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## INSIDE

MASS MOBILIZATION IN  
SOUTH KOREA  
**P.2**

CUPE STANDS IN  
SOLIDARITY WITH  
STANDING ROCK

TUMULTUOUS TIMES  
IN TURKEY  
**P.3**

CANADA ATTACKS  
FREEDOM  
OF EXPRESSION  
**P.4**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

# New US president brings upheaval

**T**he election of US President Donald Trump poses a major challenge for trade unions and workers in the United States. Union density in the country was only 10.7% in 2016 (34.4% in the public sector and 6.4% in the private sector) and most Republicans would probably like to see trade unions disappear completely.

“Republicans and right-wing politicians have long worked to bankrupt unions and weaken the labour movement, on both sides of the border,” said Mark Hancock, CUPE national president. “Now it appears the Republican majority in Congress, emboldened by the election of Donald Trump, are pushing ahead with this attack on unions and working Americans.”

Legislation has been tabled in Congress by Republican lawmakers to allow workers to opt out of union membership, but maintain their protections and benefits. Essentially, this would take resources away

from the union that it would otherwise use to organize, campaign and prepare for bargaining.

## TPP and NAFTA

President Trump has signed an executive order stating that his government would withdraw from negotiations for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The impact of the withdrawal of the US on the deal is unclear. It is speculated that the United States will now enter into bilateral agreements with each of the 12 partners of the TPP with a view to strengthening its demands for any future Pacific trade agreement.

What is clear for Canadian workers is that the TPP threatens tens of thousands of Canadian jobs, will lead to higher prescription drug costs, and undermines our health care system.

Further the United States government has said it will move to open the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).



Canada must go into any NAFTA renegotiation with a strategy for creating good jobs. We need manufacturing and service jobs with decent wages, pensions and benefits. We must also protect universal and accessible public services, and public infrastructure, which are critical to a strong Canadian economy.

As Canada's largest union, it's our responsibility to defend workers' rights, public services, and our environment. We stand in solidarity with workers and members of civil society in the United States and Mexico. Together, we will fight for a fair agreement that supports us all. ●

**CUPE**

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# Mass mobilization in South Korea



**R**ight-wing labour reforms that led to serious attacks on trade union rights, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, motivated mass mobilizations in South Korea in 2015. CUPE responded with messages of solidarity for our trade union sisters and brothers and condemned the Korean government for conducting raids on several union offices and arresting and detaining

important labour leaders and workers at that time.

A historic public sector general strike followed in September 2016, in defiance of increasingly aggressive labour reforms, specifically the imposition of performance-related pay in the public sector. In the largest public sector mobilization in their history, tens of thousands of workers across the public sector walked off the job on

September 26, 2016. CUPE was there as part of an international delegation and stood with the workers in the streets of Seoul.

CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury said at the time, “The South Korean government attacks on trade unions, the public sector and the right to demonstrate are totally unacceptable. It is important for CUPE to be in South Korea

and express our members’ solidarity with the public sector workers. Their fight for public services and democracy deserves our full support.”

Our commitment to building international solidarity with our sisters and brothers on the front line in South Korea is very important as we challenge neo-liberal and anti-worker attacks. ●

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# CUPE stands in solidarity with Standing Rock



**C**UPE stands in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all indigenous activists and allies who are courageously fighting to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The proposed pipeline would carry nearly half a million barrels of fracked crude oil across four states every day, from the Bakken fields of North Dakota to Illinois, threatening the water resources as well

as the tribe's land and ancestral burial sites.

The pipeline, as planned, will cross the Lakota Treaty Territory at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, showing a blatant disregard for the rights of indigenous people to protect the land and its resources. The level of violence and intimidation endured by indigenous activists at the hands of private security and state

forces on behalf of a private corporation, reminiscent of centuries of racism and colonial plunder, is shocking.

The DAPL deepens our reliance on fossil fuels and will worsen climate change at a time when we need to be building a future that relies on renewable energy. We need to realize our ambition to create renewable public energy systems that are fully unionized and to create

environmentally sustainable jobs that respect the integrity of the planet and its people.

We support and echo the calls on the US government to respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and to consult with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe immediately to find a solution that will not pose a risk to the Tribe, their water sources or their sacred grounds. ●

## Tumultuous times in Turkey

In January 2016, over 1,000 Turkish academics signed a peace declaration calling on the government to end violence against Kurdish civilians in

the Southeastern provinces and to resume the 2013 peace process.

Following the release of the declaration, President Recep

Tayyip Erdoğan targeted the signatories as terrorist sympathizers and launched a campaign to investigate these academics for producing

terrorist propaganda. Despite this harassment and intimidation, the number of signatories grew to over 2,000 by the end of January 2016.

*Continued on page 4*

**Continued from page 3**

Since then, the signatories of the peace declaration have been subject to criminal and disciplinary investigations, detention and imprisonment, dismissal, suspension from duty, forced resignation, bans on leaving the country, and

withdrawal of research funding.

Following the failed coup attempt in July 2016, the persecution of the signatories has intensified. Unionized workers and academics that are critical of the government have been targeted by the authorities

in the name of purging the coup plotters. Under the conditions of the present state of emergency, in addition to academics, journalists, writers, Members of Parliament and ordinary citizens have been arrested for disagreeing

with government policies.

CUPE National has joined with the international community to express our solidarity with our Turkish sisters and brothers. We continue to monitor the situation closely. ●

# Canada Attacks Freedom of Expression

**O**n December 1, 2016, Ontario Conservative Member of Provincial Parliament Gila Martow introduced Motion 36 in the Ontario Legislature, which declared the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign (BDS) a hate movement.

The boycott, divestment, and sanctions is a global campaign that looks to exert social, economic, and political

pressures on Israel to end their occupation and colonization of Palestinian land and the violent exploitation of Palestinian people and workers.

Motion 36 in Ontario, which passed with a vote of 49 to 5, follows on the heels of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) the federal government signed with Israel in January 2016.

The MoU claimed that “the selective targeting of Israel is the new face of anti-Semitism” and made the commitment that Canada will oppose those who support the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

CUPE National signed a statement, issued by the Canadian Labour Congress, that called on the federal government to “stop trying to shut down

legitimate and nonviolent criticism of human rights abuses by Israel. Tactics such as boycotts, divestment and sanctions, for example, can be effective for raising awareness about and discouraging human rights abuses by governments and must not be characterized as criminal or as inciting hatred towards a people.” ●



**1. Delegation to Guatemala** CUPE National, along with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Maritime-based group Breaking the Silence, will be part of a delegation to Guatemala in March to work in solidarity with coffee producers organized with the Comité Campesino del Altiplano. Dubbed the Education in Action project, the delegation will support the efforts of grassroots organizations to improve livelihoods of Mayan farmers in Guatemala through initiatives based on social justice and fair trade.

**2. PSI North America Meeting** CUPE National President Mark Hancock participated in the Public Service International (PSI) North American Binational Meeting in Washington, DC at the end of February. Given the recent election of Donald Trump, this was an important opportunity for CUPE to express our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the US and to determine how we can best support them to fight back against the anti-worker legislation that is being introduced. This meeting also focussed attention on preparation for the PSI World Congress taking place in the Fall of 2017.

**3. Just Peace in the Philippines** Following the 2016 election of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, CUPE National has supported several calls for justice and peace in the Philippines. We have sent letters expressing our support for the resumption of the peace talks between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front Philippines (NDFP). We have called for the release of all political prisoners and for a stop to the so-called “war on drugs” linked to extra-judicial killings. We remain hopeful that another round of peace talks will take place in April 2017.