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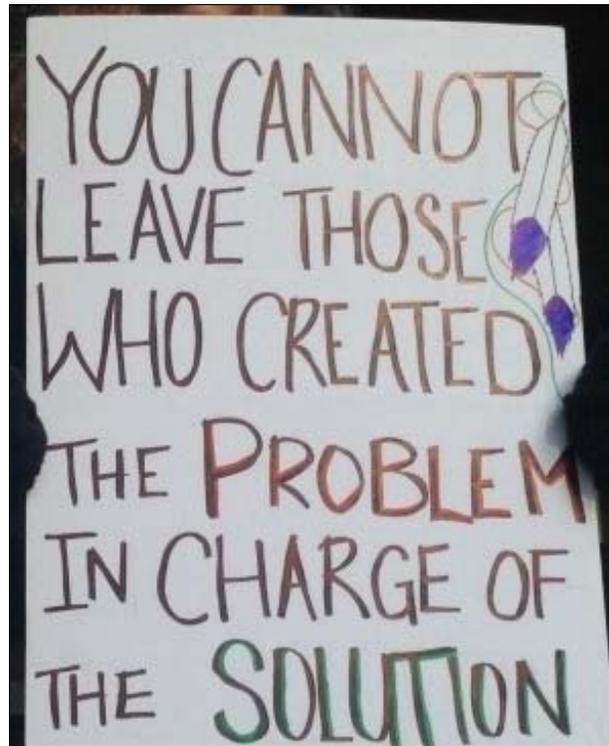
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The Need to Enforce Rights

Accountability Is a Serious Concern for Workers

- Pierre Chénier -

Workers are seriously concerned about the lack of accountability on the part of governments at all levels for what is happening to the people. There can be no doubt that decisions that governments have taken and are taking have created the conditions for the dramatic and tragic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and safety of the people. Thirty years of anti-social offensive in health care and social services -- with massive cutbacks, increased privatization, further concentration of decision-making power in ministerial hands and the marginalization and exclusion of the experience and opinions and demands of frontline workers, have wrecked the capacity of the health care system to face the COVID-19 pandemic. The tragedy at Northwood Manor in Nova Scotia is one such example. When governments establish inquiries and commissions to look into the tragedies that are happening, they are doing so behind closed doors so as to ensure that they do not look into the heart of the matter.



Such inquiries consider the first-hand experience, proposals and opinions and the voice of frontline workers as an impediment to their aim which is to hold onto the power to make all the decisions not in the interest of the people but in the service of narrow private interests.

Workers reject this state of affairs and are insisting that open public discussion take place in which the causes and solutions of the problems are put on the table and publicly examined. They do not accept so-called inquiries being used as instruments to block the people from having a decisive say in all the affairs that affect them. It is absurd to claim that frontline workers who keep the health care system functioning against all odds and at great sacrifices for themselves should be deprived of decision-making power in the system. The same thing applies to all sectors in which workers keep producing goods and services that allow society to function in this terrible time of crisis. This is why workers are firmly opposing the "business as usual" dictate of the ruling elite, the "going back to normal" because that "normal" was precisely what made the crisis much worse and much more difficult to overcome and is threatening to make the situation even worse than it is.

Workers' Forum is putting its pages at the disposal of the workers to make their voices heard, to smash the silence on their conditions and on their struggle for their rights and for the rights of all, and to open the path to solving the crises that are erupting in a way which favours the people.



Nova Scotia

Demand for Public Inquiry into Northwood Tragedy

- Interview, Jason MacLean -

Jason MacLean is President of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees' Union (NSGEU).

Workers' Forum: NSGEU is firm in its demand for a public inquiry into the disaster that took place at the Northwood nursing home in Halifax and into Nova Scotia's long-term care system. Can you tell us more about this demand?

Jason MacLean: As far as Northwood is concerned, we must not forget that it is central to Nova Scotia's long-term care system. Northwood has been considered the shining star of long-term care in the province. It's the biggest long-term care facility east of Montreal. It was looked upon positively as the place where people would end up going for long-term care. It is central geographically because it's located in the central region, in Halifax, and is also central figuratively because it was considered as the standard. And this is where we had this tragedy whereby 53 residents lost their lives in the spring.

We must learn what mistakes were made, where we had gaps in the whole system. We are also going to learn that we need to invest more into long-term care and the only way for us to be able to move along there, because it is going to cost money, is for everybody to be brought along into this whole pandemic and to look back at what decisions were made leading into it. But also, if we do that, we are going to set a framework for the future, so that other governments won't make the kinds of decisions that led to what happened at Northwood. It did not just happen out of thin air. It happened because of certain decisions and of course, because of COVID-19. Nova Scotians need to be part of that because they need to embrace reform in long-term care. It is only going to happen if they bring people along in the review, instead of holding it behind closed doors and then making decisions with nobody understanding why changes are being made or if they are actually going to have an impact in improving the situation. Our demand is all about a public inquiry.

WF: Is there a motion at this time amongst the people of Nova Scotia to hold such a public inquiry?

JM: NSGEU has sought a public inquiry since the beginning. We were actually the first group to ask for a public inquiry. And then you even had the CEO of Northwood saying that she is open to having a public inquiry. Then there's the 53 families of the people we lost at Northwood, who are also demanding a public inquiry. We believe there's an upswell of support for a public inquiry amongst Nova Scotians, especially after they realized the power they do have in demanding an open public inquiry into the mass shooting that happened in Portapique.[1] That changed the mind of the federal and the provincial government, which finally agreed to hold a public inquiry. If Nova Scotians want it to happen, it will happen.

WF: NSGEU's report *Neglecting Northwood* says that what happened at Northwood is a failure of public policy? What is the failure according to you?

JM: Many reports on long-term care have been written over the years and the recommendations coming out of them were not followed. Besides, in 2015 and 2017 there were budgets with cuts in them to long-term care facilities. In the entire seven years that Stephen McNeil has been in power, no new long-term care beds have been created, even though the acuity level of people in long-term

care and those in hospitals have both increased. In home care, people are kept in their homes longer, with the acuity level rising there as well. So public policy has dictated that people are sicker longer in their homes instead of getting good care in long-term care facilities. Public policy has been offside for quite some time and we are seeing it now with this pandemic that has casualties attached to it, as we have seen at Northwood. That is tragic.

Public policy has been driven by budgets. The current government was not willing to invest in long-term care and that was to the detriment of people who need it. Our population is not getting any younger and more people are going to need long-term care facilities.

WF: Do you want to say something in conclusion?

JM: We are stuck in a pandemic. Things happened. Governments made decisions. What we are trying to do is to outline that we cannot continue in long-term care the way we have for the last 10 years. Investments in long-term care have deteriorated. We have to improve the system. It's not about who's right and who's wrong. It's about having a good level of care for our seniors because they deserve it.

Note

1. On April 18 and 19, a lone gunman dressed as an RCMP officer went on a 13-hour shooting rampage that began in the small rural community of Portapique in Nova Scotia. Twenty-two people were killed, and the gunman was shot dead by the police. For weeks, while the families of the victims and the people of the province demanded a public inquiry into the mass shooting, both the federal and the provincial governments stalled, finally announcing not a public inquiry but an independent review by a three person panel. As public pressure mounted against them, both the federal and provincial governments finally acceded to the demands and announced a public inquiry into the mass shooting.

Quebec

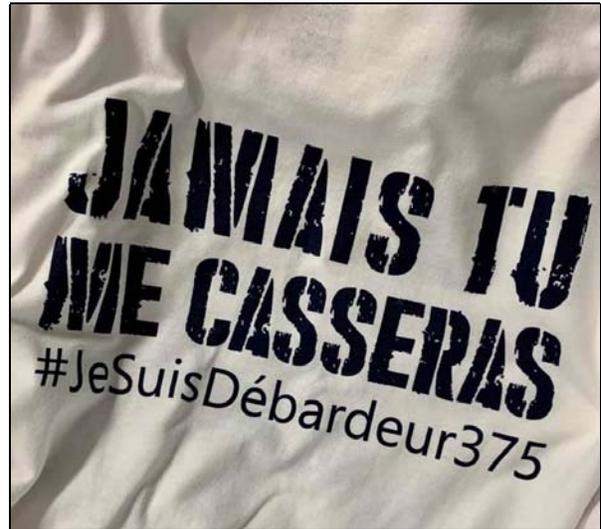
Longshore Workers at Port of Montreal Launch General Strike



On Monday morning, August 10, longshore workers at the Port of Montreal launched a general, unlimited strike as negotiations with their employer, Maritime Employers Association are deadlocked. The collective agreement of the 1,100 workers, who are members of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 375, expired at the end of 2018.

One of the employer's main demands is that longshore workers accept untenable working hours, as the workload at the port has drastically increased over the years. In an interview with the press, CUPE Local 375 negotiator Michael Murray explained:

"The longshoremen work 19 days out of 21 year-round. At one time, these schedules were feasible because the traffic in the port of Montreal allowed for paid days off within the 19 days. The longshoremen have to be available 24 hours a day, including weekends. The other side of the coin is that we have job security. The arrival of record year after record year in the port of Montreal has meant that the volume of work has increased and our people now work continuously 19 days out of 21. We have a new generation of longshoremen, who are young men and women who need to be taken care of, and they will not be able to endure this situation for years to come.



"You Will Never Break Me"

"We are looking at rearranging the hours where the employer would have some flexibility and our people would have a better work/life balance, and we've put forward a proposal that would achieve that. The employer agreed with the concept of rescheduling hours to provide flexibility for themselves but for the rest, they say they won't accept our proposal unless it is a net-zero proposal, one that is no cost to the employers. These are multi-billion dollar companies operating in the port. The small ones are billionaires. When we go from record years to record years, they cannot tell us at the negotiating table that our demands must be a net-zero. Our union has always fought for our workers, We want to improve the quality of life of our workers and at the same time we are ready to examine the employers' demand for flexibility. The employer wants to pick and choose what is convenient for them. That is why we are putting economic pressure on shipping companies."

One of the factors that pushed the workers to launch the strike is the fact that during the short-term legal walkouts that the workers have organized over the past six weeks the employer has retaliated by unilaterally modifying the working conditions of the workers, cutting overtime rates. The union also denounces the use of scabs by the employer to crush their strike.

Workers' Forum fully supports the just struggle of the longshore workers for their rights and calls upon all workers to stand firmly with them.

The Port of Montreal is the second largest port in Canada, after the Port of Vancouver, a diversified transshipment centre that handles all kinds of goods, containerized and non-containerized cargo, liquid bulk and dry bulk. The only container port in Quebec, it is a destination port served by the largest shipping lines in the world. It is also an intermodal hub with its own rail network dockside directly connected to Canada's two national rail networks, Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway. The Montreal Port Authority (MPA) also operates a Cruise Terminal and a Port Centre. According to the MPA, the port generates close to \$2.6 billion yearly in Canadian GDP.



Speaking Out on the Death of a Montreal Health Worker

- Pierre Soublière -

Thong Nguyen was a 48-year-old father and orderly who worked at the emergency ward of Jean-Talon Hospital in Montreal. He was infected with the COVID-19 virus in May and died on June 11. The Labour Standards, Equity and Occupational Health and Security Board (CNESST) filed a report on his death which was not made public but the newspaper *La Presse* was allowed to view it. The report does not establish that Thong Nguyen contracted the virus while on duty, in spite of the fact that it was determined that he had worked in all three areas of the hospital handling COVID-19 cases. It also asserts that other orderlies told the CNESST inspector that during the pandemic they had no training on the correct measures to take in light of the pandemic and that there was a regular lack of protective masks. In spite of acknowledging this, the inspector asserts that "according to documents given to her by the employer, several training courses and procedures were established to protect the workers and prevent the propagation of the COVID-19." She claims that the workers interrogated could not tell her the "precise chronology of events" regarding the work environment in the weeks prior to the worker being declared positive for COVID-19. She therefore concludes that no corrective measures are required on the part of the hospital in question.



Thong Nguyen

This assessment is being soundly criticized by Thong Nguyen's family as well as by associated unions. Doctor Lan Nguyen is Thong Nguyen's cousin and spokesperson for the family. She says she is extremely disappointed by the superficiality of this report which basically asserts that everything is fine and that nothing needs to be improved. "The state is doing everything possible to recruit new orderlies but is making no effort to pinpoint the shortcomings so as to understand how to better protect them," she said.

Alexandre Paquet, the President of the Union of Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre (CIUSSS) workers of Montreal North-CSN writes: "Thong Nguyen died while waging a daily fight on the ground against COVID-19. Yet, the CNESST is not suggesting any corrective measures in its report. As if it is normal to lose your life while doing your job and as if the system is just fine." He adds: "This ruling is sending a very bad message to the effect that if you are infected with COVID-19 and you die while doing your job, you may very well not be compensated. Your family will be left on its own, in financial insecurity."

Jeff Begley, President of the Federation of Health and Social Services (FSSS-CSN), stated: "When we see more than 13,600 health workers were infected in the first wave, that is a problem. Unfortunately, since the beginning of the pandemic, the CNESST claims to simply be following the recommendations of Public Health. And yet, the casualties among these workers show that these recommendations are not enough to protect the personnel."

The fact that the government and its institutions are not actively seeking to get to the bottom of why health workers -- as well the elderly -- were infected in such great numbers, nor what are the circumstances surrounding deaths such as that of Thong Nguyen, is both callous and socially irresponsible. It is totally unacceptable that workers are treated with such disrespect and that their demands and those of their families and unions to correct this situation, especially in case of a resurgence of COVID-19, are continually ignored by the government and its institutions. The dignity and integrity of health workers and their patients is at the heart of the health system that the people want and need and raising our voices and pushing in that direction is an integral part of transforming the situation so as to attain a health system and work environment fit for human beings.



British Columbia

Defend the Rights of Seasonal Agricultural Workers!

- *Brian Sproule and Barbara Biley* -

Several temporary foreign workers at the Krazy Cherry Fruit Company in Oliver in the Interior of British Columbia tested positive for COVID-19 in July causing the Interior Health Authority to declare an outbreak and issue an order stopping 36 migrant workers and 9 other individuals on the farm from leaving the property. The infected workers were moved to a hotel where they were quarantined.

Temporary foreign workers have provided evidence that living and working conditions on the farm are putting them at risk of COVID-19 transmission. On July 17 CBC News posted a video taken by a worker showing living conditions at the farm. Footage shows a bedroom shared by four men. One of the beds was used by one of the COVID-19 stricken workers who was, at the time of the video, in isolation. Black plastic bags containing his possessions were still in the room. The beds in the room are barely a metre apart and bedrooms are separated by hanging blankets. The video showed a nearly empty fridge. Workers are not allowed to leave the farm to shop for food.

Many voices are being raised about the treatment of migrant farm workers in British Columbia. An article which appeared in the *Tri-City News* (covering Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody) on June 27, 2020 reported that Berenice Diaz Ceballos, the Mexican Consul General in Vancouver has called for migrant workers from Mexico to be afforded the same rights as Canadian workers and for improved oversight by the provincial and federal governments of conditions on the province's farms. Well over a thousand migrant workers have been infected with COVID-19 while working in Canada this year and three in Ontario have died. The paper reports that the Consul General visited more than 350 of the 550 farms in BC which employ Mexican workers and said that "Forty per cent have substandard housing" and that she described housing facilities covered in trash, infested with cockroaches and with no mattresses for the workers to sleep on. She said that in some cases farmers have installed padlocks on the outside of the only exit of a bunk house. "If there's an emergency, there's a fire, they will be dead immediately," the Consul General said.

Workers are crammed into minivans for transportation to and from the fields. Bullying and harassment of the workers are common in order to silence them from speaking out. Threats of deportation are held over their heads. Two workers at Bylands Nursery (site of a major COVID-19 outbreak in April affecting 23 workers) in West Kelowna were fired and deported to Mexico after representatives of the advocacy organization Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) visited them to bring food and clothing on June 28. The workers had completed their mandatory 14 day quarantine after starting work at Bylands on May 27 and there was no outbreak at the farm at the time, the earlier outbreak having been declared over on May 21. Bylands has arbitrarily decreed that migrant farm workers are not permitted to leave the property or have visitors, a restriction that does not apply to any other workers.

Reached at her home in Mexico, Erika Zavala, one of the deported former Bylands workers stated "Workers simply seeking to support their families deserve dignified, fair and equal treatment." She added "Many employers believe that by giving us work, we belong to them and they can do with us what they want." RAMA activist Amy Cohen, who was one of the advocates who visited the workers on June 28, told CBC News on July 22 that RAMA is concerned that the policy of no visitors and no leaving the employer's premises for the duration of employment is a human rights violation. "It is discriminatory and unfair as the restrictions only apply to temporary foreign workers and not other Bylands employees."

Bylands isn't the only employer of temporary foreign workers to restrict community access. Two of the largest fruit growing farms in the Okanagan, Coral Beach Farms and Jealous Fruits, forbid migrant workers from leaving their properties or receiving visitors. "We feel like prisoners," one worker told RAMA, adding, "Canadians are allowed to go buy groceries at the store, go to church, go to the park. Why aren't we?"

On July 28, RAMA issued an appeal to members of the community to contact Bylands, Coral Beach Farms and Jealous Fruits calling on them to allow community access and visitation rights to temporary foreign workers once their mandatory 14-day quarantine period has expired. The appeal also asks people to contact Minister of Health Adrian Dix and Minister of Labour Harry Bains. RAMA is calling for the establishment of an investigation and appeals process for any worker who is terminated.

Workers' Forum joins migrant farm workers and advocates and allies across the country in demanding that the rights of migrant workers be enforced and that they be granted permanent resident status. These workers play an essential role in providing Canadians and others with the food we need and Canada must guarantee them dignified and healthy working and living conditions and health care at a Canadian standard.

(With files from CBC, Tri-City News, Guardian)



Take Immediate Action to Stop the Forced Isolation of Foreign Farm Workers

- Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture -

In early July, Erika Zavala and Jesus Molina, two Mexican temporary foreign workers were fired by

Bylands Nurseries in West Kelowna and repatriated three days later. They were fired because they violated their employer's policy not to leave the farm site or have visitors even though they were not in their 2 weeks of quarantine. They were visited by two members of RAMA who brought them clothing and culturally-appropriate food while following all recommended physical distancing guidelines as outlined by the province of BC.

Bylands Farms is not the only employer of SAWP workers that is restricting the ability of migrant workers to have visitors and access communities to purchase essential items or access essential services. Some of the largest employers of SAWP workers in the Okanagan (such as Coral Beach Farms and Jealous Fruits) have stated publicly that they will be restricting their foreign workers' access to local communities.



Workers from Coral Beach and Jealous Fruits have been in contact with RAMA members and other community advocates expressing that they feel they are being illegally held on the farm without any access to local communities. "We feel like prisoners", one worker told RAMA, "Canadians are allowed to go buy groceries at the store, go to church, go to the park -- why aren't we?"

The forced isolation of temporary foreign farmworkers after their quarantine period by employers such as Bylands, Jealous Fruits, and Coral Beach must be stopped immediately. These racist and discriminatory actions violate the human rights of these essential workers and is detrimental to their health and wellbeing as well as that of the local communities as they erect barriers for workers to report symptoms directly to health care personnel and access supports from local communities.

Call to Action: Call or email Bylands, Coral Beach, and Jealous Fruits.[1]

Note

1. For information on contact information for these employers and government officials and tips on what to say, visit the RAMA website [here](#).

(July 28, 2020)



Hospitality Workers Continue to Demand that Their Jobs Be Protected

Unite Here Local 40, which represents 6,000 of the 50,000 hospitality workers in BC, has announced plans to hold five day long fasts in front of the BC Legislature from August 10 to August 14 from 9:00 am to 11:30 pm each day. The Facebook announcement calls on readers to "Join us for a week where fasting workers will demand meetings with our reluctant MLAs, find strength in our community and spiritual allies, and seek justice for the workers who've spent their lives building BC's tourism industry."



The worker wants to meet with members of the Legislature to demand action to protect their jobs regardless of how long they will be laid off due to COVID-19. The tourism industry is asking for a \$680 million bailout and the workers insist that any assistance to the industry should be contingent on protection of their jobs. Hotel operators in BC are also calling for a further extension by the provincial government of the layoff period, after which employers have to pay severance, beyond the current end date of August 30, and for the federal government to extend the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

There are 1,252 hotels and 83,000 hotel rooms in the province. All were closed at the onset of the pandemic and about 25 per cent remain closed. Those that have reopened are running at about 30 per cent capacity. Only a small fraction of the regular workforce has been recalled, often at reduced hours of work without regular work schedules.

Prior to announcing the week of fasting at the Legislature, Local 40 organized a series of events to publicize their situation and demands including pickets, rallies and press conferences in front of hotels as well as outside Tourism Minister Lisa Beare's constituency office in Maple Ridge, and at the constituency offices of other Members of the Legislature (MLAs). On July 7 about 60 hotel workers and their supporters rallied outside the Legislature. On July 28 the union organized a protest outside the Shangri-La Vancouver, a high-end hotel owned by Westbank and Peterson Investments, two major Vancouver developers. The protest was against the firing of dozens of workers on layoff by the Shangri-La which follow similar actions at the Pan Pacific and other hotels in the Vancouver area.



The press release issued at the time of the protest at the Shangri-La contains statements from two of

the fired workers: KM Chan, formerly laid-off server assistant at Shangri-La Hotel Vancouver said "I don't understand why they had to terminate us. Why couldn't they just leave us on lay-off so we would have jobs to return to after the pandemic? I have co-workers that relied on this job to obtain their permanent residency and were close to getting their PR status, but with these unfair terminations they will lose everything they worked so hard for and could be forced to leave the country." Rajini Fjani, formerly laid-off room attendant at the Pan Pacific Hotel said "Those of us who were fired may be replaced by temporary workers earning minimum wage. My co-workers who remain employed are told they must sign away their years of service to become casual, on-call workers, and waive their severance rights. Otherwise, they will be fired. The Province needs to act now to protect workers and make sure we have jobs to go back to when business improves."

In an email to Lisa Beare, BC's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Michelle Travis, research director for Local 40, explained that at the Pan Pacific hotel management has asked employees to accept a rollback of their employment rights or risk losing their jobs. She said "They are being asked to give up their regular status, their schedule and seniority to become casual, on-call workers. It also appears they are being given \$250 to sign away any claims on severance."

Travis called on the government to create a right-of recall for all workers that remains in place until the pandemic is over, that workers should have a chance to return to their jobs once the industry recovers. If not, she said, employers will hire lower paid workers. "That creates a race to the bottom."

Since the onset of the pandemic employers have sought to use the crisis as pretext for stepping up their attacks on workers' rights which includes stripping unionized workers of working conditions and wages they have won over the years and circumventing minimum standards for non-union workers under Employment Standards. They want to replace stable jobs with casual, on call or gig economy-type contracted jobs where the workers are facing most precarious conditions and are not covered by the *Employment Standards Act*. It must not pass!

BC hospitality workers are waging a courageous fight for their jobs and for the right of all workers to be treated with dignity and respect and are calling on everyone to support them. Besides joining them at the legislature Unite Here local 40 is asking British Columbians to send a message to their Member of Parliament to adopt the "Hospitality Workers' Three Essentials for a Safe Recovery" which are; protection of workers' jobs, ensuring a safe route back to work, and providing income support to laid-off workers. The letter can be sent from the Unite Here Local 40 website at www.uniteherelocal40.org.

(Photos: UNITE HERE 40)

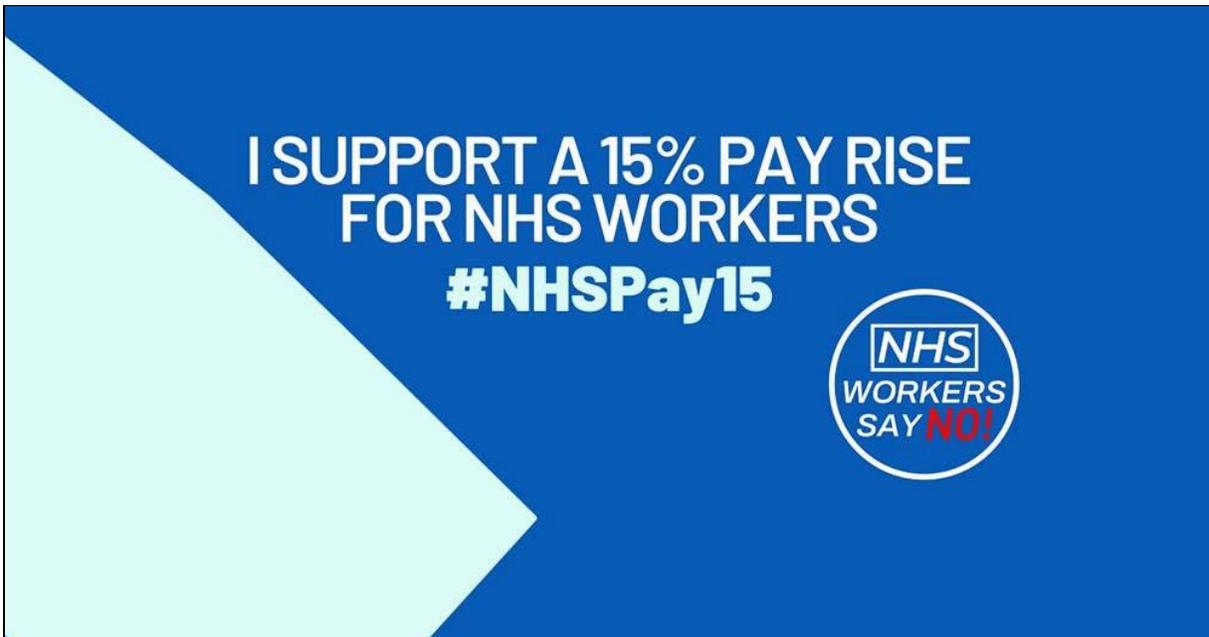


Britain

Mass Rallies Put Forward Demands of Health Care Workers

On August 8, workers with Britain's National Health Service (NHS) held physically-distanced marches to defend their dignity and to speak out loud and clear that public sector pay inequality is not acceptable. Their central demand was for a 15 per cent increase in the level of pay that has been kept suppressed for a decade. In more than 30 cities, towns and smaller communities in England,

Scotland and Wales, thousands of nurses and other NHS workers took to the streets in protest against the government's refusal to offer a pay rise despite their heroism during the coronavirus pandemic. The biggest protest took place in London and involved a march on Downing Street that ended with a rally. Workers fell silent for two minutes as a mark of respect for colleagues who have lost their lives fighting Covid-19. Marchers were applauded by members of the public as they were heading to Downing Street and chants of "Boris Johnson hear us shout, pay us properly or get out" were directed at No 10 which is the official residence and the office of the British Prime Minister. Among the placards in the various actions, there were some saying merely "540," the number of NHS and care workers who have died from coronavirus.. Other placards read "Covid hero, pay rise zero," "Stop giving nurses the clap," "From hero to zero," "Nurses are for life, not just for lockdown," etc.



Statement of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign (SSTHC) on the Occasion of the March

In preparation for the march, the SSTCH issued a statement entitled " Statement of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign on the Nurses' Pay Upsurge."

It said:

"On Saturday, August 8, nurses and healthcare workers, supported by health campaigners and many other supporters, will hold a physically-distanced march from the Royal Victoria Infirmary through Newcastle for a rally at the Monument. This is part of nationwide protests by nurses and healthcare workers throughout the country in some 30 cities and towns.

"This follows on from Wednesday, July 29, when thousands of nurses and other care and health workers marched through London to Downing Street demanding a wage rise and a stop to the attacks on the NHS, with the organisers of the demonstration demanding 'No! to public sector inequality and pay justice.'

"Nurses and other health workers are speaking in their own name and taking up the fight, both to improve their own pay, and at the same time to take part in the struggle to safeguard the future of the NHS and care services.

"Since the hypocrisy of Boris Johnson and the government has been exposed in clapping health and care workers one day and omitting them from a wage rise the next, nurses have been expressing their anger on social media and in other forums. Now they are taking to the streets, supported by doctors and others, in a series of marches and demonstrations.

"In our discussions, SSTHC highlighted statements of very angry nurses that showed it was not just about the pay but the whole neglect of the welfare of all health staff. At the same time, they have had to endure constant attacks on the NHS, increased privatisation, staffing cuts, the cutting of student nurse bursaries and the promotion of commercialisation being put above patient care. Also discussed was that health workers are struggling from the imposition of austerity, as are so many people, both working and unemployed. Some health workers are having to use food banks to eat, and struggling to pay their bills after years of real-terms pay cuts finished off by a disastrous three-year low pay deal that again left many more experienced nurses worse off. Nurses have lost as much as 20 per cent of their pay in real terms over the last 10 years. This has driven many to leave, unable to endure the stress of attempting to deliver patient care to the level they know should be offered to all as a right.



"Right from the beginning, nurses, care workers and others in many different groups have made it clear that they support those in public service receiving a wage increase, and they also know that many of these services are also being cut to fund so-called 'wage rises.' They have also expressed opposition to the Trade Bill and other attacks on the NHS by the government. This is a government that has used the COVID-19 crisis to further line the pockets of private health monopolies and other private companies such as Serco and Deloitte, whilst continuing with planned closures to hospitals and A&Es (emergency departments), together with downgrading services throughout the crisis. These are services that are vital in delivering healthcare to the people, the downgrading of which had resulted in many unnecessary deaths.

"What this new upsurge of nurses and care workers reflects is that what is being done to undermine their pay and conditions and the NHS is certainly not in their name. As one experienced nurse who had worked through the Covid-19 crisis put it in our SSTHC discussion: 'The nurses and other care workers are now speaking out in their name for a new future that upholds and guarantees their well-being as part of guaranteeing the right of all to healthcare at the highest standard society can achieve. This is not some future dream. This is what the authorities should address now, and nurses and healthcare workers should be empowered to make the decisions in the future for a new, human-centred healthcare system for our NHS, our hospitals, our community and mental health services, and our workplaces.'"

With the day of action, the health care workers clearly expressed that the whole future direction of the NHS is at stake, and there must be no return to the so-called "business as usual."



(With files from Workers' Weekly and Morning Star. Photos: Save South Tyneside Hospital)



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