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Alberta Government Holds Rights of Workers in Contempt Resounding No! to Legislated Attacks on Public Sector Workers



Alberta workers rally in the rotunda of the Alberta Legislature, June 12, 2019, following first reading of Bill 9. (AUPE)

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Alberta Government Holds Rights of Workers in Contempt

Resounding No! to Legislated Attacks on Public Sector Workers



AFL President Gil McGowan and AUPE President Guy Smith speak to media from the legislature rotunda denouncing Bill 9.

The Kenney government introduced the *Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act* as Bill 9 in the Alberta Legislature on June 13. The legislation will "legalize" postponing scheduled and ongoing collective bargaining and arbitration for 180,000 public sector workers in Alberta, involving 24 collective agreements, until at least October 31 and in some cases to March 15, 2020. The Bill prohibits implementation of wage re-opener clauses in these agreements, which set out a date when the matter goes to arbitration if a negotiated settlement is not reached and a date by which the arbitration must be held.

According to the Kenney government, the Act provides only for a "procedural delay" until the government has received the report of its "blue ribbon" panel on the state of Alberta's finances due August 15. The government further claims that it does not violate public sector contracts. This is clearly false, as the bill breaches the provisions of the collective agreements of Alberta's nurses, teachers, health care workers, provincial government employees, and others.

By making it "legal" to dictate changes to a collective agreement, Bill 9 violates the right of all workers to a say and control over wages, conditions of work and their living standards generally, and at the very least the right to negotiate their terms of employment in a climate of equilibrium and not arbitrariness and dictate. It shows that far from upholding the rule of law, the government is prepared to tear up collective agreements and to act in utter contempt of the spirit and letter of the law. While public sector workers are the specific target of this attack, an attack on the legal rights of these workers is an attack against all workers.



According to Jason Kenney and the United Conservative Party (UCP), they won the election and therefore have a mandate to do whatever they please. On this basis the Kenney government is dredging up all the despised and discredited buzzwords of the Ralph Klein and Mike Harris era -- cutting red tape, making Alberta "open for business," "cutting waste," "finding efficiencies in government" and so on. It claims there is no alternative to cutting investments in social programs and attacking the workers who deliver them.

In claiming to speak for Albertans, the government is trying to present the opposition of public sector workers to this assault as a violation of the will of the people who have supposedly provided the ruling party with a mandate. But it is the entire working class which is being attacked when the right to a say in wages, living and working conditions is negated. Further, workers who deliver the public services which the people need to live a modern humane existence are the front line of defence of these services. Their resistance has proven crucial time and again in the fight against wrecking of public services including health care, education and seniors' care. The key issue facing the people is how to end the anti-social offensive, and on this there is no split between workers employed by the state or public agencies and those who sell their ability to work to private interests.



While successive governments hand over billions to the energy oligarchs and other rich private interests, the workers are told by successive governments that they must "do their bit" to reduce the deficit or balance the budget or else the government will use force against them. Public sector workers do service to society when they refuse to be put on the defensive as concerns their right to wages, benefits and security in retirement, and to working conditions which allow them to teach the youth, care for the sick, elderly and people with disabilities, protect the natural environment, look after the infrastructure and make society function every day.

The assault on the right to collectively negotiate wages, working and living conditions shows the extent of the destruction of politics and the profound crisis of the so-called democratic institutions which block the polity from collectively setting the direction for the economy and society. The wrecking of politics replaces inquiry, discussion and good-faith negotiations with wrecking, force and dictate and the use of police powers, all in the service of the financial oligarchy who exercise their domination over the economy and society.

The right of workers to negotiate collectively their terms of employment is a right that belongs to workers because of their essential role in production and contributions to society. This right cannot be denied or negated through legislation, or justified by appointing former politicians and others to Blue Ribbon Panels who advocate for neo-liberal assaults on workers. Depriving workers of their rights has the aim of diverting even more of the social wealth working people produce into the hand of the rich and forcing workers into unsustainable working conditions, which are



increasingly precarious.

The Kenney government is attempting to negate the right of working people to negotiate terms of employment in a climate of equilibrium in which those who do the work have a say, which includes the right to say no. The government's aim is to "*Charter-proof*" its attack on the right to collectively negotiate terms of employment through a deceptive process to suppress the rights of public service workers while cutting the social programs and public services the people need for a modern humane existence. This is unacceptable in today's world and should never happen.

The Kenney government's assault is an attack on all working people. *Workers' Forum* calls on everyone to stand with the Alberta public sector workers in defence of rights and to say *No!* to dictate and illegality in the service of rich private interests.

(Photos: WF, OFL, AFL)



Using What Is Legal Against What Is Just Shows Contempt for Rule of Law

- *Peggy Morton* -



Workers stand as one against Bill 9 in Alberta legislature rotunda.

Workers and leaders of the unions representing about 180,000 public sector workers in Alberta stood as one at the legislature as Bill 9, the *Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act* bill received first reading. As soon as the bill had passed First Reading, they rallied in the rotunda of the legislature where a press conference took place. Present were the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA), and United Nurses Association (UNA) together with the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL).

Workers filled the rotunda at the legislature, shouting So, So, So, Solidarity! Speakers condemned the government's assault on the rights of workers, including the right to collectively negotiate their collective agreements, and made it clear that working people will not accept this assault.

Gil McGowan, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour called Bill 9 a "bully bill." "They are using the power of their majority in government to break legally-binding contracts. If they did this to

the contracts of businesses who supply goods and services to government, the business community would be up in arms. But this is exactly what they're doing to hundreds of thousands of nurses, teachers and other public sector workers. It would be unfair, inappropriate and illegal if they were doing it to businesses and it's unfair, inappropriate and illegal now that they're doing [it] to working people."

UNA President Heather Smith said that the level of interference in collective bargaining in this bill goes further than anything done by the Klein Government in the mid-1990s. "In the history of our union, it is the biggest betrayal by government we have ever seen in terms of reaching in and using the power of legislation to alter the terms and conditions, and agreed upon, terms of our contract," she said.



HSAA President Mike Parker said, "If I can't guarantee the stability of a collective agreement for my membership, then I don't think I can guarantee labour peace for this province."

ATA president Greg Jeffery, called the bill an affront to his members, and a heavy-handed abuse of power that significantly erodes trust between the government and its public servants. "These agreements were reached in good faith, and now the government is using its highest powers to unilaterally change the terms of the agreement. In the business world, if a contract was blatantly ignored like this, you would never do business with that company again." He called on the government to withdraw the bill.

"Six of the last seven years teachers have accepted a zero-per cent increase," he said. "There was hope for this arbitration and to pull that hope away from Alberta's teachers especially at this time of year is tragic," he said.



Members of AUPE picket in Lac La Biche, June 15, 2019, against Bill 9.

AUPE president Guy Smith called the bill an "egregious attack" and explained that the union is supposed to be ramping up negotiations that will impact 70,000 members. Arbitration for AUPE government services, Alberta Health services nursing care and general support services began on June 11 and is now cancelled. Bargaining units for post-secondary education and government boards and agencies are also scheduled to begin arbitration. "This is authoritarian, this is ideological and it does nothing but create labour unrest," Smith said. He said that workers are ready to take action in response to the government's violation of their rights. "The level of anger amongst our members is something I haven't seen in years," he said.

The unions indicated that they will be meeting together in the days ahead to plan their course of action. As well, preparations are already underway to consider their legal options.

The AUPE Facebook page has a list of actions that people can take now. They include:

Contact Alberta's Labour Minister and let him know a deal's a deal. Using legislation to break the terms of a negotiated collective agreement isn't bargaining. It's bullying.

- By phone: Call Labour Minister Jason Copping at 780-638-9400 and call Finance Minister Travis Toews at 780-415-4855.

- By email: Email Labour Minister Jason Copping at labour.minister@gov.ab.ca and Finance Minister Travis Toews tbf.minister@gov.ab.ca.

- On Twitter: Tweet Labour Minister Jason Copping @JasonCoppingMLA and the United Conservative Party @Alberta_UCP. Use hashtag #ableg

Talk to your coworkers: Ask them how they feel about this illegal attack [on] your rights, your wages and your jobs. Talk about what you're prepared to do to take action. Show them how to join the fight.

Stay tuned: We'll be in touch as the situation develops with more news and more opportunities to have your voices heard!

Workers across Alberta and Canada should provide their full support in this fight which clearly reveals that the government is trying to get away with doing unacceptable things by making things legal, which is unjust and in contempt of what is meant by Rule of Law. Speak with your co-workers about what is at stake and to join in actions to demand that the Alberta and other governments cease and desist from their unacceptable assault on rights. Alberta Bill 9 must be withdrawn!



Picket against Bill 9 in Wetaskiwin, June 14, 2019.

(With files from CBC and Edmonton Journal. Photos: AUPE, AFL)



Nurses' Union Appeals Labour Board Decision

The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) has announced that it will immediately launch a court appeal of a technical decision issued June 5 by the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB). The ALRB refused to hear UNA's application to quash an arbitrator's ruling that arbitration of the wage re-

opener in UNA's Collective Agreement can be delayed beyond the date stipulated in the Agreement. The ALRB said it did not have legal jurisdiction to consider UNA's application and that UNA would have to seek judicial review through the courts.

"We are filing with the courts immediately," UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan said. "Realistically, though, it's unlikely this would be heard by a court for more than a year, making a mockery of attempts to uphold the terms of our legal contract."

Harrigan said that while arbitration is scheduled to go ahead on July 2, 3, and 8, UNA expects that Alberta Health Services (AHS) will request further postponements. "Given the blatant way the terms of our collective agreement and the *Charter* rights of nurses are being ignored, UNA members will now be reconsidering their union's approach to negotiations," Harrigan stated. "Our legal team is reviewing all legal options," he said. "Our leadership and membership will have to consider if other options will also be necessary."



UNA President Heather Smith speaking to media in the rotunda of the Alberta legislature after Bill 9 was introduced.

Harrigan pointed out that the Alberta government's actions follow a pattern in which governments pretend to consult, "and then legislate salary reductions, freezes or limits on increases, rather than negotiating or arbitrating. This has happened in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and most recently in Ontario. We believe this is a violation of the *Charter*, but it still takes years to fight it in the courts."



The collective agreement sets very specific dates for arbitration of a wage re-opener, Harrigan said. Negotiations would have begun on February 15 and proceeded to arbitration if no agreement was reached by March 31. The arbitration had to be held no later than June 30. UNA and AHS agreed to conduct negotiations on May 13 and 17, but the Kenney government intervened and instructed AHS to postpone negotiations.

Harrigan explained: "The government stated it wants the recommendations of its 'Blue Ribbon Panel' to be considered. The chair of the Blue Ribbon Panel last year issued a report recommending 'consultations' with unions followed by legislation effecting rollbacks to salary. After UNA did not agree to the delay, AHS requested a conference call with the arbitrator. AHS asked the arbitrator to delay the hearing *sine die* (without a scheduled date). The arbitrator agreed to postpone the hearing and ruled the hearing be postponed beyond the June 30 date. He ruled the hearing would take place July, 2 or 3, and 8 -- but specifically ruled that either party may request further postponements.

"Because this clearly amended our collective agreement, we filed at the [ALRB], requesting the arbitrator's decision be quashed and the hearing take place before June 30."

(Photos: WF, UNA)



For Your Information

Section of the Collective Agreements the Government Is Violating

Both the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) signed three-year collective agreements in 2017 with a wage freeze in the first two years and a wage-reopener in 2019. The collective agreements require that if a negotiated settlement of the wage re-opener has not been reached by March 31 2019, then the matter would proceed to arbitration which must take place before June 30, 2019. Other unions signed similar provisions. The Alberta Teachers' Association signed a collective agreement shortly before the provincial election which provides for arbitration on wages for their two year contract.

Prior to introducing Bill 9, the Kenney government directed Alberta Health Services (AHS) to "postpone" the scheduled arbitration with UNA indefinitely. The government made the same request of the arbitrator selected for the AUPE arbitration. In UNA's case, the arbitrator refused an indefinite postponement, but agreed to new dates after June 30, in violation of the terms of the collective agreement, and stated that a party could seek a further postponement. According to the *Alberta Labour Code*, an arbitrator cannot alter the terms of a collective agreement. UNA launched a challenge at the Alberta Labour Relations Board, which declined to hear UNA's application in a technical decision that it lacked jurisdiction to rule on the matter and that UNA must seek a judicial review. The arbitrator in AUPE's arbitration heard arguments from the government and the union, and issued a decision that the arbitration would proceed, and the government's request for a postponement would be denied. The government then moved quickly to introduce Bill 9.



Kenney Government's Blue Ribbon Panel

The Kenney government has appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's finances, whose members were chosen to reach pre-determined conclusions. The Chair of the panel, Janice McKinnon, is a former NDP finance minister from Saskatchewan, notorious for closing 54 hospitals in Saskatchewan. In 2017, McKinnon co-authored an article directed at the then NDP government calling for public sector wages to be cut and then frozen. The authors laid out how the government should proceed, including holding consultations with unions with an aim to claim it has participated in a process of collective bargaining and therefore is not in violation of the *Charter* right of collective bargaining. The sham consultations would be followed by legislation. Such a process is concocted and in contempt of the meaning of the *Charter* right to collective bargaining.



Lockout of Aluminum Workers in Becancour, Quebec United Steelworkers Files Complaint with International Labour Organization Against Quebec Government

The Alcoa/Rio Tinto cartel has now locked out the ABI workers for 17 months with the active

collusion of the Quebec government. At a press conference on June 10, the United Steelworkers announced the filing of a complaint with the International Labour Organization (ILO) against the Quebec government for its role in prolonging the lockout and denying the right of ABI workers, members of USW Local 9700, to negotiate collectively the terms of their employment. The complaint was filed with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.



United Steelworkers announce the filing of a complaint with the International Labour Organization against the Quebec government at press conference, June 10, 2019.

The USW alleges that through his public statements from April to early June, Quebec Premier Francois Legault used the power of his office to give considerable advantage to the owners' cartel over the workers. Legault has openly sided with the Alcoa cartel against the right of workers to negotiate a new collective agreement. The USW alleges the Premier has made false statements about the nature of the dispute, blames the workers for the lockout, and suggests USW Local 9700 with what he calls "unreasonable demands" may force the Alcoa global cartel to close the smelter for good.

The USW says the Premier's intervention on the side of the global cartel violates the government's obligations related to the ABI workers' right to freedom of association and the recognition of their right to collective bargaining. With its evidence of the government's words and actions, the union presented its complaint to the ILO. The USW says the Government of Quebec is in violation of the ILO convention and declarations that recognize freedom of association, basic labour rights and the principles that must guide multinational enterprises, governments and workers in the countries where these companies operate.



The USW is asking the Committee on Freedom of Association and the ILO's Governing Body to declare that the Government of Quebec, through the Premier's public statements, has violated the convention and declarations. The USW is asking that the ILO demand the government withdraw its declarations against the workers and to respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The union also requests that the ILO tell the Quebec government to refrain from any intervention that could hinder the legitimate

activities in defence of USW Local 9700's interests. The USW demands that the government allow the union to freely and with equal opportunity advocate for the working conditions of unionized ABI workers without pressure or action to discredit them.

The ILO, founded in 1919, is a tripartite agency of the United Nations that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers from 187 countries. Its mandate is to set international standards, develop policies, and devise programs promoting decent work for all workers around the world. The Committee on Freedom of Association, established in 1951, has the mandate to examine complaints about violations of freedom of association. The committee is itself a tripartite body composed of a chairperson and three representatives each from governments, employers and workers. The committee has the power to make recommendations. Its decisions are not binding on member states.

(Photos: WF, Metallos)



Arguments of the United Steelworkers

The United Steelworkers union has filed a complaint against the Government of Quebec for violating the International Labour Organization's Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (1948), the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as well as the Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (1977).

The complaint concerns the public statements of Quebec Premier François Legault between April 1 and June 3, 2019. The union explains that ABI management broke off talks with the union in December 2017, presented it with a final and comprehensive offer and then locked out workers on January 11, 2018 when workers rejected the offer. It says that since that time ABI management has reneged on everything previously agreed to at the bargaining table and has made offers that are worse than the original offer demanding new concessions.

In the context of the prolonged lockout and Alcoa's refusal to negotiate, the USW called on the government to intervene so that negotiations could resume and be conducted in good faith. The Premier met with both parties separately on April 1, 2019, two days before negotiations were to resume.



Immediately following those meetings, Quebec Premier Legault publicly denounced the union and accused it of making unreasonable demands. These unjustified statements have had the effect of covering up the fact that the ABI Alcoa/Rio Tinto global cartel is making unreasonable demands on all aspects of the lives of the workers at the aluminum smelter and those who are retired.

Following Legault's outburst against the union, as expected, ABI management went to the bargaining table only to reject the counter-proposal of the union without any discussion. Since then the company has refused to negotiate or talk with the union to this day.

The Quebec Premier's Derogatory Statements

The Quebec Premier made derogatory statements against the union nine times in two months both to the media and in the Quebec National Assembly. He explicitly said that union members are overpaid and that the demands of the workers could force management to close the smelter and workers would be to blame for the closure. This contradicts the truth of the situation where the only demands on the table and subject to discussion do not concern wages but the ABI cartel's demands for concessions from workers on other important matters.

Legault also interfered through his public suggestion that workers should willingly accept wage cuts to lower "production costs" at the smelter. In reality, Legault's demand for a wage cut would have no effect on the actual price of production of product at the smelter but would directly mean greater profits for the global cartel and a direct loss for the workers and their community.

The Phoney *Force Majeure*

The union contends the Premier's words have greatly added to the power imbalance between the global company and the workers. This imbalance is already heavily weighted in favour of the company by virtue of the fact that Alcoa is not paying for the block of electricity reserved for it by Hydro-Québec at a preferential rate. The Quebec government accepts the company argument that the lockout, initiated and completely controlled by the actions of the company, constitutes a *force majeure* beyond the company's control thus releasing Alcoa from its obligations under its energy contract with Hydro-Québec and the government.

According to the United Steelworkers, the Premier's public statements on top of the exemption from Alcoa's obligation to pay for its contracted block of electricity from Hydro-Québec constitute a violation of freedom of association and of the right to free collective bargaining.



ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize

The USW specifically refers to the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. Article 11 of the Convention states:

"Each Member of the International Labour Organisation for which this Convention is in force undertakes to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure that workers and employers may exercise freely the right to organise."

The United Steelworkers argues that the exercise of the right to organize includes the right to engage in lawful advocacy, without pressure, intimidation, harassment, threat or action to discredit them, which has been violated by the Premier's public statements.

Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

The USW also refers to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The declaration states among other things that ILO members "have an obligation arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith and in accordance with the Constitution, the principles concerning the fundamental rights which are the subject of those Conventions, namely: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining."

The declaration states, "In seeking to maintain the link between social progress and economic growth, the guarantee of fundamental principles and rights at work is of particular significance in that it enables the persons concerned, to claim freely and on the basis of equality of opportunity, their fair share of the wealth which they have helped to generate, and to achieve fully their human potential."

Clearly, according to the United Steelworkers, the lockout and the actions of the government have violated the right of ABI workers to collective bargaining and equality of opportunity.

Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy

The USW in conclusion refers to the Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, which states in part: "Multinational enterprises, in the context of bona fide negotiations with the workers' representatives on conditions of employment, or while workers are exercising the right to organize, should not threaten to utilize a capacity to transfer the whole or part of an operating unit from the country concerned in order to influence unfairly those negotiations or to hinder the exercise of the right to organize."

The United Steelworkers argues that even though Alcoa has not in so many words threatened to move its operation out of the country, the Quebec government did so on its behalf. The Premier threatened the ABI workers by saying they risk "losing everything" if they do not agree to concessions. By refusing concessions and a lower claim on the value they produce, the Premier suggests workers themselves would be responsible for the community suffering a great loss by forcing Alcoa to close the smelter and move production to one of its other facilities.

On the basis of the totality of its arguments, the United Steelworkers concludes that the Quebec government has impeded the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, a violation of the ILO Conventions, and that the ILO must ask the Quebec government to stop acting in this way.

(Photos: WF, Metallos)



Unacceptable Comments from Quebec Premier and Labour Minister

Quebec Premier François Legault in speaking to the press contemptuously dismissed the formal complaint against the government filed by the United Steelworkers to the ILO and again slandered the ABI workers as overpaid. Meanwhile, in what sounded like a "good cop, bad cop" routine, his Labour Minister said that while workers have the right to make formal complaints such as they have

done at the ILO, they must understand that Legault's comments about the dispute come from his concern for the economy, and that he is the Premier of the economy.



5,000 people marched through the streets of downtown Trois-Rivières in solidarity with the locked-out ABI workers on May 25, 2019.

Neither Premier Legault nor his Minister considers it a problem for Quebec society that workers are being deprived of a way to settle their dispute with a global cartel in a way that respects their dignity, well-being and rights. The actions of the Alcoa cartel and government have caused the situation where workers have to resort to complaints to a United Nations' labour relations body.

It appears whenever Legault hears "ABI workers" it sends him into a flurry of attacks against "those guys who earn \$90,000 a year." This uncouth behaviour only brings shame on him and his government ministers. Their dismissive words and actions regarding the real problems of labour relations and the defence of workers' rights when workers face such powerful global empires as Alcoa/Rio Tinto bring the government into disrepute and call into question its ability to govern on behalf of its own people.

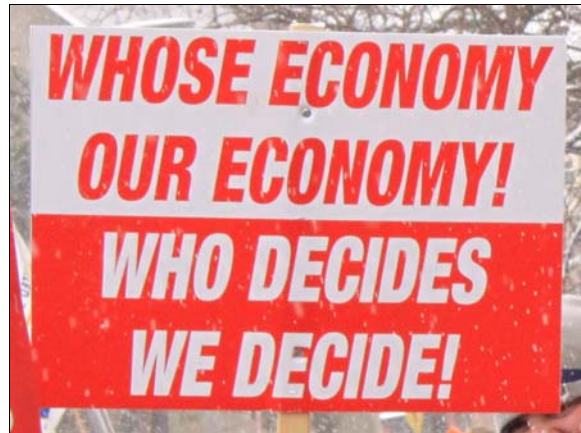
Workers recall with disgust the meeting Legault had with union leaders on May Day, in which he said workers had better settle for jobs at \$75,000 to keep them rather than jobs at \$90,000 that are bound to be lost because such wages make "production costs" uncompetitive compared to those elsewhere. This comes from a man whom his Minister calls the Premier of the economy. His so-called production costs are nothing but his and the owners' self-centred outlook to demand more of the value of what workers produce as enterprise profit and take it out of Quebec to the detriment of workers, their communities and the Quebec economy.

Legault's comments are further evidence that his outlook is that of the global oligarchs who own and control the economy and not those who do the work and produce the social product. His viewpoint on the modern economy is that of the global financial oligarchy, which could care less about the people, their jobs, well-being and the social and natural environment but only about receiving the highest return on their investment. The backward viewpoint of the rich oligarchs needs regulation, restriction and continuous organized struggle of the working people for otherwise it runs amuck causing great problems for the people and economy.

Legault's outlook is revealed again in his stance of "well paid jobs" bad versus "not so well paid

jobs" good. This position forms part of the anti-social "open for business" mantra of the financial oligarchy right across Canada. The aim of this outlook is not to have business investment that develops the economy to benefit all in a socially responsible manner but to open the country to exploitation of its human and material resources in violation of the interests and rights of all.

Pitting workers in one country or region against those in another country or region is now commonplace with the global cartels that own multiple production facilities and businesses and possess immense social wealth and have their representatives in government. They can move or threaten to move their business and most facilities to wherever it suits their narrow private interests. The organized working class and its practical politics must constantly struggle to restrict the power of the financial oligarchy.



The economy that Legault views and speaks about is the world of intrigue, collusion and contention of private global monopolies serving their own private interests at the expense of the people and their societies. If that economy of the financial oligarchy is not challenged and restricted in its actions the results are destructive with recurring crises and negation of the rights of all.

The comments of Legault and his Minister are meant to provide a shield to Alcoa's attacks on the workers, their communities and Quebec society, and make it more difficult for ABI workers to defend their rights. To the great credit of USW Local 9700 and its members they are bravely persisting in their struggle for their rights. They are continuing to mobilize support, including financial support, for their just struggle, as well as sending representatives to meet workers across Quebec to explain their fight and win the battle in the court of public opinion. In a recent action on June 11, ABI workers organized a picket in Bécancour, as Quebec Minister of the Economy Pierre Fitzgibbon delivered a speech to the Chamber of Commerce. Workers had asked to meet with him to discuss the impact of the lockout on workers and their community to which the Minister initially agreed. Subsequently, he cancelled the meeting in what is seen by many as a vindictive move directed by the Legault government in response to the complaint the USW filed with the ILO.

The continuing struggle and actions of the organized workers at ABI are important for this specific fight against the Alcoa/Rio Tinto cartel but also for the future as they establish bonds of militant solidarity of workers in all sectors in defence of their dignity and rights.

(Photos: WF, Metallos)



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