Labour Day 2020

Workers' Forums Exchange Views on New Challenges in Light of Developments in Canada and the U.S.

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On Labour Day 2020, held under the difficult conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Workers' Centre of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) sends its greetings to workers from coast to coast to coast. Best wishes for the success of the endeavours of workers in all sectors of the economy to provide the rights of all with a guarantee under the difficult conditions of the neo-liberal anti-social offensive.

The Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L) is holding workers' forums so that workers from different sectors of the economy can exchange views with one another, via meetings with less than 10 people at a time, which adhere to standards of physical distancing, virtual zoom meetings, skypes and webinars and through its publications during September, October and November. This exchange is to help workers analyze the unfolding events and find their bearings, and provide the same for all sections of the people.

We call on workers to exchange views on the challenges they and their sector of the economy face at this time, as more pay-the-rich schemes are put in place in the name of economic recovery and the well-being of the middle class.

We call on workers to discuss the challenges they think the country faces in light of the "palace coup" which is unfolding in Ottawa and the elections in the United States. The "palace coup" has already placed Chrystia Freeland as Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. The situation in the U.S. is filled with foreboding as the rulers desperately seek to perpetuate their crisis-ridden system of governance while diverting and crushing the people's striving for empowerment.

How to tackle the conditions of pandemic, high unemployment, growing poverty and the drive of the rich to use the circumstances to benefit their own narrow private interests while the people are left to fend for themselves? How to hold governments to account when they weasel out of taking up social responsibility to keep people safe and pass more and more laws to make doing so legal?

The new Finance Minister is putting together more pay-the-rich schemes in our name under the pretext of high ideals of peace, freedom and democracy and that these measures will save humankind and the natural environment. Every measure is taken to marginalize, silence and eliminate the independent voices and initiatives of the working people in the name of eliminating the danger of "mob rule." Dogmatic renderings of reality push worn-out conceptions that what is needed is a "meritocracy," which will allegedly bring forward the "best and brightest," to whom we must entrust our fate. According to this conception, what society needs is an enlightened strata of rulers who narrow down the choices for us and then "nudge" us to make the right choices for ourselves. There is to be no equal membership within a body politic constituted to guarantee the rights of all on the basis of being human. There is to be no decision-making process which vests sovereignty in the people, not self-serving narrow private interests.

The promotion of an allegedly benevolent dictatorship which concentrates power in the hands of those the rulers deem to be enlightened is not a new invention. It goes back to the 17th and 18th centuries and shows how bankrupt today's rulers are. Their bankruptcy is such that, unable to channel the unfettered development of the productive forces which make the very conception of private ownership of property obsolete, they seek to destroy what they cannot control. Their attempts to control these forces and, failing that, destroy them, is carried out in the name of upholding civilized values against the "populism" and "barbarism" of "left and right extremes" and making sure the middle class survives the drive of the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer.

The federal government's much awaited plan for economic recovery will funnel more and more of
society's assets to the narrow private interests which dictate all economic and financial policy. They are outlining the infrastructure they require at this time and how it will be paid for. Their laws are concentrating decision-making power in fewer and fewer hands so that nobody knows what is happening and the government cannot be held to account.

Within this situation and the fend-for-oneself incoherence which prevails, workers' organizations are supposed to limit their responses to unsuitable either/or options: either withhold our labour and be declared illegal, or use the courts, Charter of Rights and Freedoms with its "Reasonable Limits," and labour boards to uphold our rights. Years of experience reveal the proliferation of rabbit holes used to maintain the unacceptable neo-liberal status quo while we are more and more deprived of all that is ours by right.

Everyone is fighting to uphold their rights and this is increasingly seen as a life or death matter because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Upholding the rights of all is more and more considered to be a social responsibility of governments at all levels.

The workers' forums permit the participants to speak and hear about how the problems are being tackled in different sectors of the economy. They permit the workers to learn from one another and, at this time, exchange views on what to expect from the new Throne Speech, the program of the Official Opposition, and Canada's integration into the failed U.S. state which is trying so desperately to reinvent itself.

What do the workers propose the Canadian working people can do at this time to turn things around in their favour? It is one thing to recognize that we cannot go back to "business as usual." It is another to know what to do to avert the disasters this "business as usual" holds for the people from coast to coast to coast.

Together we can work it out. Let everyone lend a hand by joining and organizing workers' forums, sharing their experiences and providing their views. We ignore the significance of analyzing unfolding events at our own peril.

Join the discussion and exchange of views!

For information or to join, write the Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L): workerscentre@cpcml.ca

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Speaking in Our Own Name Goes Hand in Hand with the Need to Organize

- Normand Chouinard -

Throughout 2019 and into 2020, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) has highlighted the importance that workers speak in their own name and define the modern democratic personality that is required at this moment in our history, and
do so in their own image. What will enable workers to become a leading force in the resolution of the problems the society faces is the most crucial problem which requires solution at this time. Without bringing into being a modern democratic personality, the path to progress will remain blocked.

The institutions of the bourgeoisie are in such crisis that not only do they limit the role of the working class to that of a vote bank, the state in the hands of the imperialist financial oligarchy also does everything to ensure that the workers and people act against their own interests. The greater the need for the workers to speak in their own name and define their independent politics, the more the bourgeoisie works to ensure that any attempt on the part of the people to provide themselves with organizations and social forms to facilitate their freedom of expression gets nipped in the bud. Without organization, freedom of speech and of expression can only remain abstractions.

During the period of the old social contract, civil society's mechanisms were intended to facilitate the expression of a certain public opinion within society. Now civil society no longer exists. It has been replaced by neo-liberal political arrangements whereby the rich act and decide without even bothering to create public opinion and pass decisions through a democratic process that educates and at some level involves the polity. Today how do freedom of expression and of speech pose themselves for workers?

The resolution of this problem is a historic necessity. New forms of organization must be brought into being in order to sort it out. Our work must facilitate the political practice of speaking in one's own name, beginning with one's own concerns, class interests and proletarian partisanship.

For 50 years CPC(M-L) has been carrying out this work without let-up and continues to do so today within the new conditions of the retreat of revolution, the unprecedented crisis of the bourgeois institutions and the imminent danger of imperialist war.

The workers want to defend their right to speak as individuals with their own claims and rights. However, without the organization that can take such speech into the realm of public opinion, it becomes diffuse and the state does everything so that it does not gain traction, remains marginalized and ineffective. Moreover, workers realize that their individual stands are increasingly criminalized in all kinds of ways. The working class and people in general reject the culture of vulgarity and ignorance, as they do the politics of personal attacks or character assassinations. For them, freedom of speech means the affirmation of the right to establish modern human relations amongst their peers aimed at addressing the issue of political power, of who decides.
that vein, they recognize the necessity of establishing their own organizations that will guarantee that the individual right of each worker to express himself or herself is exercised in all security and that such expression becomes effective in the resolution of society's problems.

The work of the Party to build the Workers' Centre and groups of readers, writers and disseminators of its online publication, Workers' Forum, and establish other forums where workers gather to exchange experiences and opinions and work out what stands are appropriate and effective is crucial today if any headway is to be made. The groups of readers, writers and disseminators are essential because they do not leave the exchanges of opinion and discussion to chance. These consultations are at the heart of the historic necessity to bring renewal into being. Within the current situation, it is crucial and essential that the mass Party press and the mass non-Party press and workers' forums become the tools by which the Party involves the workers in mass democratic politics which favour them.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the founding of CPC(M-L). We are engaged in summation of that work while continuing to pursue it without let-up. The mass Party press has a past and a present but the future must also be defined. The essence of that future is to guarantee that the voice of the working class and its Party become increasingly influential so that a new direction is provided for the society. The maximum political mobilization of more and more workers in that work is key to attaining the objectives they require and must set for themselves.

The financial oligarchy and imperialist bourgeoisie have no future to offer humanity other than anarchy, violence and war. The working class and people are entirely conscious of this. Despite the great difficulties which we confront, huge opportunities exist to move forward and advance our work. We must seek out those opportunities and seize the occasion to build the New. Although the responsibility is great, it is one that we accept. In this regard, full weight must be put to bring the Workers' Centre on par with this requirement. It is a challenge we accept.

Normand Chouinard is a member of the Executive of the Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L).

The Conditions Are Calling on Workers to Act Forcefully and Consciously
- Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L) -

The organizing of forms to build the strength of the working class independently of the imperialist elite is the most essential and crucial work for the workers' movement at this time. The working class is the largest and most advanced social class in the country and the only social force capable of moving the economy in a new pro-social direction and for democratic renewal to allow working people control over those economic, political and social affairs that affect their lives.

In the circumstances of the pandemic/economic crisis and in opposition to the needs, views and demands of the working class, the ruling elite in control of governments have taken measures to defend the wealth, power and privilege of the oligarchs at all costs, abandoning their social responsibility for the people and society.
A basic weakness of the ruling elite is that they do not want the working class to participate in setting the aim and direction of the economy and country. This can be seen in the response to the pandemic, where the ruling elite have blocked the working class from taking control of the situation and mobilizing the human and material resources of the country to overwhelm the virus with science and social consciousness and responsibility.

Clearly, if the working class was not deprived of its leading role and the country had not been weakened with the decades-long anti-social offensive, the people would have been in a position to defeat the pandemic without falling into crisis. Strong social programs in health care and education including daycare, employment insurance and workers' compensation that meet the needs of all; public services and public enterprises that can act quickly to defend the public interest and not be beholden to private interests of the global rich, plus a fully mobilized and organized working class ready and willing to defend the people and society would bring the pandemic under control.

The ruling oligarchs have made the health emergency even worse by generating an economic crisis on top of the pandemic, in particular in the service sector, making life unbearable for many vulnerable workers and small business people. This should never have happened and the fault lies squarely with those in control who are determined to pay the rich, destroy social programs and deny workers their leading role regardless of the consequences.

Depriving the working class of its central position in modern society has greatly exacerbated the problems arising from the pandemic. The decades-long anti-social offensive of paying the rich and attacking social programs and the rights people have by virtue of being human have left the economy and country weak in the face of the virus. We are now witnessing how federal and provincial governments and the government of Quebec are at the service of the global imperialist interests which are dictating that governments and the economy must respond to the situation in
ways that favour the expansion of their control and power and further concentrate wealth in fewer hands. The Throne Speech expected on September 23 will provide arguments to justify this in the name of high ideals.

The global oligarchs are using the situation to bring all aspects of the economy under their direct control, including the small business, retail and other sectors, and to broaden their influence and control over the political and social affairs of the country. The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few is unprecedented and a great danger to the people and society.

Labour Day 2020 finds the working class facing great difficulties but also opportunities, as illusions are being shattered right and left that some social class or force other than workers themselves is going to defend their rights and save them from the worsening conditions.

Workers can see for themselves that the ruling imperialist elite have no interest in upholding the social responsibilities of the state towards the people and society. The global ruling elite are fixated on defending their own private wealth, power and privilege in complete disregard for any social responsibility. This can be seen in the anti-social anti-worker measures being enacted in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and elsewhere, using the pandemic as an excuse.

The pandemic and economic crisis have added pressure and difficulties for the working class, coupled with the continuing anti-social offensive attacking workers' rights and conditions of work and life. But the working class is not powerless in the face of the situation; it is fighting and embracing the need to organize forums which put the workers at the centre of all economic, political and social affairs and bring into being a pro-social direction for the country to stop paying the rich, increase investments in social programs, public services and public enterprise, and defend the rights of all.

Facing the conditions with courage, wisdom and a firm belief in their capacity to organize and lead a militant defence, workers will turn the situation around in their favour as they must.

Together let us build the forms that give workers their own voice, advocates, leaders and independent politics that serve them well.

*Our Security Lies in the Fight to Defend Our Rights!*  
*Only Workers Ourselves Can Turn the Situation Around in Our Favour!*  
*All Out to Organize Our Independent Politics and Workers' Forums!*

*(Photos: TMLW, FIQ)*

**Consequences of Neo-Liberal Anti-Social Offensive During Pandemic**

**Top 12 U.S. Oligarchs' Combined Wealth Surpasses One Trillion Dollars During Pandemic**

New research by the U.S. Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) shows that, since the beginning of the pandemic, the 12 top U.S. billionaires have seen their combined wealth soar by 40 per cent, or $283 billion, to more than $1 trillion.
It's the first time in U.S. history that the collective net worth of the top 12 U.S. billionaires has topped the trillion dollar mark.

What the IPS terms the "Oligarchic Dozen" are Jeff Bezos ($189.4 billion), Bill Gates ($114 billion), Mark Zuckerberg ($95.5 billion), Warren Buffett ($80 billion), Elon Musk ($73 billion), Steve Ballmer ($71 billion), Larry Ellison ($70.9 billion), Larry Page ($67.4 billion), Sergey Brin ($65.6 billion), Alice Walton ($62.5 billion), Jim Walton ($62.3 billion), and Rob Walton ($62 billion).

"This is a disturbing milestone in the U.S. history of concentrated wealth and power. This is simply too much economic and political power in the hands of 12 people. From the point of view of a democratic self-governing society, this represents an Oligarchic Twelve or a Despotic Dozen," said the report.

IPS researchers Chuck Collins and Omar Ocampo wrote, "During the first stage of the pandemic, between January 1 and March 18, the collective wealth of the Oligarchic Dozen declined by $96 billion. But their wealth quickly rebounded and surpassed their September 2019 Forbes 400 wealth level. The only exception is Warren Buffett, who is still $2 billion below his September 2019 wealth, but is currently worth $80 billion."

The research showed that Elon Musk has been the biggest pandemic profiteer, seeing his wealth triple from $24.6 billion on March 18 to $73 billion on August 13 -- an increase of $48.5 billion or 197 per cent.

Amazon co-founder Jeff Bezos was worth $189.4 billion in August -- up $76 billion or 68 per cent since March, while Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was worth $95.5 billion, having increased his worth by $40.8 billion or 75 per cent. "The total wealth of the Oligarchic Dozen is greater than the GDP of Belgium and Austria combined," said Ocampo. "Meanwhile, tens of millions of Americans are unemployed or living paycheck to paycheck, and 170,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the United States."

(rt.com, August 19, 2020.)

Concentration of Capital Under the Pandemic

- Sandy E. Ramírez Gutiérrez -

The pandemic caused by the SARS-Cov-2 virus and the measures to contain its spread seem to have thrust capitalism into a new crisis since the financial collapse of 2008. Estimates by international bodies indicate that the world is going through the worst recession since the 1930s: the International Monetary Fund estimated that The Great Confinement will reduce global GDP by 3 per cent in 2020, the World Bank is more pessimistic and predicted a 5.2 per cent drop, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated a 6 per cent decline, if there is no resurgence of the pandemic. For these organizations and many analysts, the economic stagnation and inequality that will result from this crisis cannot be resolved without the active intervention of states, which must favour increased public spending to expand health systems, guarantee social programs and promote economic activity through credits and subsidies to
companies, in a kind of refoundation of capitalism or, as some economists call it, a suspension of the laws of capitalism.\[1\]

However, the signs of recession were already appearing before the pandemic, as François Chesnais analyzes on the basis of the growth of productive capacity utilized.\[2\] Thus, the measures imposed by the health contingency, far from being the origin of the crisis, may be pushing rapidly to a restructuring of the world economy that does not "suspend" capitalism, but reinforces it through a new wave of centralization and concentration of capital based on the capacity to take advantage of changes resulting from the pandemic.

As far as global capital flows are concerned, the data on foreign direct investment (FDI) show a sharp fall but with heterogeneous results. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has estimated a reduction of about 40 per cent in FDI in 2020 compared to the level of 2019, and between 45 and 50 per cent in 2021, as a result of the confinement measures implemented virtually worldwide. This situation implies a demand and supply shock for transnational corporations, particularly for the most intensive industries in global supply chains, such as manufacturing and the extractive sector. According to the UNCTAD report, the 100 largest transnational corporations revised their expected profits downward in 2020, but the automotive sector and the extractive companies (mainly mining and oil) are the most affected, even as the pharmaceutical and large technological companies adjusted their forecasts upward.

It is also the technology companies that have become more internationalized and concentrated. The report indicates that between 2017 and 2019, technology corporations decreased in number while increasing their share of foreign sales in the top 100, thanks to two strategies. First, through the purchase of start-ups (relatively small companies, with a high technological component and strong growth potential) to access innovations and, second, through vertical integration, expanding the content for their platforms or entering segments of the market. Both trends have intensified during the pandemic. For example, in May 2020, large technology corporations announced 15 acquisitions, six more than in the same month in 2019. The second strategy is illustrated by the increased spending by Apple and Alphabet to provide broadcast services, develop video games, and produce television programs and movies.\[3\]

Meanwhile, cross-border mergers and acquisitions fell by more than 50 per cent in the first months of 2020 compared to the previous year, as many deals were delayed or cancelled. This drop may reflect not only the uncertainty of the economic landscape, but the reduction in financing for long-term projects in these sectors. The most affected sector was fossil fuels, with a contraction of 80 per cent, followed by transport with 70 per cent; the sector with the fewest cancellations was renewable energies. Some emblematic deals were cancelled, such as the acquisition of Deliveroo (United Kingdom) by Amazon (United States) and that of the state-owned aeronautics company Embraer (Brazil) by Boeing (United States).\[4\]

**Bankruptcy**

Another indicator that serves as a gauge of capital movement is bankruptcy filings. During the month of May, 722 businesses in the United States filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, 48 per cent
more than in 2019.[5] In addition to retail chains, there is a growing list of shale oil and gas producers who, as well as facing falling demand, were unable to withstand the price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia in the first quarter of the year. Companies such as Extraction Oil & Gas, Whiting Petroleum, Chesapeake Energy and 16 other U.S. companies accumulated more than $10.5 billion in debt and had to apply for restructuring through the application of Chapter 11.[6]

Not only are unconventional oil and gas producers suffering the consequences of falling prices and demand, the big oil companies at the top of the international corporate ladder have announced cuts in employment or dividends: Royal Dutch Shell, the third largest corporation in the world according to Fortune, reduced dividend payments to its shareholders by 66 per cent for the first time since World War II and its profits fell 46 per cent in the first quarter; Britain's BP announced the layoff of 10,000 employees around the world in 2020, 15 per cent of its total staff; and ExxonMobil recorded a $610 million loss in the first quarter of the year, or 25 per cent less than in 2019. Despite these results and the plummeting oil prices, the big oil corporations are far from disappearing. Chevron, for example, announced a reduction in its budget for this year from $20 billion to $14 billion to safeguard shareholder dividends; ExxonMobil and BP also indicated that they would maintain dividends during the first quarter.

In contrast, the pandemic has accelerated the slide of large technology corporations into the centre of the economic dynamics. The S&P 500 index shows the stock market dynamism of the most important companies in the United States. Data as of June 16 indicate that more than 20 per cent of total capitalization is explained by five corporations: Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Alphabet. Amazon, the e-commerce giant, increased its revenues by 26.4 per cent in the first quarter of the year thanks to increased retail sales and its cloud processing and storage services (Amazon Web Services), despite growth in operating expenses and salaries. Microsoft, Alphabet and Facebook also recorded increased revenues in Q1 2020 due to increased demand for digital services (cloud storage, entertainment and video conferencing and video calling).[7] Undoubtedly, the risk of a resurgence of the pandemic could strengthen the dominant position of technology and digital companies as global consumers adopt e-commerce solutions.

Clearly, the crisis attributed to COVID-19 is not a general one: there are clear winners, such as the large technology corporations; and clear losers, such as the energy, transport and small business sectors. But it is also clear that there are winners among the losers, such as the large oil companies which, despite the setback, can benefit from the bankruptcy of their smaller competitors. As The Economist[8] points out, the big champions of the pandemic will be able, thanks to their liquidity and high profit margins, to increase their investments or absorb their competitors, which will configure an economy with larger, more technological and more internationalized corporations.

Sandy E. Ramírez Gutiérrez is a member of the Latin American Observatory of Geopolitics (OLAG) at the Institute of Economic Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Note

4. UNCTAD, 2020, p. 3.

(America Latina en Movimiento, July 22, 2020. Translated from original Spanish by TML.)
Remittances -- A Unique Segment of the Global Financial System

Remittances -- the billions of dollars sent by migrant workers to their home countries -- make up a unique segment of the global financial system. This segment accounts for more than five per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for at least 60 low- and medium-income countries -- more than the total of foreign direct investment or official development assistance handed out by governments of the so-called developed world. In 2019, the remittances to these countries hit a record $554 billion, according to the World Bank, with 200 million migrant workers in 40 countries, such as Canada, sending home funds to support 800 million relatives in more than 125 developing nations.

Half of the receiving families live in rural areas where remittances count the most, said Gilbert F. Houngbo, President of the specialized United Nations agency called the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Houngbo is a former Prime Minister of Togo who has led IFAD since 2017. He told UN News that with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank projects that cross-border remittances will fall by 20 per cent, or $110 billion, to $445 billion, "potentially pulling tens of millions below the poverty line while undermining progress towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

With no recovery anticipated for 2020, it is predicted that savings will be depleted and local conditions will worsen. Remittances are not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels for some time, Houngbo told UN News via e-mail. "While the reduction in remittances will not fall evenly on all families, nor across all continents, societal impacts will be substantial and sustained," he explained.

In response, Switzerland and the United Kingdom -- joined by several other UN Member States,
the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies and industry groups -- issued a global "call to action" on May 22 to ensure that migrant workers and diaspora communities can keep sending back money in ways that can also improve the remittance system. The UN agency report says: "The call urges policymakers not only to declare the provision of remittances as an essential public service, but also to support the development of more efficient digital remittance channels. To regulators, it asks that they provide guidance for 'know-your-customer' requirements, that are critical for scaling up digital financial services, particularly for undocumented persons with no access to a bank account.

"And it encourages remittance service providers to explore ways to ease the burden on their migrant customers by lowering transaction fees, which now average 6.8 per cent worldwide, more than [twice] the target set in the Sustainable Development Goals, according to the World Bank's most recent Migration and Development Brief."

"Remittances are a lifeline in the developing world -- especially now," said U.S. Secretary-General António Guterres on March 19. "Countries have already committed to reduce remittance fees to three per cent. The crisis requires us to go further, getting as close to zero as possible."

For its part, the IFAD says it is partnering with financial technology firms, mobile operators, commercial banks and postal networks, to integrate digital solutions to improve remittance transfers to rural areas. In addition to its Financial Facilities for Remittances initiative, it is strengthening the ability of rural families to weather tough times through financial literacy and planning programs, among other capacity-building efforts. For the past 15 years, the focus of international attention on remittances has been on the "sending side," particularly high transaction costs.

"We need to emphasize, however, that the development impact of remittances is really on the receiving end -- where, at this time, families are struggling with the sudden disruption of their economic lifelines," Houngbo said.

The fees banks and financial institutions charge to send them make remittances a hugely profitable business. It was to make sure this small fortune would be channeled through City Bank that after 9/11 the U.S. passed anti-terrorist financing legislation which targeted community-based money transfer systems calling them terrorist organizations. The financial institutions collect these fees in the name of high ideals as one of the ways to benefit from the enslavement of the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and to perpetrate their enslavement.

According to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), approximately three per cent of the world's population resided outside their home country in the year 2000. "A more integrated and globalized world has allowed labour movement between countries to become more fluid, with more and more workers moving abroad to seek ways to provide for their families. Thus, immigrants who seek to send back remittances have become an integrated part of the economy," the OECD writes.

June 16 has been dubbed International Day of Family Remittances by the UN. The aim is not to end the enslavement of entire countries by the international financial institutions but to call on those institutions not to charge interest on the sending of remittances or lower it to no more than three per cent.

(UN News, World Bank, UNDP and OECD. Photos: Migrante, Bulatlat.)
Plight of Foreign Trade in Latin America and Caribbean Due to Pandemic

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean -

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)'s new Special Report COVID-19, released August 6, emphasizes that deepening regional integration is indispensable for emerging from the crisis. Their press release on the occasion follows:

Latin America and the Caribbean's foreign trade will experience a sharp drop of 23 per cent in 2020 -- exceeding the 21 per cent decline recorded during the 2009 financial crisis -- as a result of the economic effects arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, ECLAC indicated today in a new report.

At a press conference, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena, unveiled the institution's Special Report COVID-19 No. 6, entitled "The Effects of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic on International Trade and Logistics, in which the Commission forecasts that the value of regional exports will contract -23 per cent this year while imports will shrink -25 per cent, a figure that also exceeds the -24 per cent recorded during the 2008-2009 financial crisis.

This decline is taking place in a global context in which international trade accumulated a 17 per cent drop in volume between January and May 2020. Latin America and the Caribbean is the developing region most affected by this situation, and it will be marked mainly by reduced shipments of manufactured goods, minerals and fuel.

The collapse of tourism (-50 per cent) will drag down service exports, especially from the Caribbean, while intraregional trade will also undergo a sharp contraction of -23.9 per cent, affecting manufactured goods in particular. All of this will lead to a loss of industrial capacity and a reprimarization of the region's export basket, the report warns.

"Deepening regional integration is crucial to emerge from this crisis. With pragmatism, we must rekindle the vision of an integrated Latin American market. In addition, the region must reduce costs through efficient, smooth and secure logistics," Alicia Bárcena stated while presenting the report.

According to ECLAC's document, the value of the region's goods exports and imports declined by 17 per cent between January and May 2020 compared with the same period of 2019. Both flows plunged towards the end of that five-month period in 2020, with a 37 per cent year-on-year drop in May alone.

In the first five months of this year, sharp declines were seen in the value of Latin American and Caribbean shipments to the United States (-22.2 per cent), the European Union (-14.3 per cent) and within the region (-23.9 per cent), which together absorbed 69 per cent of its total goods exports in 2019. In contrast, shipments to Asia have shown greater resilience. In particular, exports to China fell less than 2 per cent between January and May and recovered in April and May, in line with that economy's gradual reopening, which constitutes a positive sign, especially for South American countries that export commodities.

For 2020 as a whole, it is forecast that the biggest contraction in regional exports will be seen among those bound for the United States (-32 per cent) and within the region (-28 per cent), while shipments to China are expected to fall by just -4 per cent.

In analyzing the region's sectors, the greatest decline between January and May versus the same
period of 2019 was seen in mining and oil (-25.8 per cent), followed by manufactured goods (-18.5 per cent). In contrast, the sector of agricultural and livestock products notched a slight increase of 0.9 per cent. That reflects the fact that demand for food is less sensitive to contractions in economic activity, since it is an essential good, the report indicates.

On a country level, ECLAC's report states that only four nations -- all of them in Central America -- saw their exports rise between January and May 2020: Costa Rica (2 per cent), Honduras (2 per cent), Guatemala (3 per cent) and Nicaragua (14 per cent). This is due to a combination of greater sales of medical supplies and personal protective gear (especially masks) and of agricultural products (the demand for which has been less affected by the pandemic), along with the relative resilience exhibited by intra-Central American trade.

Meanwhile, imports during this same period fell in all countries (-17.1 per cent in the regional average value), due to the deep recession that the region is undergoing. Particularly worrisome is the contraction in the importation of capital goods and intermediate inputs (-14.5 per cent and -13.6 per cent, respectively), which will affect the investment rate and will compromise the recovery, the publication warns.

In addition, global maritime trade via containers has traced a downward trend since the pandemic broke out. In Latin America, there was a -6.1 per cent year-on-year variation in the period of January-May 2020, with sharp declines in April and May. As a result, port throughput has fallen in the vast majority of ports in the region (with a 1 per cent regional average decline between January and May 2020).

Meanwhile, regional air traffic suffered a true collapse in this period: -95 per cent in terms of passengers and -46 per cent for cargo, following the global trend, while the closure of production-related activities, stricter health measures and administrative obstacles have also served to slow land transportation.

According to the United Nations organization, in a more uncertain and more regionalized global economy, it is crucial that regional integration be intensified. To achieve this, it is necessary to foster regional value chains in strategic sectors, taking advantage of the scale that a market of 650 million inhabitants offers; promote the agenda of "paperless trade" and a common digital market; reduce the region's vulnerability to external shocks; and bring about a more symmetrical dialogue with the United States, China and Europe.

The report indicates that in order to build back better, Latin America and the Caribbean must reduce its internal costs and promote efficient, smooth and secure logistics through a redesigned investment strategy, greater interoperability of services, regional integration, and the promotion of logistical intelligence.

"In the current context of heightened uncertainty, the region's countries should take actions that allow them to reduce their internal logistical costs and produce services with value-added to increase their competitiveness. These measures must be implemented in coordination with other economic and social measures to foster an economic recovery with social and environmental benefits," Alicia Bárcena added.

For the full report click here.

(August 6, 2020)
Decrease of Domestic Product in Mexico

Mexico's per capita Gross Domestic Product totalled 155,949 pesos ($7,083) in the second quarter, a drop of 19.5 per cent, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) reported, on August 27.

The per capita GDP marks the value in pesos of the income per inhabitant, which in those three months is the lowest in annualized terms since the same period in 1996 when it stood at 150,394 pesos ($6,836).

Reaction is yet to come from President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who is a critic of the mechanism for measuring GDP because of the inadequacies of the method for weighing economic development, such as not considering factors linked to social welfare and non-economic services.

Mexico is devising its own system for measuring economic development that includes people's well-being and happiness, as well as the levels of corruption that it aims to turn into an economic category.

The historical collapse of per capita GDP in 2020, according to INEGI, was due to the fact that the economy recorded an annual fall of 18.7 per cent in April-June this year, coupled with the increase in the country's population over the past year (0.8 per cent).

What INEGI -- whose data and conclusions almost never coincide with those of the government -- finds serious is that the fall in 2020 is 9.0 percentage points higher than that of 1995, when the indicator plummeted 10.5 per cent in the second quarter of that year, and was also 9.2 percentage points higher than the fall in the second quarter of 2009, and 11.6 points higher than that recorded in the 1983 crisis, in a similar period in April-June.

INEGI's analysts anticipate that the main impact of the collapse of the Mexican economy will be a deterioration in the country's poverty indicators.

The National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy indicated that the number of people living in extreme poverty will increase to more than 10 million due to the economic and health crisis.

Meanwhile organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean expect Mexico to be the country with the greatest increase in poverty in the region.

(Prensa Latina, August 27.)

Important Anniversaries

75th Anniversary of the Founding of Socialist Vietnam Celebrated in Canada

On September 2, Canadians from coast to coast participated in an online celebration of the 75th anniversary of the August Revolution and Declaration of Independence by President Ho Chi Minh in 1945. The event was organized by the Canada Vietnam Friendship Society and the program included a keynote address by His Excellency the Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to Canada Pham Cao Phong. The Ambassador also participated in a commemorative event held in Toronto on August 20 marking these historic Vietnamese anniversaries, where attendance was restricted because of the pandemic.
Earlier in the day, flag raising ceremonies were held at City Hall in Ottawa and Toronto in honour of Vietnam's National Day. A short video of these ceremonies started off the online anniversary celebration.

In his keynote address Ambassador Pham expressed his great pleasure at addressing the Canadian people on this historic occasion. He spoke with pride of the victory of the Vietnamese people 75 years ago in establishing their democratic republic under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam. The victory of the August Revolution and founding of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was rooted, he said, in the "tradition of patriotism, intelligence, bravery and the indomitable spirit of the entire Vietnamese people under the correct revolutionary path, strategic leadership and vision of the Communist Party of Vietnam and Uncle Ho."

He also pointed out that the struggle to establish their democratic people's republic was and is a source of inspiration to the anti-colonial struggle and fight for independence worldwide.

Ambassador Pham also touched on the Doi Moi (Renewal) reforms launched by the Communist Party of Vietnam 35 years ago which have resulted in historic achievements in revitalization, growth and development in all spheres of life in Vietnam. For example, for the last two decades Vietnam has been one of the fastest growing economies worldwide. Poverty which once gripped 70 per cent of the population has now been reduced to six per cent. It has given rise to the kind of beautiful and prosperous country that President Ho Chi Minh envisioned, setting the stage for a bright and prosperous future for Vietnam.

Over the last six months COVID-19 has presented the largest non-traditional security challenge since the Second World War. Vietnam has now recorded over 1,000 infectious cases, while over 700 have fully recovered. The economy is in recovery too. Vietnam enjoys a 2.58 per cent growth rate, the fifth fastest worldwide in 2020 and has a positive perspective in mid- and long-term growth.
Ambassador Pham also highlighted the strengthening of bilateral relations between Canada and Vietnam in economic and other spheres. Vietnam is currently Canada's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia. He also expressed deep appreciation for the cooperation and friendship of the Government of Canada, the warm feelings of the Canadian people for Vietnam and the Vietnamese people and the patriotism of the Vietnamese community in Canada. He concluded by highlighting that although he has been in Canada just a short while, he has been "deeply touched by the warmth and sentiments of the Canadian people, the Canada Vietnam Friendship Society and other friends towards Vietnam and on the joyful atmosphere today. Let us together celebrate the 75th anniversary of the August Revolution and Vietnam's National Day."

Following Ambassador Pham's keynote address, two short videos with historical footage were shown, one which highlighted the path President Ho Chi Minh laid out to liberate Vietnam from colonial rule and the other on the sweeping victories of the August Revolution which led to the Declaration of Independence, Vietnam's National Day, on September 2, 1945.

A lively discussion ensued. Participants highlighted the heroism of the Vietnamese people under the historic leadership of Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam. It is living testimony of how a people can liberate themselves through their own efforts, and face down and defeat the most brutal and well-armed adversaries when they have an aim for their society, a revolutionary party to unite the people and revolutionary theory illuminating their path.

The program was concluded with the inaugural launch of the Ho Chi Minh Arts Virtual Museum by Professor Nguyen Dai Trang and Vietnamese youth. This project has been worked on for months and its aim is to be an online repository for resources related to the life of the legendary leader of the Vietnamese people, Ho Chi Minh. It is interactive; a beautiful repository of fine art, music, poems and writings about and by Ho Chi Minh. To visit the Museum click here.

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Vietnam Celebrates 75 Years of National Independence -- September 2

- Steve Rutchinski -

Leaders of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the National Assembly, State, and Vietnam Fatherland Front pay tribute at the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum in celebration of 75 years of national independence.

Seventy-five years ago on September 2, 1945, the historic August Revolution of the Vietnamese
people was successfully concluded with the Declaration of Independence issued by President Ho Chi Minh in Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi. Before a jubilant assembly of close to one million of his compatriots, "Uncle Ho" declared, "[W]e, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country -- and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty."

*Nhan Dan*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Vietnam reported: "Over the past 75 years, National Day has become an opportunity for people to review and show their pride in the heroic and indomitable tradition of the nation under the leadership of the Party."

National Day, as it is known to 96 million Vietnamese in their homeland, to the patriotic diaspora and to friends of Vietnam, is celebrated with great warmth and affection worldwide. On this occasion, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) extended its warmest revolutionary greetings to the Communist Party of Vietnam, the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people everywhere.

One of the outstanding features of the Vietnamese people is their social solidarity and national unity that has enabled them to achieve great successes in nation-building and in defending their sovereignty. The outstanding success of Vietnam's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is but one such example of this national unity and trust of the Vietnamese people in the Communist Party of Vietnam and the government.

The revolutionary patriotic spirit is evident everywhere in Vietnam with many events taking place celebrating this historic 75th Anniversary of Independence. A commemorative meeting was held in Hanoi on August 29, attended by high officials of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the state and members of the diplomatic corps.

Speaking at this event, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc highlighted that over the last 75 years "Vietnam has reaped a range of important achievements with high economic growth, improved living conditions of people, maintained socio-political stability, ensured defence and security, expanded external relations, and made active and responsible contributions to peace and cooperation in the region and the world." He added that these "great and historical achievements proved the strong spirit and will of the Vietnamese nation and affirmed its role as a reliable friend and partner of the international community."
The Prime Minister and other dignitaries also attended a gala cultural performance entitled "My Motherland Has Never Been So Beautiful" on September 1 at the Hanoi Opera House. Renowned artists from major cultural institutions across the country performed songs and dances representing the August Revolution, the Declaration of Independence by President Ho Chi Minh and the victory over the U.S. imperialists in 1975 and the reunification of the country.

People queue outside Ho Chi Minh’s mausoleum to pay tribute.
An exhibition entitled "National Flag, Anthem and Emblem: The Proud Symbols of Vietnamese Nation" officially opened in Hanoi on September 1 and will run until the end of the year. Nearly 200 documents, artifacts and photos, curated by the National Archives Centre II, are on display. The exhibits specifically introduced the most important symbols of Vietnam, including the national flag, anthem and emblem as well as special stories about the birth of these symbols.

Throngs of people lined up to pay tribute to President Ho Chi Minh at his mausoleum and at the national palace grounds in Hanoi.

Ho Chi Minh City inaugurated a book exhibition honouring the life of Ho Chi Minh, the August Revolution, the Vietnamese People's Army and on national construction and development.

On September 2 Vietnamese national television staged a special arts program entitled "Loi The Doc Lap" (Oath of Independence) to mark National Day. The program included reportage, historical footage of witnesses, songs and dances which chronicled the period from the 1890s when the Vietnamese people lived under brutal colonial rule to President Ho Chi Minh's journey to seek a way to rescue the nation and the Vietnamese people's struggle for national salvation.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam stands strong and tall in the community of nations as a champion of peace, freedom, sovereignty and independence. In a world dominated by big powers Vietnam finds its way to secure the well-being and to uphold the most cherished principles of the people.

*It Can Be Done! It Must Be Done!*

*Long Live the Socialist Republic of Vietnam!*

*(Photos: Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, Voice of Vietnam, dongconsan.vn.)*
On September 3, the Chinese people commemorated the 75th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War.

President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders attended an important commemoration at the War Museum in Beijing, joined by representatives from all walks of life. They laid floral tributes to all those who sacrificed their lives in the great people's war and paid respects.

China made outstanding contributions to the cause of liberating humankind from the scourge of Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism. With exceptional courage the Chinese people faced the brutality of the Japanese imperialists, pinning down some 1.86 million Japanese soldiers -- 50 per cent of its total force. Estimates put the number of Chinese killed in the war at more than 14 million people. One hundred million were turned into refugees. Between 1939 and 1945, China suffered the loss of some 2.2 million troops, second only to the Soviet Union amongst the Allied countries, which lost 7.5 million. If the toll of those killed or wounded is tallied from 1931 when the Japanese first invaded Manchuria, then it comes to more than 35 million people lost as a result of Japanese atrocities by the time they were defeated on September 2, 1945.

The victory over the Japanese imperialists marked the end of World War II. It was the first complete victory won by China in its resistance against foreign aggression in modern times. Speaking to this on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of this victory, President Xi said:

"This great triumph crushed the plot of the Japanese militarists to colonize and enslave China and put an end to China's national humiliation of suffering successive defeats at the hands of foreign aggressors in modern times. This great triumph re-established China as a major country in the world and won the Chinese people the respect of all peace-loving people around the world. This great triumph opened up bright prospects for the great renewal of the Chinese nation and set our ancient country on a new journey after gaining rebirth."
"During the war, with huge national sacrifice, the Chinese people held ground in the main theatre in the East of the World Anti-Fascist War, thus making a major contribution to its victory. In their war against Japanese aggression, the Chinese people received extensive support from the international community. The Chinese people will always remember what the people of other countries did for the victory of their War of Resistance."

He affirmed China's commitment to peace based on its experience in the war, saying, "The aim of our commemoration is [...] to bear history in mind, honour all those who laid down their lives, cherish peace and open up the future." He went on to affirm the rule of law in international relations and the responsibility of all nations to ensure that peace and cooperation prevail.

President Xi stated that "China will never seek hegemony or expansion. It will never inflict its past suffering on any other nation." He concluded his speech with the words, "Let us bear in mind the great truth of history: Justice will prevail! Peace will prevail! The people will prevail!"

In Shanghai flowers are laid for nameless martyrs in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, September 3, 2020.

(TML archives, and report and photos from Xinhua.)
September 9, 2020 marks the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). On this occasion, the National Leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) Anna Di Carlo sent greetings to Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and wished the Korean people success in their striving to secure peace for their nation and put an end to more than 70 years of U.S.-engineered division, tension and strife and to move forward as a united, peaceful and prosperous country.

After decades of struggle against the Japanese occupiers (1910-1945), the Korean people, under the leadership of General Kim Il Sung and the Korean People's Army, liberated their nation on August 15, 1945 and began building a modern democratic state from the ruins of war. Across the country, People's Committees were formed and in August-September 1945 the Korean people elected their representatives to a People's Assembly, which proclaimed the "Korean People's Republic" on September 6, 1945.

However, the Republic was short-lived because the U.S. insisted on fulfilling its ambition to establish a foothold in north-east Asia on the Korean Peninsula after the defeat of Japan, even though the Korean people freed themselves from the Japanese occupiers without the presence of any U.S. troops. The U.S. included a term in the surrender signed by Japan on September 2, 1945 that the Korean Peninsula would be divided along the 38th parallel and that the defeated Japanese military in Korea would surrender to U.S. forces in the south, not to the Korean liberators. On September 8, 1945, two days after the declaration of the Republic, thousands of U.S. troops began to arrive in Korea. The new occupiers declared the Korean People's Republic illegal and began to crush the People's Committees by force. In the words of U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, Korea was to be an "anti-communist bulwark."

Over the next three bloody years, through a campaign of mass terror and brutality, the illegal U.S. Military Government and their local agents criminalized, rounded up, tortured, imprisoned and
murdered hundreds of thousands of suspected communists, "leftists" and other patriots who refused to submit to U.S. dictate.  

The U.S. organized a fraudulent "free and fair" election in May 1948, which was boycotted en masse by the Korean people. The U.S. installed Syngman Rhee as President of the Republic of Korea by force of arms in July 1948.  

In response to this crime by the U.S. against the Korean people and their drive for independence and reunification, Kim Il Sung declared the founding of the DPRK on September 9, 1948 in Pyongyang at a jubilant rally of more than one million people.  

In order to capture the Korean Peninsula and use it to threaten aggression against China and the Soviet Union, in 1950 the U.S. instigated the Korean War and from 1950 to 1953 more than four million Korean civilians were killed and massive destruction caused to the economy and infrastructure. The United States and 17 other countries, including Canada, took part in this war of aggression against the Korean nation under the fig-leaf of the UN flag on the false pretext of collective self-defence against an attack by the north on the south.  

The U.S. aggressors committed crimes against the peace, crimes against humanity and untold war crimes, including massacres of civilians, as well as the use of biological and chemical weapons and the fire-bombing of various northern cities, which resulted in many civilian casualties. The DPRK, though still in its infancy, with the help of the Chinese Volunteer Forces, organized the Korean people and defeated the U.S. in the war and forced it to sign the Korean Armistice Agreement, thus defending the sovereignty and honour of the Korean nation.  

DPRK President Kim Il Sung said at the time: "The victory of our people in the Korean War was a victory of the revolutionary people over the imperialist forces, a victory of the revolutionary army over the aggressive forces of imperialism. It proved that the people who rise up for freedom, independence and progress, taking their destiny into their own hands under the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party, will never be conquered by any imperialist forces of aggression. It also exposed the vulnerability and corruptness of U.S. imperialism, demonstrating to the oppressed nations of the world that U.S. imperialism is by no means an unconquerable enemy and that they too can definitely fight and defeat it."

It is important to point out that the DPRK has committed no act of aggression against another country. The Korean War, which engulfed the entire Korean Peninsula, was provoked by the U.S. and its puppet regime in the south. Standing firm against the might of the U.S. military empire -- known for its use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons worldwide -- the DPRK affirms not only its right to be, but the right of all nations and peoples to self-determination and peace. For this internationalist spirit, the DPRK is justly admired by all justice- and peace-loving people in Canada and the world.  

Led by President Kim Il Sung, the exploits of the Korean people in the anti-Japanese war continue to inspire not only the Korean people, but the peoples of the world, to be courageous, fearless and self-reliant, that no matter the difficulties and the odds against them, they can prevail. President Kim Il Sung's far-sightedness and wisdom were tempered in the forge of anti-Japanese struggle, meeting the cruelty of the Japanese occupiers with total confidence in the Korean people and their abilities and determination.  

CPC(M-L) treasures the meeting between its founder and leader Comrade Hardial Bains and President Kim Il Sung. Canadian communists will always stand with the people of the DPRK and the Workers' Party of Korea and support their tireless efforts to secure the reunification of the Korean nation, peace on the Korean Peninsula, justice and prosperity.
In the United States, the ruling circles and their elected representatives are going all out to undermine the growing movement for change. They are portraying those protesting for rights and against police violence and impunity as the source of conflict and violence which is, in fact, caused by the state. They also claim the way forward is by choosing sides in the November election or other reliance on the state machinery.

The people across the country are persisting in relying on their own initiatives and organizing to defend rights, despite brutal police violence against them. To divert and disrupt the movement not only are elections presented as the solution but now state-backed racist militias are being deployed. This is not only used to incite violence against peaceful protesters, but also to justify using far greater state violence in the name of controlling "extremists" of the "right" and "left."

The unjustifiable racist police killings of African Americans continue with the latest such crimes in Rochester, New York and Los Angeles, California. The Rochester case only came to light because of efforts by the family demanding police video. Local police knew it was a homicide in March and New York's Attorney General has had the case since April -- yet both kept the crime hidden. This has further exposed efforts by the states to quell resistance by claiming the solution to police killings is an "independent" investigation by the state attorney general. Hundreds immediately came out in protest in both Rochester and New York City and were met with a massive police presence and repeatedly sprayed with what police now call a "chemical irritant."

The level of brutality of the police forces everywhere -- in Los Angeles again shooting an unarmed African American man in the back as he ran away and in Rochester suffocating another while he was naked, handcuffed, and on the ground in cold weather -- make clear that these racist institutions are organized to impose submission to a system that protects property interests and generates fear, then presents such inhumanity as democratic and acceptable. The fear of the rulers that their "democracy" and "justice" are no longer being accepted is palpable. Their violence will not deter the resistance which is determined to prevail.
Use of Armed Militia

The use of armed militia with state backing and protection has been especially evident in Portland, Oregon and Kenosha, Wisconsin. In Kenosha, police did not arrest or disarm a young militia member from Illinois who shot and killed two people. He was only arrested at his home the following day. By comparison, organizers of the demonstrations were snatched off the street by local and federal forces in unmarked vans and held for 24 hours, charged with violating curfew.

Portland is one of the cities where state-backed efforts to discredit and criminalize protests, often using state-backed militias, has long occurred. The success of rights organizers there in making their demands for equality and against racist police violence and impunity heard and reckoned with, including daily protests now for nearly 100 days following the killing of George Floyd, is supported by tens of millions across the country. Demonstrators there have persisted undaunted despite vicious violence by local and state police as well as federal forces. Now, militias like Patriot Prayer, based in Washington State, and Proud Boys, also active in New York City, are increasingly being used.

Both commonly organize actions together, such as the recent August 29 "Trump Cruise" where dozens of vehicles were permitted by police and federal forces to caravan through downtown Portland, assaulting demonstrators by firing paint balls and pepper spray into the crowds. Police did not stop them, did not declare it unlawful when they diverted from their approved route, enabling them to reach the demonstrators. Demonstrators, on the other hand, in similar circumstances are routinely barricaded, charged with bicycles or police lines and tear gas.

In Portland, August 24, at a "No Marxism in America" rally by "Proud Boys," notorious for their violence and anti-people stands, an individual member of Proud Boys, with an arrest warrant out for previous assault on a demonstrator, was not stopped or arrested. Police knew of his presence, yet, as Police Chief Chuck Lovell put it, "What is it going to take for us to wade into a crowd of people to make an arrest on a warrant?" He added, "It's probably not something we'd look to do in that type of crowd control situation." Yet people here and worldwide have seen police and federal forces do exactly that night after night after night against people standing up for equality and an end to police violence. Further, there were only about 30 officers present at the "Proud Boys" rally, as compared to the hundreds of heavily armed officers commonly at the protests defending rights.

The militias involved are known for their violence against those standing up for rights and their
openly Hitlerite, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant actions. Both have been used to violently target
demonstrators in Portland for more than two years. Their members are usually clothed in military
style uniforms and their actions commonly guarded by Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
officials. Numerous videos show them isolating and then beating protesters and assaulting them
with paint balls and pepper balls. They are rarely arrested and police and federal forces usually do
not intervene in the beatings, many severe enough to require hospitalization. Instead, they
commonly tear gas and arrest the pro-people demonstrators.

In practice, these activities by police and militias exacerbate the policing issues facing the society.
They are in part an effort to divert the movement into making these militias their main target,
rather than the state that foments and protects them, while also increasing tensions among the
people and justifying further state-organized violence by police or the military. Kenosha, for
example, currently has more than 1,000 National Guard present.

At the August 29 confrontation with demonstrators in Portland by the armed militia forces, a
member of "Patriot Prayer" was shot and killed. Reports indicate that Black Lives Matter protester
Michael Forest Reinoehl responded in self-defence. He was from the Portland-area and a regular
at the demonstrations. Unlike Kyle Rittenhouse, who killed two protesters in Kenosha and was
only arrested the next day in a "routine" manner, Reinoehl was shot and killed in a hail of 30-40
bullets by U.S. Marshals.

Further rallies by these armed militia are being promoted in Portland for September 7, 19 and 26.
Governor Kate Brown has called on "outside agencies," like federal DHS and U.S. Marshals, to
assist. Oregon State Police will allow troopers responding to protests to be deputized by the
Marshals so demonstrators can be charged with federal crimes, which often carry harsher
sentences.

Los Angeles

Two Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies shot and killed 29-year-old African-American Dijon
Kizzee on August 31. He was stopped while on his bicycle for what the police department called
"bicycle code violations." He fled and was pursued, and a physical confrontation reportedly broke
out. Police claim that Kizzee dropped some clothes and a firearm at this point, although none of
the video of the incident can verify the firearm. However, it is clear he posed no threat. Police
reports admit he was unarmed and fleeing. Police fired 15 times, killing him with shots to the
back.

Attorneys for Kizzee's family point out that police often use bicycle code violations as an excuse to
justify a stop when a police shooting or other use of force has occurred. "That could be something
as benign as riding his bicycle on the sidewalk or against traffic," said attorney Carl Douglas. "You never see anybody in Beverly Hills or Santa Monica stopped for a code violation."

Attorney Dale Galipo said Kizzee was shot in the back without any commands or verbal warning by police. "Another reckless, unnecessary shooting of a person of color," he said. "One has to wonder: How long is this gonna go on? And why is it continuing to go on, day after day, week after week? How many families are watching right now concerned that their children, their loved ones are gonna be the next victims?"

Protest in Los Angeles, September 1, 2020, following the killing of Dijon Kizzee.

Kenosha and Elections

Following the racist police shooting of Jacob Blake on August 23 and the killing of two protestors by an armed militia member on August 25, President Trump visited Kenosha, Wisconsin on September 1. He did so despite a request from Governor Tony Evers, who publicly said his presence would "only hinder our healing" and "delay our work to overcome division and move forward together." Reports indicate that privately he also asked Democratic Presidential Nominee Joe Biden not to come, but he also visited Kenosha on September 3.

Protests against Trump's visit took place from the time he arrived in the early afternoon until the 7:00 pm curfew. There have been marches in Kenosha even before the police shooting of Jacob Blake and daily ones since. There have also been numerous community events, such as providing free food and medical supplies to further strengthen the unity and resistance.

To divert and dampen the ongoing actions in many cities, both Trump and Biden are trying to present the election as the "most important in modern history." People are supposed to divide for
or against Trump and devote energy and resources on the candidates. Instead, people are organizing to step up their resistance and already making plans for continued actions after the elections. They reject the old and obsolete "justice" of the existing system. The growing consciousness is that by sticking to their demands for equality and accountability and defending the rights of all, change that favours the people can be achieved.

In Kenosha, Trump took part in a "Community Safety Roundtable" where he began by praising the role of the police and military against demonstrations, which he termed as "anti-police and anti-American riots." He referred to demonstrators as "violent mobs," engaged in acts of "domestic terror." He said the federal government is providing more funding for "hiring more police, surging tough-on-crime federal prosecutors, increasing penalties for assaulting law enforcement."

By defaming the movement as "terrorist," charges of domestic terror, or even those of "resisting arrest" if it involves federal officers, are going to be increasingly used against demonstrators to impose harsher sentences. This was further shown in Trump's remarks attempting to dismiss protesters and their just demands as followers of a violent ideology, specifically targeting those opposing fascism.

His exchanges in the roundtable focused on the destruction of property and the need to protect it, not people. He said he would provide emergency funding of $1 million for Kenosha police and another $42 million for statewide police forces and prosecutors.

U.S. Attorney General Barr was also present. Like Trump, he emphasized continuing efforts by the federal government to control policing at the state and local level. For Kenosha, in particular, Barr said, "This is an example that when you have the local political leadership backing the police, you have the state willing to put in the resources in terms of National Guard, and the federal government able to come up with support such as the FBI, the Marshals, and ATF who have some special skills and forensic ability to help, there will be peace on the streets."
On September 1, 2020, President Trump visited Kenosha. In addition to protests (bottom) against his visit, Jacob Blake’s family hosted a community gathering.
During his visit to Kenosha on September 3, Joe Biden, amongst other activities, took part in a community meeting and spoke by phone with Jacob Blake, still hospitalized and paralyzed, and met with his family members. Trying to appear to support the cause of the demonstrators, he said the police officer involved in the Blake shooting should be charged. But, his campaign clarified, only after "a full investigation to ensure all the facts are known first."

People in Rochester are well acquainted with such investigations by local and state officials, which hide yet another brutal "I Can't Breathe" killing of a black man. In the case of the individual who was only suspected of the August 29 fatal shooting in Portland of militia member Aaron J. Danielson, there was no investigation, he was summarily gunned down and killed by federal forces.

"Full investigation," is reserved for agents of the state and whether conducted by local, state or federal officials, it is common to result in no charges. Though more than 1,000 police killings occur yearly, of the 42 non-federal police officers convicted between 2005 and 2020, only five were convicted of murder, 22 of various degrees of manslaughter, five of the lesser charges of negligent or reckless homicide. The rest were convicted for assault or lesser charges. (Statista Research Department, June 10, 2020).

Further, the broad resistance is demanding far more than just charges against individual police. The resistance is striving for new arrangements that provide justice by guaranteeing equal rights, provide the people with control, recognize that peace and security require dealing with poverty and state-organized violence, not denigrating protesters as the source of the problems.

The Trump and Biden visits and ongoing campaigns are part of the pressure from the ruling circles to divide the people and have them line up behind one or the other candidate. Instead, continuing actions in Kenosha, Portland, Los Angeles, Chicago and many other cities show the people are speaking out in their own name and organizing to achieve their demands.

**Sports Teams Join in Protests Following Shooting of Jacob Blake**

Since the police shooting of Jacob Blake, actions are being taken by professional athletes across North America in support of the Black Lives Matter movement against racism and police violence. On August 26, the Milwaukee Bucks led a historic boycott of the National Basketball Association (NBA) playoffs to protest the escalation of racial violence in the country. Minutes before the game began, only the referees and athletes from the Orlando Magic were on the court. Orlando decided to walk off to join the boycott.

Strikes are banned under the NBA's collective bargaining agreement, which means the Bucks players broke their own contract in order to protest racial injustice and police violence. The decision by the teams caused a chain reaction that included the Toronto Raptors, Houston Rockets, Oklahoma City Thunder, Los Angeles Lakers and Portland Trail Blazers, prompting action by the sport's top executives.

Teams from the Women's NBA, Major League Soccer and Major League Baseball, including the Milwaukee Brewers, have also joined the boycott, with athletes in the National Hockey League and professional tennis also holding similar actions. Many university and college sports teams also held protests and marches in solidarity across the U.S.

The stands taken by professional athletes against racism and police violence this year were preceded in recent times by then San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick in 2016, who in that year's pre-season, began the practice of sitting or kneeling during the playing of the U.S. National Anthem. He later explained, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour. To me, this is bigger than football and it
would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder." His remarks came in the context of the growing Black Lives Matter movement following several outrageous police killings of African Americans.

Kaepernick's kneeling protest has since been picked up by many other players in the National Football League (NFL), while Kaepernick himself is said to have been blackballed and has not been signed to a team since 2016, despite being acknowledged as having the skills to be a starting quarterback. Monopoly media as well as President Trump have used this issue to try to sow divisions. Nonetheless, many ordinary youth taking part in amateur sport across the U.S., whether African American or not, have also taken up this form of protest to express their demand for an end to racism and police violence and to show their unity and refusal to be divided on a racist basis.

**Actions Continue Across the Country**

**Portland, Oregon**

Las Vegas, Nevada

Denver, Colorado

Omaha, Nebraska

NO MORE NAMES

DEFUND OPD
Minneapolis-St. Paul's, Minnesota

Wauwatosa, Wisconsin
Skate for Black lives held August 30, 2020 in honour of the young skateboarder Anthony Huber and another youth Jojo Rosenbaum killed while protesting the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha.

Champagne, Illinois

Columbus, Ohio
Thousands in Raleigh, North Carolina join protests in support of resistance in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Demands included getting police out of Raleigh schools and accountability for in-custody killings in the county jails.
Memorial and march, September 3, 2020, for Daniel Prude who died in police custody in March, 2020. Seven officers involved were only suspended September 4 following release of police bodycam video showing officers holding him down and suffocating him.

New York City
Washington, DC

August 29, 2020


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Website: www.cpcml.ca  Email: editor@cpcml.ca