

“Let’s block everything”

Italian Workers Demand End to Genocide in Gaza and to Cut Ties with Israel

By John Wilson

On Sept 22, a general strike across Italy brought trains and highway transport to a halt after unions called a nationwide walkout in support of Palestinians in Gaza. The strike was organized after dockworkers in Genoa vowed to support the Global Sumud Flotilla, which includes prominent activist Greta Thunberg, by threatening to block the exit of container ships carrying goods to Israel. Trains and buses were canceled, and schools and universities were closed as local transport workers, teachers and students went on strike.

In Genoa, dockworkers obstructed the entrance to the port, while students blocked entrances to universities in Turin, Rome and Milan. In Venice, demonstrators



marched to the port with banners reading “Gaza is burning, we will block everything.” Tens of thousands of protestors marched in over 80 Italian cities under the slogan “Let’s Block Everything.” The protesters demanded that their government recognize Palestinian statehood and suspend commercial and military cooperation agreements with Israel.

The pro-Palestinian anti-war movement has grown faster and more broadly than any similar movement in our planet’s history. The momentum continues to rise as evidenced by the recent general strike led by Italian trade unionists. In North America an increasing number of unions have passed or strengthened pro-Palestinian resolutions.

The Ontario Public Services Employees Union (OPSEU), representing over 200,000 public workers, has finally recognized Anti-Palestinian Racism. OPSEU has declared it will no longer tolerate harassment and discrimination against Palestinians and will undertake training of its membership. In addition, “Palestinians” will now be included in the Statement of Respect read before all union events. Earlier this summer National Union of Provincial Government Employees (NUPGE) demanded an arms embargo against Israel.

The pan-Canadian organization, Labour4 Palestine recently issued a Labour Day statement entitled “Time for Canadian Unions to

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Issue #25 - October 2025

the **RED** REVIEW
a Socialist Action Journal

Price \$2



 www.redreview.ca

Welfare not Warfare

By Yves Engler

Resistance to militarism is growing. Hopefully it can restrain Mark Carney’s extremism. In recent days we’ve seen messages from the Council of Canadians, Toronto District Labour Council and other established left groups questioning militarism. One of the five demands of the Draw the Line coalition that brought out tens of thousands Saturday was “End the war machine. Stand for justice and peace.” Their statement noted:

“Canada is joining the global arms race and massively increasing its military spending alongside NATO partners while cutting funding from healthcare, housing, and public services. Canada is arming Israel’s genocide in Palestine and fueling global conflicts that enrich weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin. We refuse to let war profiteers prosper while people suffer. We demand an immediate two-way arms embargo on Israel, cancelling

Canada’s plans to balloon its military budget, and a foreign policy based on diplomacy and peace-building.” Amidst this growing activism, I’ve received emails from an NDP MP and riding association criticizing the F-35, Golden Dome and military spending more generally. A recent party caucus retreat criticized cuts to social programs to pay for arms. In addition, Avi Lewis raised military spending in a CBC interview about the launch of his NDP leadership bid. I have not

seen this much criticism of Canadian militarism since the war in Afghanistan in the mid-2000s. In 2021-22 the No Fighter Jet Coalition was able to break into the mainstream with a public letter signed by prominent individuals but that campaign was only able to get a single sitting NDP MP (Leah Gazan) to endorse its call. In fact, the party has usually celebrated militarism. In 2011, for instance, the NDP supported two House of Commons resolutions endorsing Canada’s central role



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in NATO's destruction of Libya. The growing opposition to militarism is essential as public resources fly out the door. A recent Globe and Mail article noted that Canada planned to buy a dozen submarines at a cost of about \$10 billion each. The Liberals are also purchasing 15 surface combatant naval vessels from Irving Shipbuilding. The three initial ships cost \$22 billion. (They'll cost two to three times that sum over their lifecycle.) By contrast, in last week's big housing announcement Carney allocated \$1 billion over multiple years to mitigating the abject misery faced by 100,000 Canadians living on the streets. Homelessness received one eighth of the cost of one of the surface combatant naval vessels! And they are purchasing fifteen of those vessels! Carney's militarism is extreme. In June the prime minister added an immediate \$9 billion to this year's war budget. That was on top of the already

planned boost of over \$3 billion and a military budget that doubled from \$20 billion to \$40 billion over the past decade. During that period military spending increased from 1% to 1.4% of GDP. The \$9 billion boost announced in June, combined with some accounting gymnastics, brought Canadian military spending to NATO's 2% of GDP target. But that's not enough for Donald Trump and the warmongers. Subsequently, Carney agreed to an even more outrageous NATO target of 5% of GDP on "defence" by 2034. While some of this target will be accomplished through accounting changes like adding the \$8 billion spent on Veteran Affairs to the military tab, the boost in war spending required to hit 5% of GDP would be a disaster for Canadians and the world. It would lead to cuts to social programs and give the monsters (Carney, Anand, Poilievre etc.) who've been enabling Israel's live streamed holocaust in Gaza greater capacity to intimidate and

invade other countries. Part of what is spurring the growing challenge to Canadian militarism is revulsion at what's happening in Gaza. A significant share of the crowd at the Draw the Line protest I attended in Niagara Saturday seemed to have come out because of Gaza. Watching the horrors Ottawa is backing there, makes it hard to believe the mythology that the Canadian military will be used to defend international law or human rights. As progressive minded people consider the issue, we shouldn't just oppose Carney's massive boost in military spending. We should ask ourselves why a country like Mexico spends 0.7% of GDP on the military and how come Iceland and Costa Rica don't have militaries.

To assist, donate or learn more about my bid to lead the NDP, check out yvesforndpleader.ca

Declare Hot Cargo on Israel". The statement demanded:

- 1) Declare all Israeli products, services and relationships as Hot Cargo, not to be touched by workers of conscience.
- 2) Endorse the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.
- 3) Publicly speak out against anti-Palestinian racism and support workers who are being discriminated against in workplaces across the country for speaking out against the genocide.
- 4) Publicly oppose the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and the attempts to conflate criticism of Zionism or Israeli state policies as anti-Semitism.
- 5) Officially break off relations with the Histadut (Israel's central labour body) for supporting the genocide and discriminating against Palestinian workers.

At its recent convention in Vancouver, Unifor, the largest private sector union in Canada (320,000 members) passed a resolution calling for an arms embargo against Israel and in support of Palestinian workers. Unifor had already previously voted to support BDS. This resolution followed a letter from Lana Payne, Unifor president, to Mark Carney:

"Prime Minister, we call on your government to fulfil Canada's obligations under domestic and international law and suspend exports to Israel."

At its 79th convention, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), which has a substantial history of supporting Palestine, unanimously voted for another resolution demanding "that the US government immediately cease all military aid to Israel, and instead pressure Israel to: a) end their apartheid policies and the genocide, occupation and destruction in Gaza, as well as the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and

b) negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of equality, democracy and human rights, including Palestinian self-determination and the right of return of refugees;"

These are positive actions. Unions in support of Palestine must now mobilize their members in support of Palestinian solidarity demonstrations and other events. The organized workers have the strategic power to end the genocide while building solidarity within the labour movement. Our Italian comrades and siblings are showing the way!



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The union wants wage increases in line with inflation and cost-of-living, while the NDP government claims that it wants an agreement that's "fair to workers and to the public." A recent Leger poll found that 81% of British Columbians support public service workers wage increases at or above the rate of inflation.

The BC Government Employees' Union (BCGEU) strike involves several key issues, primarily centered on wages, remote work protections, and essential service designations. Here's a breakdown of the main points of contention:

1. Wages and Cost-of-Living Adjustments

The union is fighting for an 8.25% wage increase over two years, along with cost-of-living allowances (COLA) to protect against future inflation. The provincial government has offered a mere 4.5% compensation increase over two years, which includes some cost-of-living adjustments. The government offer is below forecasts for inflation over the next 2 years. The union argues that low wages have led to recruitment and retention issues, with half of its members living paycheck to paycheck and 70% spending over 30% of their pre-tax income on housing.

2. Remote Work and Flexible Work Arrangements

The BCGEU is pushing for formal contract language to guarantee remote work options and protect against arbitrary management decisions. This includes designating full and partial remote positions. Business groups, like the Greater Victoria Chamber of



Commerce, oppose expanded remote work, arguing it reduces foot traffic and harms downtown economies.

3. Essential Service Designations

The strike has disrupted some services, leading to negotiations over essential service designations. For example, meat inspectors were recently classified as "essential" after ranchers raised concerns about halted inspections affecting slaughterhouses and livestock sales auctions operations. The government maintained that food safety was not impacted by the absence of mandatory meat inspection services!

4. Government Fiscal Concerns and Hiring Freeze

The government cites fiscal challenges, including a hiring freeze imposed in February, as reasons for limiting wage increases. The union argues that the hiring freeze exacerbates understaffing (B.C. has one public servant per 186 residents vs. the national average of 1 per 146) and harms public service delivery.

The strike highlights broader

tensions between public sector workers' demands for fair compensation and flexible work conditions and the government's concerns about "fiscal responsibility and economic impacts on businesses."

Although the NDP is a trade union-based party, a labour party, its leadership is social democratic. They seek only minor reforms to the failing, exploitative and oppressive capitalist system based on private ownership and the profit motive. When in office, they strive for the approval of the business press and business groups, as "responsible" and "prudent" managers of the economy. They refuse to adequately tax high incomes and wealth, attempting to pay for weakening social programs on the back of the workers.

BC supporters of Yves Engler's socialist campaign for Leader of the federal NDP support the workers' demands. Socialists join the union picket lines and denounce Eby's ongoing efforts to sustain high business profits for BC capitalists at the expense of the public interest and workers' livelihoods.

Imperialist Hands Off Venezuela

By Barry Weisleder

(excerpts from a speech at a panel on "Human Rights in a Perilous Time." Sept. 12, 2025 in Toronto

Donald J. Trump says that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. Why? Because Trump, the modern-day Hermann Goebbels, claims that he has stopped at least five wars. He neglects to mention that he started or fueled several of the wars now raging. To what wars am I referring?

I refer to the genocide in Gaza, the demolition of homes in the West Bank, the bombardment of Iran, the assassination of Iranian military and political officials, repeated attacks on Yemen, the Zionist invasion of Lebanon and Syria, and of course, the NATO conflict with Russia over Ukraine. And currently, Trump is sending U.S. war ships across the Caribbean Sea to the coastal waters of Venezuela. Already, U.S. forces destroyed one small boat carrying eleven passengers. The White House claimed that the boat was involved in drug smuggling. Washington provided no evidence to support the allegation, nor did it attempt to arrest and charge the passengers in the small boat -- a vessel that had no capacity to reach the shores of America.



According to 19th century Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, "War is politics by other means." The political aims of Washington and its allies, including Ottawa, are rooted in economic goals. Seizure and control of Venezuela's rich oil wealth are central objectives. What do we call the system by which dominant economies, backed by military power, profit by the exploitation of resources owned by others? Yes indeed, it is known as imperialism. It involves the export of Capital equipment, followed by the transfer of wealth from the South to the North. It is a highly unequal exchange.

Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian revolution came to power in 1999. His party, the PSUV, changed the old economic arrangement by nationalizing the country's oil

industry. That move upset America and its junior partners in crime. Most of all, it set a bad example on a global scale, so far as the imperialists were concerned. Canadian Capital has plenty of oil and gas in its own backyard. But rebellious republics in the global south threaten Canadian mining and banking interests worldwide. So, Ottawa joined Washington's gambit to strangle the economy of Venezuela and to remake its government. Such efforts have a ripple effect. They curtail human rights at home and abroad. Attacks on immigrant workers' rights, the assault on free speech and on freedom of assembly are now quite evident. Mark Carney has reduced the ranks of foreign students, restricted the flow of migrant workers, outlawed pro-Palestinian campaigners like Samidoun, and threatens to create 'bubble zones' where



protest is banned near schools, childcare centers and religious institutions, following the bad example of intolerant local city officials. Deportation of political critics and asylum claimants is now common, not just in the USA. Such actions imperil human rights and threaten lives. Intimidation tactics are spreading. This is integral to the agenda of former big banker Carney, his government, and the ruling business class. It is a feature of late capitalism.

Remember the Lima Group. It was another so-called coalition of the willing, designed to overthrow the elected government of Venezuela. Do you remember the pretender-president, Juan Guaido, Trump's man in Caracas? Ottawa's policy was to isolate and starve Venezuela if it resisted the imperial dictate.

What was the NDP position? Most of its MPs became enthusiastic backers of Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland. Freeland co-chaired the Lima Group. She never denounced the legacy of her grandfather who was the editor of a Nazi newspaper in Krakow, Poland under German occupation in the 1930s. A big enthusiast of the Lima Group was NDP foreign affairs critic Helene Laverdiere, MP for Laurier-Sainte-Marie. Laverdiere publicly supported Juan Guaido and promoted sanctions against Venezuela. How many children died as a result? Did the NDP mass membership approve that policy, or even debate it at a convention? Although leader Jagmeet Singh was embarrassed by Laverdiere's brazenly pro-imperialist pronouncements, he did not refute them. Party officials did their best to keep the issue off

the debate floor.

Lima is the capital of Peru. When Pedro Castillo, the president of Peru, quit the Lima Group in 2021, he said membership in it was the worst thing his country had ever done. The entire Group dissolved thereafter. Will it be reconstituted? Not likely. But if it should ever reappear, what should it be called? Perhaps call it the Buenos Aires Group, in recognition of President Javier Milei, whose symbol is the chainsaw.

I had the privilege of being invited by the government of Venezuela to observe the second inauguration of President Nicolas Maduro. I was in Caracas from January 9-13 in 2019. I attended a number of events. Traveling around the capital I saw an outstanding achievement of the Bolivarian revolution – beautiful, tall, brand new apartment buildings. The state constructed housing for millions, including many poor mud cliff-side dwellers. That was one way oil revenues were put to good use. Back in Toronto I led a deputation to a committee of Toronto City Council to report on the exciting social housing gains in the South American republic. Sadly, the city councilors, including NDP-linked Gord Perks and Paula Fletcher, walked around the room and engaged in loud conversations

They made it clear that they were not interested in listening.

Venezuela made impressive gains, despite the hostility of Canadian and American capitalists, and their loyal politicians. One important arena of social progress is known as the Communal Councils. These are self-managed decision-making bodies that empower workers to formulate project proposals to government and engage in mutual aid and local planning. The Communal Councils represent an expansion of democracy. Unfortunately, they occur mainly in public enterprises, which encompass less than 1/3 of the economy. 2/3 of the Venezuela economy is still in private hands. As a Marxist I believe that a revolution that does not go all the way cannot survive. In Canada, our

primary task is not to lecture from afar; it is to get the imperial boot off the neck of the people of Venezuela. Our slogan is: Imperialist Hands Off Venezuela!

But more than slogans are needed. What is to be done? It is time to protest U.S. aggression.... To protest the act of piracy and murder on the high seas, to demand that the embargo be lifted, to insist that aid be allowed to flow into Venezuela, that countries be free to trade with Caracas without punishment, that the U.S. naval and air forces be withdrawn immediately from the region.

But this is not enough. In addition to protest in the streets against the policy of the capitalist pirates, we need to foster political action inside the mass working class organizations of Canada,

including unions and the NDP.

For far too long anti-war and anti-imperialist activists have been begging for crumbs from the banquet table of the ruling rich. Isn't it time that we had an anti-imperialist voice in the leadership of the only mass, labour-based political party in North America? That opportunity is now. If you want an Eco-socialist, an anti-war internationalist to be a voice for revolutionary change, please join the [Yves Engler for NDP Leader campaign](#) today! His program includes demands such as: Abolish billionaires. Declare a national housing emergency. Shut Down the Tar Sands. Land Back. End Canadian Complicity with the Genocide in Gaza. Get Canada Out of NATO. Imperialist Hands Off Venezuela. The future of Venezuela is for the Venezuelan people to decide.

B.C. Public Workers' Strike Escalates

By Gary Porter

After more than 5 weeks of escalating strikes and overtime bans, the B.C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU) has mobilized more than 13,000 workers out of the 34,000 work force at more than 28 different sites across the province. Each day the scope of the strike expands in an attempt to pressure David Eby's NDP government back to the bargaining table. Job action sites include the liquor and cannabis

distribution centres, mining sector, (where a number of projects are being fast tracked), the Royal BC Museum, IMAX Theatre, BC Archives, Ministry of Citizens' Services offices, as well as the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch.. On Sept 23, 2,800 workers joined the strike in Health, Forests, Transportation and Vehicle Safety. On Sept 24, 600 more workers at 25 Liquor retail stores walked off the job.

