

À L'OFFENSIVE!  
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ORIENTATION  
TEXT



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DU MONTRÉAL MÉTROPOLITAIN



# Going on the Offensive!

We are living through turbulent times, where one crisis follows another, each deepening the next. Socially, politically, and environmentally, the world feels off-course, and real solutions to our most pressing problems remain frustratingly out of reach. We're confronted with urgent, large-scale challenges that lay bare the failures of our current system. In the face of this, many are losing hope, slipping into cynicism, apathy, or conspiracy thinking, drawn in by the populist rhetoric of self-serving politicians more concerned with protecting the interests of the wealthy and powerful than with the common good.

The problems we face today are not new. On the contrary, they are the result of political and economic choices, decisions rooted in logic that have shaped our world for decades, even centuries. As alarming as the current situation is, it is sadly not surprising. We saw it coming long ago. Yet successive governments, elected to serve the public good, have done little, if anything, to alter the course of events.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the environmental crisis. For decades, scientists and environmental activists have raised the alarm, warning of the catastrophic consequences of our lifestyles and production models. But governments, more attuned to corporate interests than to the ecological devastation those same corporations fuel, have failed to act. By turning a blind eye to environmental threats, we now endanger the very survival of our species. Trapped in a logic of relentless consumerism and profit at any cost, many still choose to ignore the problem, hoping it will somehow resolve itself. This wilful blindness is stoked by advocates and politicians who deny climate change or show outright contempt for the common good, even if undermining it serves only to enrich the already wealthy.

The social crisis mirrors the environmental one. The housing and homelessness emergencies we face today are the result of decades of neglect and, in some cases, deliberate disregard. For far too long, governments at every level have failed to implement real, lasting solutions to poverty, precarity, and social exclusion. Instead, they've handed over responsibility to the private sector—entities driven by profit, not the public good. Once again, the warning signs were clear. Once again, we are left confronting problems that feel overwhelming but were entirely foreseeable.

The current period threatens to bring even deeper social setbacks. These regressions are accelerating on multiple fronts: the rise of the right and far right, the growing privatization of public services, widening inequalities, and the resurgence of racism, misogyny, and all forms of discrimination and hate. Inflation is eroding the livelihoods of countless people, pushing many into intolerable and unjust conditions. The warning signs are multiplying, and they show no sign of fading.

In the face of these stark challenges, populist sycophants peddle simplistic “solutions” and revive familiar scapegoats: immigrants and non-status people, racialized communities, the 2SLGBTQI+ population, “wokes,” and others. Backed by the vast resources that wealth affords them, they manipulate new technologies and distort public discourse to serve their own ends. Tragically, a significant portion of the population has bought into this rhetoric of fear and division, falling squarely into the trap laid by politicians and elites who thrive on crisis. We have entrusted society's future to people who have no regard for the common good: people who dismantle our public services and social protections, built over decades, in service of their wealthy allies.

In our workplaces, labour relations are becoming increasingly strained, both in everyday interactions and, even more starkly, at the bargaining table. We are witnessing an unprecedented number of disputes, particularly lockouts, which are lasting longer and growing more bitter. Employers are digging in their heels. The recent Amazon warehouse closures are a clear example of this trend. More and more, our struggles are being fought in the courts, weaponized by employers against workers. The use of strikebreakers is on the rise. In the media, the voices of the rich and powerful vilify unions, promoting the idea that people would be better off fending for themselves, that collective action is outdated, even dangerous. And yet, unions continue to lead the resistance, and to win. But we must remain vigilant. We are still up against bosses and their political allies. The CAQ's proposed reform of the Labour Code and Bill 89 are ominous signs. We must meet them with unwavering resolve and collective strength.

Our entire society rests on the exploitation of both people and the planet, treated not as living beings, but as disposable commodities, to be used up and cast aside once they've served the demands of profit. We exploit the labour of temporary foreign workers, only to send them back when they are no longer deemed useful. We destroy entire ecosystems so that a handful of individuals can grow richer. We raise rents until people are pushed into the streets, with no regard for their dignity or survival. This model must be overturned.

And yet, in the midst of all these crises, the fundamental questions remain unasked: Why have we reached this point? How can we explain our perpetual state of crisis? Why are we unable to organize our collective economic, social, and political life in a way that truly meets our needs while respecting both nature and humanity? Without addressing the root causes of these problems, we can be certain that we will never find a real solution.

If we take a moment to reflect, one conclusion becomes clear: the myriad crises we are facing all have a common root: the capitalist system. It is capitalism that ensures wealth and power remain tightly bound together, concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite. It is this system that convinces us we must destroy nature and exploit human beings to satisfy our needs. Capitalism fosters the belief that individualism and personal material success are the keys to salvation. It promotes the myth that, as the saying goes, you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs, suggesting that the well-being of some must come at the expense of others. This system imposes a logic of endless, destructive growth, ravaging our environment in the process. And it is the defenders of this system who seek to persuade us that collective action is futile, that only the personal initiative of the so-called "best" among us will lead to progress. It's clear where this mindset has led us, here, and everywhere else.

Unless there is a profound systemic change, real solutions to our social, economic, and environmental crises will remain out of reach. At the CCMM-CSN, we firmly believe that another way is possible. There is no inherent reason why we must view the world and society through a capitalist lens. While many would have us believe this is the only way, they are either mistaken—or deliberately misleading us.

Clearly, the old model is outdated in every sense. The way we produce the goods that meet our needs, how we distribute wealth, how we allocate power, and how we organize ourselves collectively must change radically. It's becoming increasingly clear that this is a matter of humanity's survival. This is not alarmism; it is a clear-eyed assessment of the consequences of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy, which have dominated our societies for far too long. As we often say, "It's time for shame to change sides." We need not hide from re-

jecting capitalism. Instead, it is those who profit from it and defend it, despite the devastation it causes, who must be held accountable.

The solution to our problems and crises lies in civil society reclaiming power from those who have usurped it. It will not come from "above," from the rich and powerful, but from below, from all workers, from the masses. This is true not only in our workplaces but in society at large. However, those in power will not relinquish it without a fight. They are highly organized, both locally and internationally. They are confident and well-positioned, and they know it.

The necessary social-ecological transition on the horizon will not be easy. Too many have a vested interest in preserving the current system, as they profit from it in terms of power and wealth. Too many are afraid. Too many are cynical or apathetic. As unions, we have a responsibility to organize ourselves, to anticipate the obstacles ahead, and to protect workers' rights. We must propose an ambitious political program that enables profound change for the benefit of the entire population. This is what unites us as union activists: the belief that together, we can rise to any challenge. We have no choice but to radically transform the way we live and produce. If we fail to act, these changes will be imposed on us. We need only look at what's unfolding in the United States in recent months: more inequality, more violence, more discrimination, more hatred. Let's not wait until we've reached the breaking point our neighbors to the south are experiencing before we react.

Unions are used to struggling, and the record number of disputes during the current mandate is a testament to this. It also demonstrates that when we are organized and mobilized, we win. This same logic must apply to all levels of our action, both on the frontlines and behind the scenes. Over the years, we have proven that we can stand up to unscrupulous bosses who lock out their workers and resort to scabs. We've witnessed governments and employers use every tool at their disposal to undermine workers' legitimate struggles. But above all, we have seen these tactics lose much of their power when confronted by determined and courageous unions.

For decades, the CCMM-CSN has been advocating for a deep transformation of our society and the very foundations on which it is built. In 2025, this transformation has become urgent at every level. At this 39th Congress, let us set ourselves the goal of organizing and taking action to protect our rights and those of the broader population, within our own reach. Of course, the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain-CSN alone won't solve the world's problems or overthrow capitalism. But by tirelessly working to improve the aspects we can control, we will contribute to the global movement for change needed to build a society that aligns with our aspirations. Only in this way can we sustainably create the conditions necessary for a just, equitable, democratic society free from racism and discrimination, respectful of the environment, and in line with the values and ideals we hold dear.

In our workplaces, we must demand more democracy and greater respect. The workers themselves are best positioned to make decisions about the organization of their work! Let us always remember the words of Marcel Pepin, former president of the CSN: "It's not enough to be right, you also need to have might. It is through the mobilization of all our members, through our collective and united organization, that we will gain the strength we need."

It's often said that the best defense is a strong offense. That's why the theme of our 39th Congress is "On the Offensive." Let's stand united and organize our actions to make them as effective as possible—this is our only chance to win.

On the offensive, comrades, together we will win!