



Nothing to Lose

Autoworkers in the fight of their lives

by Mick S

Ontario – An estimated 5000-7000 jobs were lost in the Ontario auto industry in the last couple of months as General Motors (GM) announced that it will close its flagship Oshawa truck plant in 2009 and auto-parts companies like Progressive Moulded Products and Magna followed suit shortly afterwards. According to the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW), the Canadian auto industry including both assembly and parts has lost a total of nearly 30,000 jobs since 2001.

This comes hot on the heels of a controversial no-strike agreement between the CAW and auto-parts giant Magna Inc. as well as early concessionary contract agreements between the CAW and the big three auto-manufacturers: GM, Ford and Chrysler.

Upon news of the Oshawa truck plant closing, hundreds of CAW members responded by setting up a blockade of GM's corporate offices for two weeks before getting slapped with an injunction and a lawsuit by GM. Union leaders complied, urging their members to "stay tuned," but ruled out any workplace or strike action. Over one month later there has been no signs of any resumption of any protests.

"At this point, we're not going to pull our workforce out of the plants," CAW Local 222 president Chris Buckley stated on June 16th, "We understand the auto industry is not very healthy at this time and we're not going to put our members' jobs at risk."

One has to question if the announcement that GM was slashing tens of thousands of jobs in a panicked effort to stem GM's hemorrhaging of money at a rate of \$3 billion a quarter doesn't already put jobs at risk.

On July 7, only a few days after learning that their employer Progressive Moulded Products had filed for bankruptcy and closed down their 11 Toronto area plants, a large group of angry non-union workers followed the Oshawa lead and set up a picket line to try and pressure for severance pay. While this action started off strong with hundreds of workers out on the picket line, it faded after a couple of weeks as a protocol was agreed to, likely at the advice of CAW leadership that intervened, that saw trucks allowed through the picket line at timed intervals until all tools and equipment were systematically removed. With this crucial leverage gone, the pickets became largely symbolic and it is unlikely that workers will receive any reasonable compensation.

While the pickets in Oshawa and then Toronto show the potential strength of workers to stand up and resist these attacks,

they have not been enough. Wildcat strikes, plant occupations and above all organizing with co-workers is required should autoworkers stand up against the bosses and defend jobs. It won't be easy, but nobody else is in the position to do it. If autoworkers do not respond strongly, even radically, to this blatant attack on their livelihoods, it is likely that these trends will continue in both Canada and the USA.



Windsor rally, May 27 2007 — credit: CAW media

about us>>

Common Cause is an Ontario anarchist organization. We publish the Linchpin paper bimonthly, as well as additional content online. Locals are active in Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto, and there is interest elsewhere, including northern Ontario. We welcome new members and alliances with activist groups. Contact us at: commoncauseontario@gmail.com

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Residential School Apology

an anarchist view

by Rev

On June 11th 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, claimed to apologize for residential schools and the government's plan to destroy the cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This apology came after a similar apology was given to Indigenous people in Australia. Residential or boarding schools were part of colonial policy in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Canada. Harper's apology talked about the abuses and cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples in Canada by the Canadian government, especially the forced removal of children from their families. However, there is so much that Harper did not say. What he left out was that the residential schools were just one aspect of colonization.

Residential schools were run by churches, led by the Department of Indian Affairs for most of their existence. They focused on a total approach to assimilation: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. The Indigenous children stolen from their families were to be made into Canadians by force. The curriculum was created to allow the destruction of Indigenous ways of living on the

land. The idea of "killing the Indian and saving the man," was really about making way for capitalist ways of living on the land. In essence, residential schools aimed at handing over Indigenous land to corporations and turning Indigenous people into workers. Since Canadian society was based on private property while most Indigenous communities held the land in common, residential schools taught skills for private property ownership and taught the values of a capitalist society

to the children. In the mind of the churches and the government, the Indigenous person was to become a settler and worker for the ruling class.

The residential schools were first called Manual Labour or Industrial schools and this says a lot about their actual purpose. The schools spent a half day teaching lessons in the classroom, the other half was spent learning trades or housework. The schools aimed to produce workers that were able to be exploited for wages or for their crops. The students were taught to be hard working and obedient like all good white Christian workers. Or in other words, to respect the authority of the church, state and the capitalist bosses. This is the same idea as the workhouse or poorhouse in Europe, to discipline and create the working class.

Authority and fear were central to the goals and methods of the residential schools. Indigenous societies were very free and equal. European society on the other hand used discipline and power to control people. Residential schools used power and violence to train Indigenous peoples to submit to settler society and the figures of authority in it. Indigenous peoples were taught to behave like white people or face punishment, just like all settler children are taught to behave or face punishment. Those who ran residential schools argued that Indigenous parents did not exercise proper authority over their children.

The residential school curriculum tried to destroy Indigenous languages in order to remove the people from the land. Indigenous languages often name an object by what you can use it for. For instance,



Cecilia Jeffries Indian Residential School, Kenora, Ontario
Picture courtesy of Nishnawbe Aski Nation Residential Schools Project, www.nan.on.ca, The Shingwauk Project

plants are often named after what healing properties they offer. The elimination of this knowledge through the teaching of English imposed settler ways of living, because the necessary knowledge to live Indigenous was lost.

Residential Schools also taught sexism and the rule of men over women (patriarchy). Girls were taught to be domestic and remain in the home, while very often Indigenous women had more freedom and could do many jobs outside the home. Women were taught that Christian marriage was right rather than be brought up in a clan system where women's solidarity and collective power protected women from male oppression. Women were taught to be inferior and this destroyed the backbone of the gender equality in Indigenous societies. This inequality was essential to the development of the working class in all European societies. The production of the Christian nuclear family is the linchpin of capitalist society.

To wrap up, residential schools were a project to spread capitalism. Residential schools were meant to turn Indigenous peoples into settlers and make them workers and peasants for the capitalist system. Harper will never apologize for the real goals of the residential schools. Many Indigenous peoples, such as the Assembly of First Nations, are even scared to admit how colonized they remain. Really discussing decolonization will require the unsettling of capitalism. Recognizing that colonization and capitalism are the same process, shows us that the struggle for Indigenous freedom from the authority of bosses and the government is a natural ally with the anarchist struggle for freedom.

Updates on Indigenous activism

"Bob Lovelace and the KI Six were released from prison after serving three and two months respectively of six month sentences for contempt of court."

— Judy Rebick, May 30, www.rabble.ca

"AbitibiBowater, the largest newsprint company in the world and the only one still logging on Grassy Narrows land, announced it would leave Grassy Narrows effective immediately. ... [T]he Grassy Narrows campaign ... included the longest-running blockade in North American history."

— Jessica Bell, June 23, www.alternet.org

"On June 14 ... Canadian border control officers brutally attacked Katenies and Kahentinetha, two Mohawk grandmothers. Both are part of the MNN network and known for their outspoken criticism of U.S., Canadian and international power cartels."

— June 23, www.mohawknationnews.com

www.ocap.ca/supporttmt

www.barrierelakesolidarity.blogspot.com

It's the stupid economy

by Big B

There's value in not declaring a recession if you're the U.S. or Canadian financial regulators responsible for the economy – let alone a depression. And it may not be for what regular readers of Linchpin would think the reasons are either. There are few signs that the right-wing strategists who analyse world security and the markets – and whose analysis goes on to influence the conservative governments here and in the U.S. – are worried about scenes from the Grapes of Wrath enveloping the heartland, or that ten thousand fresh memberships in communist organizations will be filled out tomorrow if a depression proves real.

They're worried about consumer panic that will halt the unprecedented economic growth of the last ten or fifteen years ... they're worried about having offered every innovation that can grow an economy (like the car did, and flat screen tv's can now) faster than they can develop new ones ... they're worried about having to replace sheer profit with widespread social programs – the fall-out of Hurricane Katrina – only all the time, and everywhere – and the one apparent les-

son learned from the last great depression. They're worried about their bottom line.

What's clear is that the Western economies can't be saved this time out with the innovation and new economies created through war, since the U.S. adopted the model of permanent war post-9-11. And in the case of the U.S. they're worried because any recession now would be a clear indication that the world no longer values its currency, and can no longer afford the way the U.S. has chosen to secure its energy routes. It's feeling a little like the end of empire. Especially when the East can afford, and manage permanently, scenes from the Grapes of Wrath, and in fact spin, like finely woven silks, that misery into an asset of their economy – much like England did at the start of the industrial revolution.

Asia has no shortage of food staples such as rice (nor does the U.S., who grows 90% of its grain staple needs). It was reported recently that Thai rice growers were fetching as much as a thousand dollars per tonne of rice – an unprecedented amount. What the world food markets are experiencing now is a crisis in the distribution of food staples,

brought on by the unsustainable way the U.S. has chosen to secure its energy routes mentioned before.

Technically, there isn't a recession in the U.S. at present – if a recession is defined as two consecutive fiscal quarters (roughly three months a piece) with negative growth. The U.S. fed tells us this isn't so, and other bell weathers such as the newest job loss figures suggest that things aren't recession bad. But the language of the markets is largely a made up one, understood by its practitioners, but experienced by us all. And as much as there are regulators able to drive inflation down as an act of absolute state power at these first signs of crisis, there are enough analysts and money managers whispering depression to make it none-the-less self-fulfilling. Hard as it is to ignore when people walk away from their homes en masse, cannot manage their debts en masse, cannot afford to heat their homes, or drive their cars en masse – and when whole economies contract around the cost of supplying the fuel necessary to bring the goods to market, it would seem inevitable that tough times are ahead.

Against the state and capital on the high seas

By Marley B

Thanks to the work of a rare breed of historians (see below) we now know that the pirates of the 17th and 18th centuries, rather than violent thieves, were in fact rebels against the oppression of the young modern state and of a still-emerging capitalism. The (mostly) men who became pirates were poor sea-labourers, slaves and navy sailors who, in the face of extreme exploitation and tyranny at the hands of merchant and navy captains, decided to throw off their chains and build alternative ways of life that represent some of the first experiments of the modern era with direct democracy and radical equality.

When they mutineed, pirates replaced the dictatorship of the merchant or navy captains and elected their captains, subject to instant recall. A captain had sole authority over "fighting, chasing, or being chased" but top authority rested with the ship's "council" where everyone had a vote and where the most important decisions were made by majority rule.

Pirates also rebelled against the emerging system of wage slavery (what we now call the hourly wage or salary). Instead they distributed loot according to a pre-capitalist share system where wealth was distributed along radically egalitarian lines, with the captain receiving barely twice as much as those receiving the lowest share. Part of the captured booty was also set aside in a common fund, a welfare safety net for pirates injured "on the job."

Libertarian legal codes were used on pirate ships (yes, they had constitutions). Most of the laws dealt with maintaining harmony on the often-crowded ships. Capital punishment was used at times but it is telling that this was reserved largely for abusive captains, either their own or those from captured ships. Pirates were also free to leave a ship and join another or start their own. The 18th century Atlantic ocean saw the emergence of a loose informal federation of pirates, a mobile community of linked but autonomous pirate ships who collectively wreaked havoc on European transatlantic commerce (itself

based on the genocide and racist exploitation of peoples in Africa and the Americas)

As always, we should not romanticize our radical history. Patriarchy, slavery, racism and the occasional act of brutality were also at times part of pirate communities (though far less present than in the broader society). But we should acknowledge the piracy of this time and place for what it truly was: a movement that, while containing its own contradictions, also expressed the desire among the oppressed to resist the brutalities of the modern state and the capitalist system from their very beginning.

For further reading check out:

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker. [The Many-Headed Hydra](#) (Beacon Press, 2000)

Marcus Rediker. [Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea](#) (Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Peter Lamborn Wilson. [Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs and European Renegades](#) (Autonomedia, 2003)

Practicing anarchism

Norwegian anarchists talk in Hamilton

by Marley B

There is a widespread belief that anarchism means chaos and disorganization instead of its true meaning: direct democratic control over all aspects of society including the economy, social and economic equality and liberty. Unfortunately, this myth shows no sign of letting up. However, at least for one night in Hamilton, those 20 or so people who attended Kim Keyser's talk, "The Prefigurative Organization," got a glimpse of what anarchism really means.

Aided by fellow Norwegian anarchist Rudolph, Kim's talk began by arguing that to achieve radical social change, we need to practice what we preach within our own organizations. As Kim showed, anarchists have always held this belief (which makes us different from other socialists) and we have over time come up with two important tools to make this happen: direct action and direct democracy.

As explained by the speakers, direct action is the anarchist equivalent of the belief that "if you want something done, you have to do it yourself" with the important difference that the "you" is replaced by "we". Put another way, by direct action anarchists mean that if you and your community need something done (better housing, cleaner environment, stopping racists), it is best for the community to take direct charge of their struggles. Leaving it up to "elected" politicians, bureaucrats of every kind and bosses big and small only means that nothing substantial ever gets done or worse, they find ways to benefit at the community's expense.

Direct democracy means that you

and your community make decisions directly on the issues that affect you. This can and has been done through a number of ways such as neighbourhood and workplace assemblies, referendums, or by sending delegates to decision-making councils with strict mandates from the community. This kind of democracy is very different from what we have now where we choose representatives who are then free to do as they please till the next election circus.

Besides introducing the audience to these basics, the speakers also presented some innovative ideas of their own meant to get anarchists and others thinking how to better practice direct democracy in our own organizations. For example they argued that to avoid re-creating a bureaucracy, members elected to positions in the organization should: never be paid more than the average wage of the members, have no special prestige or privileges, have short, regularly-rotated, well-defined and narrow (minimal power) mandates and they should be easily removed by the membership if they abuse their responsibilities.

The speakers also presented the idea of "Opinion Points" which caused a lot of discussion. The aim of opinion points is to improve majority vote decision making by measuring the commitment and energy that the group is willing to put behind a decision. Under this method, members attach opinion points to their vote (say on a scale from 1-5 where 5 represents strongly in favour). The opinion points are then added up on both sides. The side with the highest number of opinion points carries the vote. Under this method, it is possible that a minority of members who are willing to put a lot of energy into putting into action a proposal, can out-vote a majority of weakly committed members. Ideally, this method is supposed to get us around the problem where decisions are taken but not implemented due to a lack of commitment.

Those who attended this well organized and interactive talk had a lot of discussion till late into the evening. Many more interesting ideas than can be discussed here were presented. These are available in the companion pamphlet "The Prefigurative Organization" written by Keyser. Hopefully this wonderful tool will soon become available online so we can start testing some of these ideas out. For more information contact Kim at [futurebliss\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:futurebliss[at]gmail[dot]com). Audio of the talk is online at www.linchpin.ca

Hamilton Anarchist Bookfair a success

Hamilton's first ever anarchist bookfair proved a remarkable success with more than 250 visitors attending from as far away as Buffalo. Vendors came from across southern Ontario, as well as Quebec and Alberta. Workshops were held on labour organizing, anarcha-feminism and Indigenous struggles. Common Cause Hamilton plans to build on this year's success with another bookfair next year, promising a better publicized event and more material for children.

Note: Common Cause Hamilton is now hosting an Anarchist Discussion Group the third Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm at the Sky Dragon Centre, 27 King William St.

Toronto Bad Books

Held the first Saturday of every month:

September 6th – [Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution](#),

by Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin

October 4th – [Welcome to the Terrordome: The Pain, Politics, and Promise of Sports](#).

by Dave Zirin

For times and locations check our website at www.linchpin.ca

Ottawa Anarchist Discussion Group

The Ottawa Anarchist Discussion Group is one of the longest-running anarchist projects in Ottawa (since January 2005) and is now affiliated with Common Cause Ottawa.

The discussion group was founded for two main reasons. First it was created by and for people already engaged in local struggles. It is intended as a forum to allow for reflection on the links between theory and action. We aim to deepen our analysis and understanding of how the present system works in order to be more effective in our struggles to change it.

Secondly and just as important, the discussion group is aimed at those new to anarchism. We seek to engage people on the level of ideas. Too often we anarchists fail to explain our ideas to ordinary people.

This fall the discussions may see something of an evolution as we rethink the focus and format to ensure continued relevance to those involved in local activism.

We are also planning on holding the **Organizing for Justice conference** in late October or early November.

Email a_ottawa@mutualaid.org or check www.linchpin.ca/ottawaevents

Linchpin locations

Linchpin is distributed in a number of ways in many Ontario communities, including at:

Hamilton:

The Skydragon Centre, 27 King William St.

Ottawa

Exile Infoshop, 256 Bank St.

Oneness Grassroots Promotions, 430 Rideau

Toronto:

GlobalAware Infoshop, 19 Kensington Ave.

Toronto Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord St.

You can mail us at:

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772 Dovercourt Rd.; Toronto, ON, M6H 4E3

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