear that the intent of some was to seize control of the building, to capture and possibly kill leading members of Congress, including Pence and Pelosi, to reverse the election result, and to install Trump and his Republican supporters to government.
- 42) The plan to kidnap the Governor of Michigan and to seize control of the Michigan State Legislature, was a dry run, and only one of several plans exposed in the media, by militias, para-military groups, and fascists to seize control of State Legislatures across the country. The events at the Capitol building were the culmination of far-right convulsions that have gripped the country for some time, and that were not surprising and should not have been unexpected, and that are far from over.
- 43) As the CC noted 4 years ago, Trump is the de facto head of a fascist movement in the US, though the organizers of the movement and the financiers may not be so visible. Trump is out of office, but the movement that delivered 74 million votes and supported his call to arms on January 6th, is alive and virulent. Many Republicans in Congress and state legislatures oppose Trump's impeachment, and may have the votes to block it. This is another indication that this movement's supporters, leaders and organizers are still there, and planning their next moves.

- 44) Biden's appeals to unity will not bridge a divide that is about far more than an election campaign. It's about a system in decay facing sharpening internal contradictions, unable to maintain its dominant place in the global capitalist system, outstripped economically by a rising Chinese economy with increasing global influence and power, and threatened by a deep economic crisis, mass permanent unemployment, declining wages and living standards, and an increasingly and viscerally angry population.
- 45) The US has relied on the use of force and violence since its inception, and in particular since WW II when it established itself as the dominant imperialist power by dropping atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, building up the largest stockpile of nuclear and conventional weapons of war ever seen in history, and by establishing 800 military bases around the globe. It's no wonder there was widespread fear that Trump might attempt to start a war – using the nuclear codes or conventional weapons – in the 2 weeks after the assault on the Capitol in an effort to hold on to the Presidency. The world was already balanced on the edge of catastrophic global destruction as the result of a nuclear or conventional war, set off by accident or design, and by irreversible climate change and environmental destruction.
- 46) Now the circle is closing, and the whole world is afraid that what is boiling in the US is a fascist movement that will overturn what remains of bourgeois democracy in the US, and start new wars of world conquest that could end in a nuclear war and the end of the world.
- 47) Indeed, the events of the January 6, and of the previous 4 years, are a serious warning of great danger ahead for working people, and for humanity. This is a qualitative change in US imperialism in decline, that cannot and must not be ignored.
- 48) This means extraordinary actions must be taken now to build and mobilize the forces for peace, for global disarmament based on mutual security. We must rebuild the peace movement, and the Peace Congress in the first place, among the youth, women and workers, and mobilize mass actions to force the Canadian government to sign the international treaties against nuclear weapons, to withdraw from NATO and NORAD and the USMCA trade deal, to end the arms trade, to cut the military budget and military spending and instead invest in civilian spending, such healthcare, education, childcare, job creation, reversing climate change and pursuing climate justice.
- 49) It means extraordinary action to mobilize the labour and democratic movements to demand action to *criminalize* white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups, hate speech in real time and in print, and on social media, and enforce the laws with severe punishments including jail sentences. Parliament's decision in early February to put the Proud Boys and other white supremacist organizations on the list of terrorist organizations was hasty and ill-considered. The government has thrown out a big net, which will catch a lot of fish besides the sharks, and which civil rights organizations have also expressed concern with. The list of terrorist organizations is a political list that has included organizations like the ANC, FARC, IRFAN, Palestinian and other

national liberation movements, who have been added to the list on the say-so of CSIS and the CSE. Criminal organizations like the Mafia or the Hell's Angels are easily prosecuted for their criminal activities and as criminal organizations. Neo-Nazi and white supremacist organizations should be prosecuted in the same way. Criminalizing these groups poses no threat to civil, democratic and political rights in Canada. The terrorism list is a threat to these rights however, and to political dissent.

- 50) The last four years of growing right-wing white supremacy, reaction and fascism means urgent action is needed to end systemic racism, and to put police under public, civilian control, defunded, demilitarized, and in most cases disarmed. It means dissolving the RCMP, CSIS, and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE).
- 51) It means fighting for an expansion of labour and democratic rights, fighting to end to systemic racism and win full equality for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people, for women and the 2s/LGBTiQ community, and national rights to self-determination for Quebec, Indigenous Peoples, and the Acadians.
- 52) It means mobilizing the labour and democratic movements to demand good jobs, and higher wages, pensions, and living standards; expanded social programs, and funding for education and healthcare, and for science and democratic culture – not mass corporate culture laced with far-right conspiracies and anti-communism such as is generated by Global Research and others.
- 53) We need to seize the moment to fight for a fundamentally different, and more progressive direction for Canada, that blocks the far-right, curbs corporate power, and enacts fundamental economic and social change, that will open the door to socialism. We need to build a People's Coalition that can fight for this new direction, that can fight for a People's Agenda, an independent foreign policy of peace and disarmament, that fights for climate justice, that fight for multi-lateral and mutually beneficial trade with the world, and that fights for a Canadian economy based on full employment policies, with value added jobs in manufacturing and secondary industries, in public transportation, public services, and in supply management systems of family farming.
- 54) And we have to build the Party, and our capacities to provide concrete political leadership in these struggles, to move people into mass action around these issues, to find allies to these struggles, and to achieve real advances in the struggle for fundamental change and for socialism everywhere we can.
- 55) The lesson of January 6 is that this is more urgent than ever before.

The Biden Administration

- 56) For the progressive forces, the labour and democratic movements, and all those opposed to the fascist and reactionary forces and policies that Trump and the Republicans represent, Trump's defeat was a relief. The progressive forces in the US worked hard over four years to mobilize

working people and to secure this result, and that is the real victory. Sustaining it will be key to any progress over the next four years.

- 57) But the Biden administration and the slim majority held by the Democrats in both the Senate and the House as a result of the January elections do not reflect a shift away from the main direction and policies of US imperialism over many decades. The new administration will not abandon its attacks on socialism, and is planning to step up its anti-China and anti-Russia campaigns. It will not abandon its regime change foreign policy, or its support for NATO and NORAD, or its vast stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weapons, or its gigantic spending on the military and weapons of mass destruction. US imperialism is still the main enemy and the main threat to the survival of humanity.
- 58) Further, Biden's "Buy American" campaign is the same protectionist policy pursued by Trump. Canada is not excluded from this policy, despite whispered US assurances to the contrary, and despite the USMCA trade deal's promise of "open borders" and shared hemispheric access. Canadian workers and farmers will be hurt by these policies, just as they have been hurt by current and previous free trade deals with the US, and US trade policies before that. The Biden administration will extend procurement access to Canada if it suits them, and won't, if it doesn't. That's the way it works when an elephant and a mouse co-habit.
- 59) At the same time, the Biden administration is compelled by both the extreme gravity of the crisis and by popular pressure, to take immediate action on the Covid-19 crisis, and on climate change; with Executive Orders to rejoin the Paris climate agreement and as well, to rejoin and restore funding to the World Health Organization. He has also signed a myriad of orders to stop and reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to improve vaccine access across the US. He has removed the bans on immigration from seven Muslim majority countries, ended the separation of families and caging of children at the southern border, stopped construction of the wall along the US-Mexican border, and canceled the Keystone-XL pipeline (though he continues to support other pipelines). He has restored the DACA program, 'paused' repayment of student debt, proposed a massive relief program for the unemployed and businesses in the US, and has promised to address systemic racism in the US.
- 60) On January 26, Presidents Biden and Putin both agreed to extend the START nuclear agreement which limits strategic weapons deployments, and which is the last remaining nuclear agreement between the US and Russia. All other agreements have been nixed by the US.
- 61) Biden has also indicated his support for rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran - the Iran nuclear deal, which the Trump administration unilaterally pulled out of in 2018. However Biden's support for rejoining comes with conditions involving further concessions by the Iranian government. Biden is upping the ante, in a dangerous game of aggression and war.

- 62) Many of these things have been done by more than 45 Executive Orders. But the big promises of a massive economic relief package and a \$15 minimum wage, action on healthcare, and action to end systemic racism will almost certainly be watered down or derailed entirely in Congress.
- 63) Similarly Trump's last actions included Executive Orders to designate Cuba, Iran and the Houthis in Yemen, as "state sponsors of terrorism", and to apply new sanctions against them. In Yemen, the designation and the sanctions will lead to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people who are currently facing mass starvation, for the crime of resisting an illegal Saudi war of aggression. In Iran, it will make efforts to restore the Iran nuclear deal abandoned by Trump, very difficult to achieve, and it will increase tensions and the danger of war.
- 64) In the case of Cuba, it was Trump's final effort to strangle the people and the government of Cuba by further tightening the 60 year old economic blockade, making the normalization of relations between Cuba and the US much more difficult. As we said in our statement last month, the whole world knows that Cuba is not a terrorist state, opposes terrorism in any and all forms, and has a foreign policy of peace and international solidarity that manifests in the international medical brigades that it has sent to countries around the world.
- 65) Whether Biden will sign executive orders to reverse these designations and sanctions, remains to be seen. Mass pressure by the people's movements around the world will be very important.
- 66) The crucial issue now is for the progressive and democratic forces around the world to pressure the new administration to suppress the burgeoning fascist movement on full display in the US today. Clearly, the Democratic Party is not the route to radical or fundamental change in the US. As well, the continued organization and mass action of the labour and progressive forces in the US will be vital to push these issues forward, and to derail the far right and fascist danger that the Republican Party now represents. What working people in the US need now is a strong Communist Party and a strong labour movement to defend their interests and to chart a way forward to socialism, peace, and climate justice.
- 67) Capitalism is the disease. Socialism is the cure.

The Threat of War

- 68) The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has left the nuclear clock set at 100 seconds to midnight – the closest it has ever been to midnight and the end of the world – for the second year in a row. They note that the danger of nuclear war has increased in the past year due to the continuing modernization of nuclear and conventional weapons, the development of new conventional and nuclear weapons delivery systems, the development of hypersonic weapons and space-based interceptors to stop them, the escalating militarization of space and development of cyber-weapons, the increased number of nuclear tests in 2020, the lapse of international treaties such as the nuclear test ban treaty, and lapsed negotiations on nuclear arms proliferation and fissile material control, the movement of nuclear weapons to sea-based

platforms including submarines, and the still growing and massive expenditures on nuclear and conventional weapons globally.

- 69) The Bulletin notes that “governments in the US, Russia and other countries appear to consider nuclear weapons more-and-more usable, increasing the risks of their actual use. There continues to be an extraordinary disregard for the potential of an accidental nuclear war, even as well-documented examples of frighteningly close calls have emerged.”
- 70) Add to this the explosion of conspiracy theories, disparagement of science and knowledge, and the obstacles to securing peace and disarmament are greater than ever. The defeat of Trump is a positive in this regard.
- 71) This is a clear call to action: to rebuild a powerful global movement for peace and disarmament that can force governments to act, and to turn back the nuclear clock, reversing the countdown to Armageddon.
- 72) The World Peace Council and its Canadian affiliate the Canadian Peace Congress play a vital role in the work to rebuild and renew the mass struggle for peace and disarmament in the new conditions of the 21st century. We have helped to rebuild Peace Councils in English-speaking Canada, and the Mouvement Québécois pour La Paix which is the anti-imperialist core of the peace movement in Quebec, but much more needs to be done. Peace and disarmament need to be a central issue in Canada’s political life, and we need to make a key issue in the coming federal election campaign. We have to put this issue back on labour’s agenda at the coming CLC convention, and in the youth movement, the women’s movement, and wherever we can. Peace and disarmament must become everybody’s business, in the current very dangerous and precarious global situation.
- 73) Canada’s foreign policy continues to shift towards US policies of aggression and war, regime change, and escalating military spending, in line with Canada’s own imperialist goals and ambitions. A proposal to beef up the NORAD agreement, at an estimated cost of \$11 to \$15 billion of which Canada would pay 40%, is clearly linked to US efforts to militarize the Arctic and to enable the US launch of a first-strike nuclear war.
- 74) A Globe and Mail interview with Canadian General Jonathan Vance on January 11th, exposed just how far from its self-proclaimed “peace-keeping” role Canada has moved, and how extremely aggressive its stance is towards China and Russia.

“There is no way you can look at the global landscape and see [anything] other than increased indicators of danger and threats. The level of real and actual danger will depend on how it is that nations around the world hold China to account, and the same can be said for Russia.”

- 75) ‘Holding them to account’, includes cementing the Canadian military’s relations with the Pentagon, rock solid support for NATO and NORAD, developing a “grand strategy” with the US to

“confront” China and “retaliate” against Russia, banning Huawei from Canada’s 5G network; and purchasing new fighter jets, frigates costing over \$70 billion, ice-breakers, drones, and other equipment for use in the Arctic against Russia. Vance cited the heads-up the Pentagon gave to Ottawa about its plans to kill Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, as an example of how relations should be cemented.

- 76) If this is the accepted view in the Canadian military over foreign policy, what is their view of domestic policy? What is their view and their involvement in domestic politics, and in particular with far-right and fascist groups like the Proud Boys, and La Meute – founded by two former members of the Canadian Armed Forces in 2015? And what is Parliament doing to keep the military out of politics in Canada, and accountable to Parliament and the public – not the Pentagon?
- 77) This interview underlines once again why Canada must withdraw from NATO and NORAD, why these aggressive military pacts should be dissolved altogether, and why Canada’s military spending must be cut by 75%. Instead of war, these funds should be routed towards civilian spending, on job creation, healthcare, education, childcare, culture and sports, and more.
- 78) January 11th marked the coming into effect of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bans the use, testing, production, manufacture, acquisition, possession and stockpiling of nuclear weapons under international law. The sixty states who ratified the Treaty are all non-nuclear countries, motivated by the holocaust of the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Canada, along with all other members of NATO and NORAD, has not signed or ratified the Treaty. This is a key treaty for multi-lateral nuclear disarmament, and Parliament should be pressed to ratify.
- 79) These facts alone should be sufficient to move masses of people into action for peace and disarmament. But the mass outrage and mass action for peace and disarmament that characterized the last half of the last century, has been overtaken by widespread confusion, resignation, and fear. Imperialism’s doctrines of “responsibility to protect” and “humanitarian intervention” have been very successful in their goal of de-mobilizing the peace forces, and undermining peace sentiment in Canada. The moral certainty that imbued the anti-war movement in the 1960s – 90s, that the US was the unjust and illegal perpetrator of endless wars of aggression, of torture and other war crimes, has been profoundly eroded. Canada is now an active partner in US wars, and Canadian soldiers are now involved in atrocities. Access to accurate information about the real situation in countries attacked by US imperialism is hard to get, and harder to believe in era of social media and disinformation. Racist tropes add more fog to the picture. Aggressors and victims become confused, and paralysis is the result – exactly what US and Canadian governments and military have worked so hard to achieve. Meanwhile the military is providing work and wages for a lot of unemployed youth, while munitions and equipment manufacture provides jobs and wages to a growing number of workers, many of them unionized. Re-directing funds from military spending to civilian spending would create many more jobs, expanded services for youth and the public, and would contribute to ending

climate change. The Greens and the NDP, who used to campaign for peace, have shifted to the right and no longer even discuss peace and disarmament, let alone campaign for it.

- 80) Our work to mobilize the anti-war and peace forces needs to involve a lot of education and information, as well as strong economic arguments, to create the motivation, the clarity of purpose, and the sense of urgency needed to move masses of people into action. Our strong voice will help. But we need to work to ensure that there are strong voices for peace and disarmament in the women's movement, in the trade union movement, in the youth movement, and everywhere we can. Our Party is not, and cannot be, the only voice for peace in Canada. The Canadian Peace Congress has a much wider audience and following among those who are looking for a way forward, and they have done excellent work in the way of educating and mobilizing on key issues of peace and disarmament. We must help the Congress in its campaigns, and in its efforts to build chapters across the country, and in its outreach to the labour and people's movement across Canada.
- 81) The imperialist campaign to isolate and demonize China is growing louder as China's economic growth and international influence continues to expand. While economic growth fell into negative territory in almost every advanced capitalist country, China achieved a growth rate of 2.3% in 2020, rising to 6.5% in the fourth quarter of the year. Its Belt and Road policy has helped to expand China's foreign trade and investment, and expanded its international influence. Further, the rising standard of living for workers and farmers, and its success in raising 700 million people out of deep poverty, sets it apart from the capitalist countries where mass unemployment, precarity, and poverty are growing.
- 82) Imperialism's attacks on China, are the old standards of Cold War rhetoric: human rights, democracy, slave labour, minority rights. They focus on Hong Kong, and the Uighurs to prove their case, but the facts don't align. Hong Kong is part of China, though it was occupied and held as a British colony until it was finally repatriated in 1997. Before 1997 there was no democracy in colonized Hong Kong, and the first election was held after de-colonization when it was repatriated to China. The Communist Party of China adopted a policy of "one country, two systems" through 2047, to ease the transition from capitalism and colonialism to China's socialist system. Hong Kong has autonomy as a Special Administrative Region. As a British colony, Hong Kong had a well-defined class system, and it is these pro-capitalist forces that are behind the protests, and the calls for foreign intervention. A close study of the protests shows that the Chinese government, the government of Hong Kong, and the police have been patient and non-violent, as they work to de-escalate the sometimes violent protests and the calls to insurrection, but they will not tolerate foreign intervention. Ironically in the event, the US government supported rioters who stormed Hong Kong's Parliament buildings.
- 83) Likewise the vicious assertions that the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang are victims of genocide, have been enslaved in concentration camps, denied their language and culture, and forcibly sterilized, also does not stand up to scrutiny. Xinjiang is an autonomous republic in the northwest part of China, in central Asia. About half the population of Xinjiang is comprised of Uighur Muslims, whose rights to language and culture are guaranteed in law, and are visible throughout the

region. Uighur women are not forcibly sterilized, there is no genocide, and in fact the Uighur population is growing. While the Han majority in China were subject to China's one child policy from 1980 to 2016, the Uighurs and other ethnic minorities were not, and were encouraged to have two children. Today the Uighurs and other ethnic minorities are able to have as many as three children, though the Han population is limited to two children per family. It's important to note that the vast majority of the Uighur population does not support ISIS or terrorism, does not hanker for colonial restoration, is enjoying a higher standard of living than at any time previous, and are free to speak their national language, practice their culture and religion, and enjoy their protected rights as an ethnic minority. Some Uighur Muslims have been influenced by the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (akin to ISIS), a terrorist organization that aims to establish a Caliphate in Xinjiang and is responsible for violent terrorist acts committed over more than a decade. Some Uighurs have volunteered - or been coerced - to join this terrorist group, and the government has responded with a mass education program including about terrorism, with vocational education, job creation, and a rise in living standards aimed to undermine and destroy terrorism in Xinjiang. These actions by the government have been deliberately distorted by capitalist governments and media.

- 84) Canada's subservience to the Trump administration's demand that Meng Wanzhou be arrested and held for extradition to the US, while she was in transit at the Vancouver airport 2 years ago, may have seemed like an easy way to score points with the US, however it hasn't turned out that way for the Liberal government. The Chinese government has pushed back hard, with economic sanctions and exposure of Canada's very weak legal case, and morality. The Trump administration tried to link and then equate the detention of convicted spies Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig in China with the detention of Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver, thus facilitating his "let's make a deal" approach to foreign policy. The Canadian government, under pressure from the US and from technology multi-nationals in Canada to prevent China's 5G technology entry into Canada, has adopted this false equation as a way to justify its detention of Meng Wanzhou for extradition to the US on trumped-up charges. In response China has slapped sanctions on Canadian products which are hurting Canadian farmers and exporters. The government of Canada has the power to drop the extradition case against Meng Wanzhou and it should do so now. Further, the government should work to normalize relations with China, by ending its Cold War attacks on China, and its support of capitalist interests and insurrection in Hong Kong.
- 85) Hitler's propaganda chief Goebbels asserted 90 years ago that the more lies that are told, the more outrageous they are, and the more often they are repeated, the more likely they are to be believed, and to be accepted as 'facts'. Today, the lies, conspiracy theories, racism and misogyny emanate from far-right and fascist sources operating through Q-anon, Breitbart News, Rebel News, and the Epoch Times which specializes in attacking China and socialism, as well as a whole slew of social media sites whose job is to spread lies and disinformation, and to reject facts, science, education and critical thinking as "elitism". This is how the far-right in the US developed a mass base, and what these same forces are trying to do here in Canada. Some of these dangerous forces have unfortunately been given undeserved credibility by Canadian-based Global Research, which features articles by a range of authors, from the genuine, anti-imperialist left all the way over to the far right.

- 86) This is why we have to step up our agitation and propaganda work, to be much more effective in reaching out to much larger sections of the people, breaking the blackout during and especially between elections. It's also why we have to work harder to mobilize the public in defence of public education, for accessible and free post-secondary education, for well-funded public broadcasters and news sources, and for a democratic people's culture that rejects the mass corporate culture that swamps the airwaves in English speaking Canada and Quebec, every minute of every day.
- 87) This is also the conduit for virulent anti-communism, which is increasing at a rapid rate. The attacks on "Communist China" are also aimed at us as the advocates and fighters for a socialist Canada, and at socialism itself as a system that is passe, that is unworkable, undemocratic, dictatorial, etc. etc., when in fact China's economic growth has outstripped every country in the world. Anti-communism is increasing now because working people are increasingly questioning and rejecting capitalism, and many are looking left for solutions. Anti-communism is capitalism's attempt to inoculate the public against socialist ideas. Our response: Capitalism is the disease. Socialism is the cure.
- 88) In the Middle East, the Trump Netanyahu 'deal' to break the unity of the Arab League states opposed to Israeli occupation and annexation of Palestine, has succeeded, with Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan agreeing to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel while the Palestinian people are the victims of an escalating genocide. In exchange for Morocco's betrayal of the Palestinian people, the US agreed to recognize "Moroccan sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara territory". This is an agreement of occupation between two occupying powers. The occupied nations of Palestine and Western Sahara are demanding an end to the occupation of their lands, and recognition of their right to self determination as independent states. We condemn this agreement and the silence of the Canadian government and the EU, and we reiterate our support for the just struggles of the Palestinian people and the people of the Western Sahara. Our response will be to redouble our work to build support and solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people and the people of Western Sahara.
- 89) The Biden administration's addition of new conditions on Iran, and a 12 day deadline for Iran to accept them, in exchange for the US rejoining the nuclear agreement, is not a solution, but a new US provocation that will further increase tensions in the region that could lead to new wars. Likewise, there is no movement by the Biden administration to end the war in Syria, or to pressure the Saudis to end their genocidal war on the Houthi in Yemen where massive famine and death reign.

Against Fascism and Reaction

- 90) In Bolivia, the coup against the MAS government of Evo Morales in 2019 was defeated with the re-election of the MAS government in a decisive and a landslide popular vote in October 2020.

Forced into exile by the coup, Evo Morales has now returned and though he is no longer the President, but remains a key leader of the MAS party and movement. While the fascists have been defeated in the election, they remain a factor in the politics of the country and the continent.

- 91) In Chile, the Pinochet Constitution was defeated in another landslide vote, also in October. This was the result of years of work by the trade unions, the Communist Party of Chile, the Mapuche, and the people of Chile. A huge victory in the dismantling of the fascist infrastructure, the struggle now moves to the drafting of a new Constitution to be drawn up over the next two years by representatives to be elected in April. The election of anti-fascists and Communists will be vital to ensure that a democratic constitution is drafted.
- 92) In Ecuador, the Party is mobilizing working people to defeat right-wing and fascist forces in the presidential elections, which held their first round on February 7th. The left candidate, Andrés Arauz, the ally of the former President Rafael Correa, led the vote results by 13 per cent. Since then, the US, Colombia and the OAS have escalated their attacks against Arauz with new slanders and anti-communist lies. The goal is to prevent Arauz from running in the second round and to steal the election. As in Bolivia and Venezuela, we stand with the people of Ecuador against this build up towards a coup.
- 93) In Venezuela, the Maduro government continues to resist efforts at regime change orchestrated in the US and motivated by the Lima Group led by Canada's Deputy PM, Chrystia Freeland. The sanctions, freezing of government assets outside of the country, and other de-stabilizing measures including invasions launched in Colombia, have had a very hard impact on the Venezuelan people and on the Maduro government, causing widespread shortages of food and essentials, and growing hardship. The constant threats of invasion and regime constitute an undeclared war on Venezuela. So too, Canada and the US' continuing recognition of the pretender Juan Guaido as President of the Republic when even the EU has abandoned Guaido and recognizes the Maduro government. In this increasingly difficult and complicated situation, our Party and the progressive movements must intensify solidarity with the Venezuelan people and their struggle for sovereignty and an independent path of economic and social development. Our job is to stay imperialism's bloody hands and let the people of Venezuela determine their path to the future. There will a more detailed report on work in this area later on the agenda.
- 94) In El Salvador and Colombia, right-wing reaction and fascist movements are also on the offensive, using assassinations and terror against FMLN and FARC cadres, and labour and farm leaders.
- 95) In India, the far-right Modi government has been badly shaken as millions of small farmers marched on the capital, camping on the outskirts for 80 days up to now, blocking roads and highways into Delhi, supported by striking workers and trade unions, farm organizations, and with the active aid and assistance of India's Communist Parties. In September the Modi government passed three new laws which will force an estimated 300 million small farmers and

their families off the land, while privatizing and corporatizing farming across the country, implementing a neo-liberal model in agriculture. The farmers have everything to lose, and have promised to continue their protests and blockades for as long as it takes to force the government to rescind the new laws. This struggle is historic. It is the largest insurrection since Independence, and one of the largest in world history. In Canada and around the world, protests and demonstrations have been held in solidarity with the farmers, demanding that the Modi government rescind the laws, while in India mass hunger strike is underway drawing parallels with Gandhi's hunger strike in the struggle against British colonialism.

96) Our Party has supported the protests, and sent strong messages of solidarity, while we have also participated with other south Asian organizations here in solidarity protests across Canada. The Trudeau government has issued weak criticism of the new laws, while we have demanded the government put pressure on the Modi government to rescind these draconian laws.

Climate Change

97) In 2015, the Paris Agreement set very modest targets for reductions of carbon emission globally: to limit global warming to 1.5 to 2 degree C, relative to pre-industrial levels, by 2030. Canada's commitment was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 30% by 2030, and by 80% by 2050, with 2005 as the baseline year. China on the other hand, committed to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, while the US pulled out of the Agreement altogether.

98) During 2020 global carbon emissions fell 17% in the first part of the year due to the pandemic, and then rose as industries started up again, for an overall decline of 4 to 7% for the year. Statistics show that globally the demand for renewables has increased, while demand for fossil fuels has decreased. This is part of the reason for the drop in oil prices, which has negatively affected Canada's petro economy. It's also a reason why multi-national oil corporations are pulling out of the Alberta tarsands. For the first time in US history, renewables are projected to produce more electricity than coal. In sharp contrast, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has called for increased coal mining and coal fired production of electricity, delisting 164 provincial parks including 60 now slated for coal mining. The combined federal/provincial push for the Keystone XL pipeline, has cost Alberta \$1.5 billion to date, with \$4.5 billion in now useless loan guarantees. But the pipeline struggles are far from over as both governments throw their support behind other pipelines including the Trans Mountain from Alberta, through the Rockies to the sea.

99) Yet 2020 was tied with 2016 as the warmest year on record, with massive wildfires in Canada, the US, and Australia; powerful tropical cyclones, rising sea levels, warming oceans that becoming more acidic; and melting polar cap.

100) The fact is that global warming will continue to increase until carbon emissions are reduced to near zero. And that is why urgent and decisive action is called for to reduce emissions in Canada and globally.

- 101) Stimulus spending by the G20 countries (including Canada) in 2020 invested \$240 billion into fossil fuel energy and \$160 billion into clean energy, while the IMF and the World Bank made no distinctions. At the current rate, carbon emissions from fossil fuels will increase at a rate of 2% per year for the next decade, and a 50% increase in fossil fuel production by 2030.
- 102) The Trudeau government's new climate plan announced in early December, is not new however, and builds on the same faulty logic as before, which is to focus on the price on carbon emissions rather than taking direct action to cut emissions in the sectors that produce them. In Canada, 37% of carbon emissions are produced by industry including the oil and gas industry. The top 25 carbon emitting facilities produced 118 megatonnes of emissions, of which 8 are coal fired plants, and 17 are tarsands, steel, refining, and a pipeline – 70% of which are located in Alberta.
- 103) An effective plan would be to cancel the pipeline, close the coal fired plants and the tarsands - with job and wage guarantees for displaced workers; nationalize energy and natural resources, expand renewables as part of a publicly owned energy industry, and nationalize basic steel in order to deeply cut emissions now and to create a publicly owned steel industry in Canada. Green retrofits of public infrastructure including schools and hospitals, and developing a public transportation industry based on electric vehicles. Further, deep cuts to military spending and withdrawal from NATO and NORAD would result in deep cuts to carbon emissions produced by military vehicles on land, sea and air, by weapons, and by buildings.
- 104) If this prescription was followed, Canada's emissions would drop quickly and steeply.
- 105) But the government's plans are much less demanding, and much less effective.
- 106) Climate Action Network Canada executive director Catherine Abreu noted that while other countries are stopping the expansion of fossil fuel investments, Canadian governments "continue to double down on fossil fuels." It will require mass pressure from the labour and people's movements to force federal and provincial governments to change direction and to act decisively, and quickly.
- 107) According to the PM's plan, the new price will rise from the current \$30 a tonne of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to \$40, rising to \$50 a tonne by 2022, then rising by an additional \$15 per tonne every year until 2030, when the price will be \$170 per tonne. The prices are only a proposal however, subject to negotiations with the provinces, which means they will end up much lower than this opening bid by the PM. Alberta's Premier and Energy Minister have already panned the plan, declaring it "yet another attack on Alberta's economy and on Alberta's jurisdiction."
- 108) But putting a higher price on carbon is not a solution, it simply raises the cost of doing business for fossil fuel companies, an increased cost that is passed on to consumers. What's needed is urgent action to stop fossil fuel extraction and transition to renewal energy, while guaranteeing the jobs of workers displaced by the shift.

109) Other pieces of the plan are an energy refit program, support for zero emission vehicles, promotion of hydrogen and other zero emission fuels, and carbon capture technology. What is not mentioned is Indigenous rights and how the plan will impact on UNDRIP legislation which the government has promised to table in Parliament. The government has pledged \$15 billion for the whole program.

The Economic Crisis and the Political Situation in Canada

110) One year in and there's no recovery in sight. Statistics Canada reported at the end of January that 2020 was the worst year for GDP in six decades with an economic contraction of 5.5%. In comparison, the crisis of 1982 saw a contraction of 3.2%, while the 2009 crisis saw GDP fall by 2.9%. This crisis will be protracted, with some sectors never recovering, and many unemployed never going back to work.

111) In its January report the Bank of Canada projected that the economy will go in reverse for the first quarter of 2021, with unemployment at 8.6% in December and still rising due to continued layoffs, furloughs, and bankruptcies. In December alone 63,000 jobs (net) were lost. Over the course of the year, an estimated 1.1 million workers lost their jobs as a result of the crisis. And these are just the official figures.

112) The biggest hits were to women, youth, and racialized people who comprised the largest proportion of those working in the service sector and in part-time and precarious employment. In March, women aged 25 to 54 lost more than twice as many jobs as men. A July study by the Royal Bank showed that women's participation in the labour force had dropped to its lowest point in 30 years. The closure of childcare centres and schools due to the pandemic, was a significant factor in forcing women into their homes, to care for their children, educate them, and also care for extended family, parents and in-laws. The social impacts were over-crowded conditions and increased health risks, increased domestic violence, unreported child abuse, and dramatically increased demand for access to shelters for women and youth, and for the homeless. While the pandemic will lift at some point, these conditions are not likely to change as employers shift work from office to home; and factories and data from Canada to low-waged countries around the globe. The pandemic will lift, but unemployment, part-time and precarious work, and the new conditions of work from home, will remain and worsen. This will make it harder to organize workers, who will be isolated in their homes, not the offices and workplaces where they gathered to work in the past.

113) In December 99,000 jobs in the service sector, tourism, and the arts were lost, and the numbers going forward will undoubtedly continue to rise, with the biggest impact continuing to be on women and racialized peoples. Industrial jobs were also lost as plants shut down, some permanently, while jobs in the resource sector and the wood industry continued their steady decline. In Quebec, the hardest hit sector was tourism, with manufacturing in second place. These jobs are unlikely to return, and if they do it will likely be in the US, as deindustrialization accelerates under cover of the crises.

- 114) Household debt, which was already at record levels before the current crisis hit, has risen to 170.7% of disposable income in the third quarter of 2020, from 162.8% in the second quarter. About 14% of homeowners with mortgages, and 10% of renters asked for bank deferrals last year, while 9.6% asked for payment relief from credit card payments and personal loans in April, a figure that dropped to 4.3% following the government's relief payments that started in late April and have been extended twice since then. These deferrals have since expired along with deferrals for credit card debt and car loans.
- 115) Last year 58,000 small business closed, many in bankruptcy, while the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is projecting further closures that could rise to 222,000, with layoffs affecting 2.95 million jobs.
- 116) A recent poll by Pollara Strategic Insights showed 81% of respondents say Canada is still in recession and that it could last for years. 54% say they're "holding their own" financially (the result of CERB, EI and other income supports), while 22% are in trouble. What working people can expect over the next few months are job and income losses that will be even worse.
- 117) The Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada said in November that the longer the crisis goes on, "the greater the risk of financial trouble for highly indebted households, and the greater the risk of defaults that could impair the whole financial system."
- 118) Meanwhile layoffs by large employers continue. The airline industry has laid off thousands of workers since the start of the crisis, with almost all employees laid off today with the industry's virtual shutdown.
- 119) Mass layoffs in the oil industry have resulted first from dropping global prices, and from the withdrawal of some oil companies from the tarsands and its low grade oil production, and now from the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline in the US. In Alberta, 1,000 construction workers who were working on the Alberta side of the pipeline, were laid off after the Keystone announcement.
- 120) Retail giant Hudson's Bay announced 600 layoffs in Canada, in January, with more likely to follow this spring as corporate landlords and creditors demand payments be made.
- 121) But while small employers went out of business in large numbers, many big employers just got bigger – and richer. Canada's Big Six banks for example have \$70 billion in funds generated over the first 9 months of 2020 that will likely be used to buy up small US banks and further expand into the US market. The Big Three in the grocery industry, Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro made enormous profits during the year, raising prices on essential foods while repealing the \$3 an hour pandemic pay to its front-line workers, almost as soon as it was proclaimed. Despite a 19.7% drop in auto sales, and massive layoffs in the auto industry last year, Linamar, an auto industry parts producer in Ontario, has made huge payouts to its CEO and its shareholders, after receiving \$108.1 million in CEWS payments while paying out \$15.7 million in dividends. Linamar

stock has risen from \$38 in September to over \$70 in December. Linamar wasn't alone. Air Canada also used CEWS to cover its payroll through the spring, laying off thousands of employees the day after the CEWS payments expired. Thirty six of Canada's top-100 CEOs covered their payrolls with CEWS in 2020, and many other profitable companies did as well.

- 122) Canada's twenty top billionaires got \$37 billion richer last year, including grocery store owners Galen Weston and Jim Pattison, e-commerce titan Joseph Tsai, and media tsar David Thompson whose fortune rose by \$8.8 billion in 6 months and is now worth \$50.6 billion. A report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that the top one per cent now own more than 26% of the country's wealth. Globally, the figures are even starker, with the world's richest 500 people adding a record \$1.8 trillion to their combined net worth last year, for a net increase of 31%.
- 123) The past year of economic crisis and pandemic has resulted in a new round of corporate concentration and centralization in Canada and around the globe, as well as a massive reorganization of work. Hours of work, wages, working conditions, and a shift of work from workplace to home have taken place under cover of the pandemic, often in spite of collective agreements and even labour laws. Further, the crisis has accelerated the drive to privatization of public assets and services, through reduced municipal revenues plus increased costs for services needed as a result of the pandemic and the economic crisis. Privatization is also being fast-tracked with P3 contracts for hospitals, schools, and infrastructure through the federal infrastructure bank.
- 124) As noted with the CEWS program, the federal government's recovery benefits have helped to stave off a full-fledged collapse, however the vast majority of funds have been funneled to Big Business as stimulus to restart the economy. Subsidies to workers have been limited to CERB, from April to September, and CRB from October to March 2021, and EI which was expanded and increased in December, but runs out after 45 weeks.
- 125) The impact of the crisis on workers has been enormous, with income losses which rose to \$100 billion during the second quarter of 2020 alone. The impact of lost jobs and wages quickly spiralled with the loss of savings, accumulation of rent arrears and evictions. At \$500 / week gross, the CERB payments were not enough to pay for housing let alone other living expenses in Canada's big cities. In April 2021 CERB recipients will have to pay tax on the CERB benefits to Revenue Canada, whether they are working or not. Further, Revenue Canada is now demanding repayment of all benefits from some recipients, claiming they were not entitled to the benefits. The government and CRA should grant amnesty in both situations.
- 126) Municipal governments have been hit very hard, dealing first-hand with the double whammy of meeting the economic and healthcare crises, without either the funding or the powers needed to do the job. Across the country, Mayors and City Councils are demanding funding and support from senior levels of government, receiving just \$2.2 billion from the federal government, much less than the \$10 billion asked for. Provincial funding is also much less than needed. Legally obliged to balance their budgets, cities are facing the choice of massive cuts to

services and/or privatization of services, and huge increases to property taxpayers including tenants and homeowners. School boards are in a similar position with provincial governments, but without taxing powers most are solely dependent on provincial transfer payments.

127) Frontline workers in healthcare, as well as in education, childcare and essential government services such as transportation, sanitation, postal services, and food services and delivery, have all faced the dangers of contracting COVID-19 because of unsafe work places and working conditions, inadequate supplies of PPE, and the absence of paid sick days for 60% of the workforce including 90% of low-wage workers.

128) In long-term care homes, in meat packing plants, and on farms employing foreign temporary workers, workplace and working conditions have proved deadly, with high rates of infection and death among workers.

129) Throughout the last several months, we have campaigned for a people's recovery plan that focus on immediate government support for workers, the unemployed, and those unable to work, and a longer term plan for an economic recovery for workers involving fundamental economic and social reforms. These include:

- * expanding EI to include all the unemployed, for the full duration of unemployment, at 90% of previous earnings
- * substantially increasing the minimum wage which we are demanding be raised to \$23 / hour for all workers across Canada
- * substantially raising pensions while reducing the pension age to 60 with full benefits
- * introducing a Guaranteed Annual *Livable* Income across Canada
- * outlawing evictions, foreclosures and utility cut-offs due to unemployment
- * canceling taxation of CERB and CRB benefits, and ending related prosecutions of CERB and CRB recipients
- * creating good, environmentally sustainable jobs with good wages, and a universal system of quality public and free childcare, as the key stimulus to economic recovery

And on healthcare:

- * legislating 14 paid sick days per year
- * making Long Term Care part of Medicare, with Canada-wide standards
- * raising wages and eliminating part-time work in healthcare
- * guaranteeing vaccine and PPE supplies with Canadian plants and operations
- * securing global vaccine equity by making vaccines free

130) The longer term plan includes fundamental change that would curb corporate power and that would address climate change with decisive action to cut emissions by closing the Alberta

tarsands, nationalizing energy and natural resource industries, and deeply cutting the military budget.

- 131) The longer term plan would expand labour and democratic rights, equality rights of women, racialized people, immigrants, and 2s/LGBTiQ persons, and would recognize the national rights of Indigenous Peoples, Quebec, and Acadians.
- 132) It would nationalize the banks and insurance companies, Big Pharma, Air Canada; and would take Canada out of job-destroying corporate free trade deals like USMCA, and instead build up Canada's manufacturing and secondary industries, build a million units of affordable social housing, infrastructure, and public transit systems that are part of a new transportation policy based on sustainable and affordable mass public transit. This plan includes expansion of public services and social programs, reversing decades of privatization, expanding Medicare, making post-secondary education free, and introducing a universally accessible, free, and quality public childcare system. And it includes progressive tax reform and cuts to military spending, to finance a People's Recovery that is so urgently needed.
- 133) The full program is attached here, for review and discussion tomorrow.
- 134) This is a program with legs, and has been well received across the country, generating a lot of interest in our Party. Given that this economic crisis will be protracted, and that conditions are likely to worsen significantly before there is any recovery, we need to step up the campaign in 2021.

The Coming Federal Election

- 135) For the last 15 months, the Liberals have governed with a minority. This has led to some concessions extracted by the NDP, most notably the increase of EI minimums to \$500 / week, secured last fall. More concessions might have been won if the NDP had been more willing to press for them, and if the right-wing leadership of the labour movement had been more willing to fight and less inclined to climb into bed with the government and business during the pandemic.
- 136) The Liberals are anxious to hold an election and secure a majority government so as to be able to implement their policies with a free hand, as they have been able to do for much of 2020 already and with several scandals to prove it. What makes this urgent from their perspective is the growing demand from Big Business, the banks, and the Tories for austerity policies that will turn public opinion against the government, and make it easier for the Tories to defeat them in an election. They could call it as early as this spring, or in the fall, but it's almost certain to be this year.
- 137) The Tories were anxious for an election last fall, when their new leader Erin O'Toole was largely unknown by voters, while the Liberals were engulfed by the WE Charity scandal. They are

in less of a hurry now that deep and poisonous views of many members and leaders in their party have been exposed to public dismay. These include the racist and misogynist views and actions of social conservative leadership candidates Derek Sloan, Leslyn Lewis and Pierre Poilievre, and the just resigned Senator Lynn Beyak, among others. An Angus Reid poll of Canadians, taken just after the US election in November, showed that 41% of Conservatives polled would have voted for Trump; an astounding and troubling revelation that puts them in the company of Trump supporters Ezra Levant, Conrad Black, Brian Mulroney, and Jenni Byrne, Harper's former chief of staff in the PMO. Further, O'Toole's connections with Rebel News have exposed his own connections to the far right in Canada, and exposed his Labour Day message as nothing more than a Trumpian pitch to discouraged workers. O'Toole's call to "unleash the private sector" and implement a flat tax has not been widely embraced either.

138) The NDP has been hampered by the fact that many of its policies are similar to the Liberals' policies. They were able to secure improvements to EI in December, and are campaigning for expansion of Medicare to include LTC and for pharmacare, for a national childcare program, for a wealth tax on the ultra-rich, and for UNDRIP legislation federally. Still trying to woo business and transform themselves into a neo-liberal New Labour party, it has relegated itself to the mushy middle on military spending and foreign policy issues such as China. This has made it easier for the Liberals to infiltrate the labour movement, as well.

139) The Greens have elected a new leader, Annamie Paul, who is politically to the right of Elizabeth May. The first Black woman to lead a federal political party, she was unable to secure a seat in Parliament in September's Toronto Centre bi-election, though she was the runner-up. The campaign for the Green leadership was a hard fought race with left wing candidate Dmitri Lascaris in second place. Many who joined the Greens to support his campaign will be likely leave the party as it moves further to the political centre. We have worked with the Greens on issues such as proportional representation and can work with them on climate justice, Indigenous rights, and a guaranteed annual livable income.

140) The Bloc Quebecois has opposed the government in confidence votes this fall, lining up with the Tories to force an election. It enjoys wide support among Quebecois/es who see the BQ as defenders of Quebec's sovereignty and interests in Ottawa. In the last federal election the BQ took many of the seats won by the NDP in the 2011 Orange Wave, and aims to increase its seats in Parliament and also its profile in Quebec's labour movement. The BQ has supported the CAQ's mis-named secularism legislation (Bill 21), but it has also introduced Bills in Parliament opposing the US blockade of Cuba, and sanctions on Venezuela.

141) Three provincial elections have been held during the late summer and fall, with all returning incumbents to majority governments. The Liberal government in Newfoundland and Labrador called an election for February 13th with similar hopes, however an upsurge in the pandemic closed voting polls, resorting to mail-in ballots due March 12 instead. -A Commission on economic recovery is expected to make its recommendations public shortly after the election. The President of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour has resigned from the Commission in protest of some or all of the recommendations, which likely include privatization, it has been

suggested. The timing of the election before the report's release has been strongly criticized. The NDP has three of the forty seats in the Legislature, but has not been unable to field candidates in every riding.

- 142) The federal government's Fiscal Update in early December was in fact a trial balloon for an election call, featuring a juicy menu of election goodies including \$70 to \$100 billion to be spent on a national childcare program, pharmacare, a green transition, safe drinking water, and tax reform. The government also announced \$51.7 in spending over the next 2 years to extend and enhance the CEWS program and deliver a new commercial rents program for business, extend CRB and improve EI for the unemployed, put aside \$1 billion in emergency funding for Long Term Care, and deliver a green retrofit program. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland proclaimed it the biggest recovery plan since WW II, and it is the biggest public investment in recovery among the industrialized countries. The federal deficit is expected to top \$381 billion before the government is done, with the largest part of it being transfers to Big Business through the various recovery programs such as the CEWS benefit, LEEFF, and others. But it's working people who, as always following an economic crisis, will be the ones to pay the bills.
- 143) The debate over the deficit and debt is one of the most muddied, precisely because those who profited from the bailouts and transfers that created the deficits and debts, do not want to be held responsible for bringing it down. Instead they blame the unemployed, precarious workers, and the poor for ballooning national debts, and demand that they should pay the bills through cuts to wages and living standards, social programs and public services. The austerity imposed on working people after the 2008 crisis did not significantly reduce the deficit, though it did slash the wages and living standards of the working class, while enriching the corporations and the very wealthy, and increasing the gap between the rich and the rest.
- 144) True to form, Finance Minister Freeland has stated that she is taking advice from former PM Paul Martin who made a massive grab of EI funds and slashed social programs in the '90s to finance corporate tax cuts and deficits. Thirty years later, right-wing think-tanks like the CD Howe Institute, the Big Six banks, business organizations, and former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge are urging fiscal discipline and cuts, in other words austerity. According to right-wing columnist Konrad Yakabuski in the Globe and Mail, real austerity looks like Greece where "the EU and IMF... took a hacksaw to spending, resulting in real wage cuts for public sector workers, reduction of as much as 40% in public pensions and massive tax increases." This is the corporate prescription for deficit reduction, and where we're headed if the labour movement fails to mobilize for a fight at the CLC's June convention.
- 145) The issue here isn't whether the government should ante up funds to keep working people afloat during this deep economic and healthcare crisis. The issue is who should pay for it, and why publicly funded bailouts should include large profitable corporations, whose limitless greed fed the crisis the world's people are engulfed in now.
- 146) Instead of corporate bailouts and handouts, Canada should tax the corporations and their wealthy owners and investors. Instead of bailouts, we should nationalize Air Canada which was

publicly owned until 1988, and Bombardier, and restore services and routes across Canada that were cut in order to produce profits for CEOs and shareholders. These services will generate profits when the pandemic passes, and these profits should go to the people of Canada in the form of quality public transportation services.

- 147) Instead of permanent mass unemployment, the government should introduce a 32 hour work week with 40 hours pay, and create good jobs, with rising wages, pensions, and living standards, and growing real wealth on Main Street, instead of the speculative wealth of the hedge funds on Bay Street and Wall Street.
- 148) Progressive tax reform will shift the tax burden onto those most able to pay: the corporations and the wealthy, and reduce the tax burden on working people, the unemployed, and the poor. Substantially increasing the corporate tax rate, restoring the capital tax, raising the tax on capital gains to 100% on realized and unrealized gains, closing corporate tax loopholes and collecting deferred corporate taxes, closing access to international tax havens which took in \$450 billion in international transfers out of Canada between 2016 and 2019.
- 149) Cutting military spending is the other route to increased social spending. Vastly increased military spending under Harper, and increased commitments to NATO under Trudeau, guarantee that a 75% cut would yield billions of dollars for social spending and a People's Recovery in Canada.
- 150) These are the issues we will have to fight on in the coming election, which could come as early as this spring, or later, in the fall. Either way we need to nail down candidates and ridings in the next six weeks, securing nominations and support wherever we can.
- 151) This will be a very important election for working people, and the future.

The Fightback

- 152) The struggle against systemic racism has dominated across the country throughout the year, with the campaign to defund the police taking centre stage. Mass demonstrations took place throughout the year, including sit-ins and occupations outside police and municipal buildings across the country, organized by numerous Black organizations under the banner of the BLM movement, to fight for racial equality, and the primary demands for an end to police killings, and for reform of policing, reduction of police budgets, and civilian control over police in the wake of the murder George Floyd in the US, and police killings of numerous Black and Indigenous people in Canada.
- 153) Police budgets, which are the largest single expenditure in municipal budgets in Canada, have been targeted for cuts of 50%, and have garnered support from significant sections of the labour movement including the OFL, CUPW, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, as well as Indigenous Peoples and other anti-racist and progressive organizations. We support defunding

the police, demilitarizing, and disarming most police units, and using these funds to support affordable social housing, education, healthcare including mental healthcare, community centres and amateur sports and culture, etc. We also demand strict civilian control over police, with teeth.

- 154) Black Lives Matter is an organization, as well as a movement that includes that includes many Black organizations involved in the anti-racist struggles today, and it is these organizations that are collectively leading most of the protests. We support this movement and have been active in solidarity actions across the country. Bringing the labour movement across the country to actively support this movement for equality will be an important step to building a broader people's coalition.
- 155) Indigenous People have also been very active through the past year, fighting for their land and inherent rights, against oil and gas companies, pipelines and dams in western Canada, and for their fishing rights in Nova Scotia. The explosion of racist violence against the Mi'kmaq fishery in October escalated from harassment and interference with Indigenous fishers on land and at sea, to the illegal theft and destruction of Indigenous lobster traps, equipment, ramming Indigenous boats, burning a fish boat, and firing live ammunition at Indigenous fishers, to the destruction of two Indigenous fish storage facilities with rocks and gasoline while fishers were trapped inside. Throughout all of these events, the RCMP and police stood by, watching the attacks unfold. The Hell's Angels were reportedly involved, and were said to be responsible for silencing a spokesman for small commercial fishers who opposed the violence.
- 156) The RCMP's failure to intervene to stop the attacks, to arrest mob leaders, and protect Indigenous fishers endangered by mob violence, combined with the federal government's failure to order the RCMP to act, is clear evidence of systemic racism and of government collusion to wipe out the Indigenous fishery.
- 157) The right of the Indigenous peoples of NS to an Indigenous fishery is undeniable. The 1752 Treaty of Peace and Friendship guaranteed the Mi'kmaq the right to earn a "moderate livelihood" from hunting and fishing. In 1999 the Supreme Court of Canada rejected the federal government's challenge in the Marshall case, and upheld Indigenous rights to hunt and fish.
- 158) Behind the scenes is the Clearwater corporation, the largest producer of shellfish in North America, which operates year-round with exclusive rights to trap 720 tonnes of lobster in the biggest lobster fishing area off NS, annually. Clearwater has a direct interest in diverting attention from its own massive profits, unsustainable fishing practices, and court appearances for gross violations of DFO regulations. Its virtual monopoly on fishing in NS means it effectively sets the price for the lobster catch, and for the poor wages and living standards of small commercial fishers.
- 159) At the end of the 2020, Clearwater's owner sold its operations to a joint venture of the Mi'kmaq and a BC company, Premium Brands. The deal includes a coalition of Mi'kmaq peoples

from across the Maritimes and Newfoundland, who hope the 'historic' deal will finally end the violence and the struggle over Indigenous fishing rights. In BC, the west coast salmon fishery is also threatened by the offshore fish farming factories. A struggle to move the fish farms out of the ocean and onto land where they won't threaten the wild salmon, continues.

160) In Ontario the struggle for land and Treaty rights has resumed in Caledonia, at 1492 Landback Lane, where developers have once again started to build a new housing subdivision on unceded Indigenous land on the Haldimand Tract. The Indigenous occupation began in July and has continued since. Twenty years ago, another developer tried to build a subdivision on a nearby site which led to an earlier occupation and eventual abandonment by the developer. The occupation was attacked by racist mobs and police numerous times, before it was over. The Party actively supported that earlier struggle with solidarity dinners and meetings organized by the Party in Hamilton. Party members from southern Ontario have participated in labour solidarity events supporting the current struggle as well.

161) These and many other struggles, as seen by the "Land Back" demand, illustrate the growing resistance against capitalist resource extraction and export policies by Indigenous peoples and their allies. At the heart of this movement is complete rejection of the land theft, cultural genocide and assimilation strategies upon which the modern Canadian capitalist state was based. We extend our full support and solidarity to Indigenous land defenders and water protectors engaged in resisting corporate, government and police attacks against their inherent and traditional territories - including both lands which were the subject of unfair treaties, and lands which were never ceded during either the colonial or the imperialist era. We call upon all levels of government to make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a living reality. Genuine steps to meet the demands of Indigenous peoples and First Nations must include an end to all forms of police and court actions against land defenders and water protectors, protection against racist vigilante attacks on Indigenous peoples, and settlement of all outstanding land issues on the basis of recognition of First Nations sovereignty.

162) In western Canada, the struggle against pipelines continues, with Indigenous Peoples leading the struggle on the ground. The fight against the Site C dam also continues, as costs escalate dramatically due to long-foreseen geotechnical problems which threaten the physical integrity of the project. Pressure on the NDP provincial government is mounting, including a new lawsuit against Site C by the West Moberly First Nation. These are important struggles for Indigenous rights, as well as for environmental justice and against climate change.

163) These movements against systemic racism and police violence, and for Indigenous rights to land and fishery and hunting, have been the most visible and active, with protests, demonstration, and occupations through the past year, despite the dangers of the pandemic. And there has been solidarity support for these struggles from the labour and peoples movements. This will be more visible once the pandemic passes.

164) Regrettably, the CLC leadership has spent most of the past year advocating tri-partism. The CLC's joint statements with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce that "We're All in This

Together” is a declaration of peace – at least for the year or so that the pandemic and economic crisis rages. But the working class is taking a terrible beating during this pandemic and crisis, while the biggest corporations are making a killing.

- 165) Every worker knows that we’re not all in this together, they live it every day. This complete collapse of leadership and capitulation to the Liberal government, was most clearly seen in the decision by CLC President Hassan Yussuff to endorse former Liberal Finance Minister, and millionaire, Bill Morneau for Secretary-General of the OECD. The announcement resulted in an immediate outpouring of anger from affiliates and Labour Councils across the country. For the NDP lieutenants in the labour movements it was a betrayal of the NDP. For others it was outrage at the CLC’s apparent capitulation to the Liberal Party and corporate Canada.
- 166) But there was an earlier sign of deep trouble. It was the CLC President’s blistering public attack on CLC Vice President Donald Lafleur for attending a trade union conference on the war in Syria and its horrendous impact on working people in that country. Although Lafleur attended as an individual, at his own expense, he was subjected to a scathing attack by Yussuff on CBC radio while he was still in transit and before Yussuff had even spoken to him.
- 167) These two events clearly show the cleavage in the CLC, and the two opposing directions that labour can take. On the one hand, class collaboration and solidarity with the Liberals and the employers, and on the other class struggle and class solidarity with workers in struggle around the world.
- 168) That’s the choice at the coming CLC Convention in June 2021, when a new leadership will be elected and decisions will be made – or not made – on how to unite a politically and organizationally divided labour movement, how to bring Unifor back into the CLC, and how to move labour onto the offensive in the struggle against employers and reactionary governments in the conditions of a pandemic, deep economic crisis, and a mounting attack on workers’ rights, wages, pensions and living standards.
- 169) Contending leadership slates offer little choice or help to workers, who are being asked to choose between candidates who are closer to the NDP or to the Liberals, and to agree that policy-making and action programs are best left to leadership to decide. Vice-President Lafleur who is running for re-election supported by his union and progressives in the trade union movement, stands out from the crowd.
- 170) The CLC Convention will be on-line in June, creating new challenges for the left at the Convention.
- 171) The Action Caucus is organizing and has broadened its base considerably over the last year. Workers who are facing layoffs, furloughs, and permanent unemployment are searching for the left current in the labour movement, and for militant action in defence of working class interests, including moving the labour movement as a whole onto the offensive against profit-hungry corporations and right-wing governments.

- 172) Progressives in the trade union movement, including Communists, need to get to this convention and help to strengthen the fight for a militant trade union movement and leadership based class struggle policies and mobilizations.
- 173) Public sector unions have been a special target of right-wing governments, and those in healthcare and education have come under particular attack during the pandemic. Workers in healthcare and education have fought back, demanding safe working conditions for themselves and their patients and students. These fights have been mainly with provincial governments that are responsible for health and education; many of them Tory governments across the country. These governments have put up very little money to address these urgent needs, relying on the federal government to pay the freight. Frontline workers in both the public and private sectors have been demanding the pandemic pay promised by public and private employers with lots of publicity, but still no delivery.
- 174) A number of unions have tried to exercise the right to refuse unsafe work laws, almost all of which have been denied. This includes transit workers and private sector unions such as the building trades. Almost every one has been denied.
- 175) In Quebec, the CSQ which represents 125,000 teachers and nurses who have been without a contract for almost a year, has received a strike mandate of 73%. These are front line workers, exhausted from working without adequate protections and supports during the pandemic, and angry at the CAQ government for their indifference to their working conditions, health, low wages, and their rights. The strike mandate is for a 5 day strike aimed to pressure the government to negotiate. Whether it will result in a contract, or will spark a larger struggle remains to be seen. The Common Front of unions which had enormous power in previous negotiations is not present in the current negotiations, leaving workers and their individual unions in a weaker position than in previous contract negotiations, but a Common Front could still be forged in the heat of the negotiations still ahead involving several unions.
- 176) There is also a developing movement in Quebec against Bill 59, which if passed, will make devastating changes to health and safety legislation for workers. As the national Committee of the PCQ noted in its brief to the National Assembly, it's no coincidence that the CAQ government decided to table the Bill in the midst of the pandemic, hoping to minimize mobilized opposition by the labour movement and injured workers' organizations.
- 177) Two important strikes have taken place in recent months: the 3 months long Dominion Stores strike in Newfoundland and Labrador involving 1400 workers at 11 stores owned by Loblaws over part-time work and low wages; and the 6 months long Co-op Refinery strike in Regina where the defined benefit pension plan was on the chopping block. In both cases the corporations were determined to impose their demands, and the workers responded with a determination to fight and to win against powerful, rich and arrogant corporations. The strikes were both by UNIFOR bargaining units, and received widespread support and solidarity from CLC affiliated unions, and community support. Provocations and violence by the company against

strikers on the picket lines at Co-op Refinery generated wide public anger, as did the widely publicized fat profits banked by Loblaw's during the pandemic while they cut the \$2 / hour pandemic pay, along with 60 full time jobs, in order to cut wages and eliminate benefits for the vast majority of grocery store workers. These two strikes exemplify the reasons why the labour movement needs to unite to fight the employers, secure and improve wages, pensions and working conditions, and roll back the employer-government offensive.

178) As the pandemic recedes, and the effects of corporate restructuring, cuts, and layoffs become clearer, we can expect more strikes and more struggles by unionized workers fighting to protect their jobs, wages, health, and living standards, and by the unemployed, precarious workers, women and youth struggling to make ends meet. This is where the Party needs to intervene, to be active, in the streets, on the picket-lines, in the movements, in the struggles, linking the struggles for immediate reforms with the struggle for fundamental change and for socialism. Or as Lenin put it, welding socialist ideology onto the working class movement. The period ahead will be full of class and social conflict as working people struggle to survive a prolonged crisis and offensive by capital. Our Party, our clubs and our members must be active and involved in these struggles, fighting for working class rights and standards, providing leadership, taking initiative, exposing capitalism, advocating for socialism. In the process we will also build the Communist Party, member by member among the best of those involved in these struggles.

179) Struggles against evictions and foreclosures, and for the rights of tenants and homeless people have opened up across the country as greedy landlords try to force the unemployed out of their homes, and to raise rents. In Toronto, our members have been very active in the rent strike, in housing the homeless, and in organizing unemployed tenants during the pandemic. In Winnipeg, Vancouver and Montreal, the Party is becoming involved in similar struggles. These struggles will grow as the crisis continues and deepens across the country.

180) Housing prices have risen by 11% in Montreal, by 13.5% in Toronto, and by 11.7% in Vancouver in 2020 over 2019, despite the economic crisis. The housing bubble could burst at any time, leaving new and young homeowners with enormous mortgage debt and little equity. Rents have fallen in the downtown condos, as tenants who had jobs headed for cheaper housing in the suburbs where they could work at home, but the cost of rental housing is still unaffordable in most of Canada's big cities. In Toronto, CMHC figures show 11% of tenants were unable to pay their rent last year, while 13,000 eviction hearings were held in the last 3 months alone. This is the real situation for tenants across the country suffering the horrendous impact of layoffs and high rents. This is another public health crisis in which cities are ill-equipped to handle and without the funds to build social housing, or even temporary or emergency housing. The immediate solutions are to ban evictions, foreclosures and utility cut-offs during the pandemic, and to house the homeless in hotels until housing is available. The solution is to increase the supply of affordable social housing across the country, which will bring down hugely inflated house prices in the for-private, for-profit market.

181) As the pandemic recedes as a result of the vaccine's spread, the pace of the struggle will pick up, and these struggles will become more visible, and the fightback will grow. Without the kind of action we have proposed to permanently support working people and the unemployed with jobs, incomes, and expanded social programs including childcare that will help women to rejoin the workforce, the crisis will deepen as the federal government moves to cut income supports, and introduce austerity measures to bring down the deficit. This is capitalism's way out of the crisis in the 21st century.