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This Coup Against Canadian Rights Will Not Pass!

A U.S. Steel press release November 1 reads, "United States Steel Corporation announced today that it has agreed to proposed terms with Bedrock Industries Group LLC regarding the sale and transition of ownership of U.S. Steel Canada, Inc. ('USSC') to Bedrock...."

"U.S. Steel will receive approximately \$126 million in satisfaction of its secured claims, including interest, and unsecured claims. The proposed terms also include an agreement to provide mutual releases among key stakeholders, including a release of all claims against U.S. Steel regarding environmental, pension and other liabilities.

"As part of the proposed transition in ownership, U.S. Steel will continue to provide certain shared services to USSC and will enter into an agreement to supply USSC with all of its requirements for iron ore pellets through 2021."



The press release speaks of an agreement between two arms of U.S. finance capital to reorganize ownership and control of the century-old Stelco Steelworks situated in Hamilton and Nanticoke, Ontario. The reorganization will shift \$126 million from one arm of the U.S. oligarchy to another arm. In doing so the key feature as the press release states is to release the U.S. imperialist rich from all claims against them regarding environmental remediation, pensions, other post-employment benefits, a provincial loan worth \$150 million that they refuse to pay back, municipal taxes etc, which they contemptuously label "liabilities."

This agreement could be characterized as similar to one thief selling stolen goods to another criminal at a discount and in so doing the buyer of the stolen goods at a marked-down price assures the thief that all charges and problems related to the original robbery will be wiped clean as he has good connections and influence with the state authorities.



The U.S. imperialist rich are treating Canada as a colony without rights. They have decided amongst themselves in collusion with Canadian state collaborators in the judiciary and governments as well as civil society to hatch a scheme involving Canadian social property that Canadian workers have built over the past century and more. The agreement violates the rights of Canadians to the employment their social property can provide, their claim on the social wealth they can produce, and the pensions and other post-employment benefits they were promised upon retirement in exchange for their capacity to work. The agreement also violates the rights of Canadians to environmental remediation and payment for work done at USSC by local companies that should come from the continuing value workers at the social property can produce or from the global assets of U.S. Steel.

Upon U.S. Steel's 2007 purchase of Stelco, which was in itself a scam that saw another arm of the imperialist beast run off with \$1.1 billion, USS made all sorts of promises regarding levels of employment and production and to make the pension plans whole by 2015. USS broke every promise and must be held to account. It does not have a legitimate claim to one penny let alone \$126 million and to abscond without meeting its commitments, especially to the pension plans.

The rights of Canadians are sacred. The Canadian working class will not allow its rights or the rights of its fellow Canadians and nation to be trampled in the mud. This coup against Canadian rights will not pass! Canadian workers stand as one against this theft of what belongs to them by right!



Rights and Exceptional Circumstances



In a recent discussion, Gary Howe, President of USW Local 1005 at Stelco Hamilton Works remarked that while Trudeau goes around the world demanding other countries respect human rights, here at home, workers under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCA) have no rights. Workers under CCA cannot pursue human rights claims; they can only file grievances in the case of dismissal. Gary said Stelco steelworkers are under CCA for the second time, which will soon total over five years without even their basic rights recognized let alone guaranteed. Essar Steel Algoma steelworkers in Sault Ste. Marie have been under CCA three times in recent years.



The lack of rights extends to the absence of a guarantee of pensions and post-employment benefits not only under CCA but generally. Under CCA, these rights are considered expendable to save a company from liquidation or major creditors from losses. Under the hoax of exceptional circumstances, rights are extinguished for the greater good of saving a corporation or facility, or to ensure that certain creditors of the financial oligarchy receive their money. This means that workers' rights are not rights at all but policy objectives that must succumb to the property rights of the financial oligarchs who view their rights as owners of equity and debt as sacrosanct and dominating all other aspects of

life. They use the state authorities to enforce their domination over the working class and to deny workers their rights.

The oligarchs seeking to control U.S. Steel Canada, the former Stelco, and Essar Steel Algoma, and

bring them out of CCAA, all use the line of exceptional circumstances to negate the rights of workers to their jobs, wages, pensions and benefits. They say rights must be denied if the steel sector is to regain its footing and for the investors to be rewarded.

Workers cannot and will not accept this line of the ruling oligarchs of exceptional circumstances that demand the negation of rights. The recognition and guarantee of rights have become fundamental in modern life. People have rights by virtue of being human. If the present system and those in control cannot guarantee rights then either they must relinquish control or replace the system. If these big companies, which exist as oligopolies with interlocking ownership and global control across entire sectors, cannot guarantee rights then they have no reason to exist. They must step aside and allow a new direction to be found where rights are recognized and guaranteed.

We live in the twenty-first century within a socialized economy of industrial mass production that can meet the needs and well-being of all and guarantee their rights. No excuses are acceptable and no excuses will be accepted by the modern working class for denial of rights. Rights are inviolable! Accountability for rights begins at home!

Note

Since September 18, 2009 over 350 companies have entered CCAA bankruptcy protection. Companies with creditor claims on them in excess of \$5 million can enter CCAA. (For the complete list see [Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada](#))



Workers and Community Oppose Port Closure in Churchill, Manitoba **"This is a Fight About Communities Being Able to Guide Their Own Future"**

- Interview, Marianne Hladun, Regional Vice-President for the Prairies, Public Service Alliance of Canada -



Protest in Winnipeg, September 21, 2016, against closure of grain shipping at Port of Churchill.

Workers' Forum: The Union of Canadian Transportation Employees (UCTE), one of the components of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), is opposing the decision of U.S. transportation management company OmniTRAX regarding the Port of Churchill and the rail freight service. Can you tell us what this decision entails?

Marianne Hladun: What OmniTRAX announced, and that was on July 25, was that they were cancelling the 2016 grain shipping season, that there would be no grain shipped through the port in 2016. They are saying the intention is to reopen in 2017 but we do not believe it. But that is what they are saying and they are maintaining it. They also announced that they were reducing rail freight service on the rail line that leads up to the port to once a week from twice a week.

What happened was in total there are anywhere from 65 to 70 employees there at the port. There were about 35 that were there cleaning, basically servicing equipment, getting it ready to receive grain. They were called into the lunchroom and given two weeks notice that they were being laid off. The remainder of the employees received a letter saying they would not be called back for 2016. Workers usually start sometime in June. Some people come in earlier and they get everything cleaned up. It sounds like at the end of the season when they are done, everything freezes over and they just basically drop the tools and leave, and the cleanup is done in the spring. They know when the ships are booked to come and they plan their work accordingly. According to OmniTRAX they had no contract for 2016 and the decision was made to lay off the workers.



We are also currently in negotiations. The collective agreement of the port workers expired December 31, 2015. We have been in negotiations with them and they are continuing to negotiate.

WF: What is the impact of the decision of OmniTRAX on the workers and the economic activity?

MH: It has a huge impact. Churchill is a community of only about 800 people. Over the years there was a military base, there was some other stuff, some research facilities, they are down to about 800 and if you factor in 65 to 70 people, the figure we are using, that is about 10 per cent of the community basically that works at the port. It is not a nine to five job. They would work significant hours during the season and be eligible for EI. Because of the layoffs, even the folks that got called back earlier in 2016, the majority do not have enough hours, which means they have no access to EI over the winter, and those that did not get called back obviously do not have access to EI. The reality is that the only option at this point is to leave the community. Seventy people in a community of 800 is like 10,000 people leaving from the city of Winnipeg.



There are really only two industries in the town of Churchill: one is the port that has been there since the 1920s, and the other is tourism. They get a lot of tourists for the northern lights, the polar bears and so on. When the layoff came it was too late to even get hours in the tourism industry because those jobs were already filled. The majority of the employees that were laid off did not have access to jobs in the community.

The port is one issue, but the rail line that leads up to the port supports communities all the way along in Northern Manitoba and so the decision to reduce rail freight service to once a week from twice a week is also having a huge impact. The community does not have access to fresh produce anymore. The grocery store shelves are empty.

Restaurants have to put a sign up saying we can't guarantee all the items on our menu will be available. There is a significant impact to ensuring the community can get in what they need.

WF: The policy paper of UCTE says that these developments are linked with deregulation of grain shipment and liquidation of the Canadian Wheat Board. Can you tell us more about that?

MH: This is in direct relation to the Conservatives getting rid of the Wheat Board. Just by way of background, in 1997 the federal Liberal government at the time chose to privatize the rail line that goes up to the Port of Churchill. They sold it to OmniTRAX and threw in the port facility for a dollar. That is a matter of public record. OmniTRAX wanted the rail line. They were not looking at the port but they bought it for a dollar. At the time, when the Wheat Board was utilizing Churchill as a regular shipment port, they were running anywhere from 500,000 tons of grain, primarily wheat, to 700,000 tons every season. When the Wheat Board was killed by the Conservatives that amount dropped down significantly and there was a five-year subsidy provided to OmniTRAX by the Conservative government to make up for the losses of grain not being shipped by the Wheat Board. That subsidy expires this year, coincidentally of course [laughter]. As of next year there is no federal subsidy money, which I believe was based on tonnage. Last year, according to OmniTRAX information, they shipped about 160,000 tons of grain, so down significantly.



Farmers attend meeting of Canadian Wheat Board Alliance in Swan Valley, February 12, 2016. Among topics discussed are concerns about future of rail line to Port of Churchill.

When the Wheat Board was doing the marketing they looked for different markets. They also were basically advocating on behalf of the farmers. For farmers from Eastern Saskatchewan, primarily Northeastern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, shipping to the Port of Churchill was a lot shorter and a lot cheaper and less cost to the producers. The Wheat Board would buy a bulk of producer cars. Those were the rail cars that would take grain up to the port. What is happening now is the large grain companies are basically building their own port facilities. They are either building in Vancouver or Montreal and sometimes if it is going east they will transfer in Thunder Bay. They are utilizing their own port facilities. I know of a major grain company that shipped a lot of grain through Churchill and this year they decided not to because they are building their own port facility at the port of Vancouver. Unfortunately for a farmer from Saskatchewan they either have to ship to Vancouver or they have to ship to Montreal.

WF: What are the demands that the community is putting forward?

MH: What we are advocating, as the Mayor of the town also advocated for from early on, as has Niki Ashton, the MP for Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, is that the facility should be returned as a national asset. If it were to become a port authority, a port authority is run for the good of the community and it is run by a board of directors and that is structured within the legislation as to who would be on it. Any community in the area would be able to put people on the board. We recommend, while not identified in the legislation, that First Nations need to be on that board too because they depend on access through the port. We believe everyone is best served if the port is returned as a federal port authority under the *Canada Marine Act* under Transport Canada.



Picket in Churchill against closure, September 2016.

We believe that the demand is widely shared by the community. UCTE, which is a component of PSAC, has come forward and said here is how you could do it. The legislation is available, they can do it by way of regulation and Order in Council. There are infrastructure dollars that are attached to a port authority. You can make sure that it is maintained and operated in the best interest of the community, and basically no community is held hostage by an American corporation.

This is more than a fight for the community. This is a fight about communities being able to guide their own future. It was the federal Liberals that privatized it and it is up to the federal Liberals today to fix it.



Winnipeg, September 21, 2016.

This government, when they came in, did restore some of the cuts from the previous government. They reopened Veterans Affairs offices and some of the Coast Guard Stations. We believe that Churchill is a viable hub for a Coast Guard Station, that you put a port authority in there. There was talk that if they increase the storage capacity they could bring more grain through. It is a concern of farmers that they have access to more markets.

(Photos: PSAC, B. Sigurdson)



Federal Public Service Workers Hold Day of Action

Rally at Prime Minister's Office Denounces Government's Intransigence

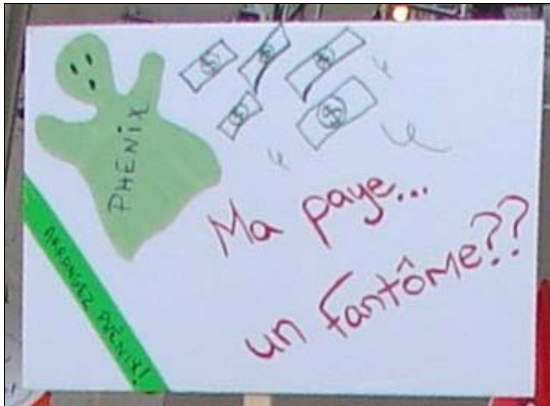


Federal public service workers demonstrated across the country on October 31, including a large rally at the Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa. Workers protested the government's failure to resolve cases of tens of thousands of workers unpaid or underpaid and the refusal of the Liberal government to negotiate with unions representing public service workers.

In Ottawa, Speakers representing the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the Professional Institute for the Public Service Canada (PIPSC) and Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) denounced the government for carrying on the same demand of the previous government that workers give up the sick leave rights in their collective agreement. The workers have been in negotiations for a new collective agreement since 2014. Speakers repeated several times that "the honeymoon is over" for the Trudeau Liberal government.

PSAC representatives reiterated that they would not back down and accept Liberal demands to give up sick leave. PSAC has begun a campaign calling on the Prime Minister to live up to promises to "fix public services and repair the relationship with the workers who deliver them." The next round of negotiations is from November 1 to 7.





Actions Across Canada



St. John's



St. John



Moncton; Halifax



Bridgewater



Sudbury



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Windsor



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(Photos: TML, PSAC.)



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