

Canadian workers denounce US-NATO war drive against Russia and Putin's invasion of Ukraine

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* has spoken to workers over recent weeks who have denounced Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine and the US-NATO aggressive war drive against Russia. In contrast to the pro-war propaganda pumped out by the corporate-controlled media on a daily basis and the war fever that has gripped much of the middle class, working people across Canada have no enthusiasm for the aggressive warmongering of American and Canadian imperialism, which is playing an especially provocative role in the conflict.

Laurent Lafrance, national convener of the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC), recently posted an anti-war video message on behalf of the committee to Twitter. ??

The CERSC was set up by educators last year to fight for a Zero COVID policy.

"We condemn unequivocally the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which only produces destruction, death, and divides the Russian and Ukrainian working class," Lafrance stated. "But we also oppose the provocations of the imperialist powers of NATO, which has expanded right up to Russia's borders in the three decades since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and deliberately sought to incite the current conflict."

Lafrance's message concluded with an urgent appeal for educators and other sections of working people to join the struggle against war and to end the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is not only necessary but urgent to build an anti-war movement among school workers and the working class as a whole," he said. "This is inseparable from a struggle to eradicate the pandemic globally. It is on these two fronts that our committee is working with determination alongside our supporters in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

"We call on teachers and school workers in Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere to build their own independent committees and join the struggle for socialism."

Malcolm, a teacher from British Columbia, opposed the imperialist powers' reckless drive towards a third world war in a powerful contribution at a recent CERSC meeting.

"I have no interest and actively oppose any participation of the Canadian government, my government, in an armed conflict so that the Ukraine can join NATO, an imperialist, military alliance," declared Malcolm, who described the war drive against Russia as being about "power, control and geopolitical rivalries.

"The Ukrainian government is being portrayed to the world as a kind of liberal, tolerant state, a beacon of democracy.

"But this is the exact same playbook that the Western media rolls out in every drive to war. The theocratic, fundamentalist Mujahideen was portrayed as revolutionary partisans during the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, the reactionary Kuwaiti monarchy portrayed as the modern equivalent of French Resistance fighters, the terroristic Kosovo liberation army as heroic freedom fighters.

"This is always accompanied by atrocity propaganda. In the runup to the 1991 Gulf War congressional hearings heard testimony from a young woman named Nayirah, who claimed to be a nurse during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and said she saw Iraqi soldiers come into her hospital, rip babies from their incubators and leave them on the floor to die. It was a lie, she was actually the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US and was part of a campaign by the Kuwaiti government to influence public opinion. The media reported the allegations as fact, and Western leaders repeated them over and over as justification and cover for their real imperialist motives."

Malcolm concluded by drawing a parallel to the support for war within the ruling elite and its homicidal policy during the pandemic. "The political establishment, the media elites, the economic tycoons and investors told workers for two years that they need to live with a virus that has killed millions of us," he said. "They have not overnight become

bleeding-heart humanitarians. The principle of profits before lives, increased access to markets and natural resources, the drive above all for continued economic profit is exactly the same principle that is guiding the response to the conflict in the Ukraine. The fight for Zero COVID and international disarmament is one and the same, and that can only be carried forward by a movement of the international working class. In the face of threats of nuclear war and a pandemic that shows no signs of ending, the fate of the planet hinges on us building our movement.”

The WSWs also spoke to a rail worker at CP Rail, where the company seized on high commodity prices produced by the imperialist powers’ sanctions against Russia and the disruption of supply chains during the pandemic to justify locking out 3,000 conductors and engineers to prevent a strike. Rail workers had previously voted overwhelmingly for strike action to fight for improved wages and pensions, and an end to punishing scheduling and disciplinary regimes.

He said, “This [Russia-Ukraine] war is good for CP Rail. They are stoked for this. The employees are not asking for a lot, just basic things that are necessary for a reasonable life. CP is a multibillion-dollar company, and I see no reason why the employees shouldn’t be treated with fairness and respect. But it’s ‘No, screw you!’ and then they’re locked out.”

The WSWs received many comments from British Columbia (BC). Will, a teacher on Vancouver Island, said, “I don’t agree with NATO’s expansion and encroachment on foreign soil. I disagree with all wars that are fought in the name of capitalism at the expense of the working class of all nations, including the current situation in the Ukraine.”

Andrew, a hospitality worker, said, “The jarring move away from pro-economy COVID coverage by the government and media towards overly simplified narratives about freedom and democracy regarding the conflict in the Ukraine shows the power of a neoliberal private-public partnership to disseminate ruling class narratives and reveals concerning cracks in the foundations of our so-called liberal democracies.

“Yet again, the working class is being disproportionately impacted by capitalists’ solutions to crises of capitalists’ creation.”

Nella, an office worker in northern BC, added, “I can’t believe all the so-called progressives out there screaming for Russian blood. The ruling class has sat by and allowed hundreds of thousands of infections, possibly millions, and thousands of preventable deaths, and now they want us to believe they’ve turned into humanitarians? Give me a break. But what’s worse is the unbelievable stupidity of the liberal middle classes who have bought it, hook, line and sinker.

“Why should I support NATO expansion? What do I get

from Ukraine joining a Western military alliance aside from the threat of a thermo-nuclear war hanging over my head? So far the only thing I’ve gained is a bigger gas bill. I’m old enough to know that we don’t give a toss about freedom and democracy in foreign lands if it doesn’t meet our material interests.”

A retired BC parent who wished to remain anonymous told us, “We did nothing when the US invaded Iraq, we joined in when the US invaded and occupied Afghanistan, we helped bomb Libya, we placed civilian-killing and illegal sanctions on countries like Iran, Venezuela and Syria. As for the invasion itself, it’s obviously illegal, just like the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions were illegal. Unprovoked, the West is saying? No. If you paid attention to world events the past few decades you know Russia has been consistent. No NATO expansion. Yet that’s exactly what NATO did and is doing. Would the US accept weapons of war on Mexican or Cuban soil?”

He also noted the imperialist powers’ support for far-right forces in Ukraine, commenting, “CTV had to apologize for airing two women Ukrainian soldiers wearing Nazi symbols. That’s the type of people we’re supporting?”

An educator from Ontario stated, “In this warmongering world craving for more destruction and more social inequalities, I stand against the war in Ukraine orchestrated by NATO and its stooges, e.g., France, USA and Canada. We are witnessing unbelievable misinformation regarding the origins and causes of this historical conflict.

“The working class must unite and stand against wars. All wars. As an educator I have a moral and professional responsibility to let my students know about this situation and guide them in learning more about this war and the struggle of the working class.”



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