

The Electro-Motive Lockout and Non-Occupation: What Did We Lose? What Can Learn?

— Herman Rosenfeld¹

In the months since the February 2012 settlement at the Caterpillar-owned Electro-Motive plant in London, Ontario, the already bleak context for unionized workers in Canada has deteriorated. Austerity budgets at all levels of government and political attacks have continued to target public sector unions. The Wall government in Saskatchewan issued a Consultation Paper, which, if implemented, could eliminate the Rand formula and attack union rights to engage in politics (CEP, 2012), while Ontario opposition Tory leader Tim Hudak went even further calling for the kinds of anti-union policies initiated in Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana (Ontario PC Caucus, 2012). The ruling Ontario Liberals, with a minority government, have tabled a bill to freeze wages for teachers and plan to extend it to all provincial public sector workers.

Prime Minister Harper's government has virtually eliminated the right to strike in areas under federal jurisdiction, forcing postal workers, airport and rail workers back to work in the name of preventing disruption to the economy. The notorious omnibus budget law targeted Employment Insurance (recipients must agree to seek jobs that pay dramatically below their normal pay rates); temporary foreign workers and even refugees.

This has to be placed in the context of the dramatic pressure of restructuring, concessions bargaining and weak job demands in the private sector. While this has been an ongoing characteristic of the neo-liberal period, a new phase began with the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, with the state-guided restructuring in auto, steel and other sectors (Albo

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et al, 2010). This process is still working itself through, as Detroit-Three auto bargaining recently ended with the union agreeing to extend a two-tier wage for new hires with a “grow-in” period of 10 years, starting at 60 percent of the regular wage, with a “hybrid” pension, combining defined benefit and defined contributions plans (Rosenfeld, 2012b). The high Canadian dollar exchange rate – itself tied to the dominance of oil, gas and other natural resource export-dependency – certainly contributes to the problem (CAW, 2012).

There have been notable efforts at resistance by the labour movement and the social movement Left. But these have been extremely weak, isolated and have, for the most part, ended in defeat. The larger labour centrals, such as the Canadian Labour Congress and provincial federations have also been unable to mount impressive or even consistent resistance (although the experience in the latter is admittedly more mixed). This is the context that has driven a number of recent conflicts in this country, most notable the Caterpillar-owned Electro-Motive lockout and closure. This experience is both particular to the changes in the larger transportation sector in North America, but also characteristic of the pressures facing the manufacturing industries, and therefore its unions and workers.

ELECTRO-MOTIVE: WHAT HAPPENED?

By now, many people have a certain familiarity with the events at Electro-Motive in London. Caterpillar, as part of its Progress Rail subsidiary, owns Electro-Motive.² It was bought from two vulture funds that had previously purchased it from General Motors in 2005 (Wells, 2012). The notorious anti-union employer paid \$820 million for EMD, which also includes an electronic manufacturing facility in LaGrange,

2 Caterpillar is the world’s largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment. General Electric is its chief rival in locomotive production. Caterpillar is noted for breaking the UAW plant in Peoria, Illinois, in 1995 and the closure of the Brampton, Ontario plant and CAW occupation in 1993. In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited the Electro-Motive Plant to show off a \$5 million federal tax break for buyers of the locomotive-maker’s products, and provided a further tax break on capital investment. In 2009, they set about a major expansion plan seeking to cut costs, laying off upward of 11,000 workers or 9 percent of its workforce. Even though it lost sales and revenue through the 2008-2010 recession, Caterpillars shares rose 64 percent on the Down Jones in 2010, reaching total sales of \$43 billion in 2010, and profits rising 95 percent in the first 9 months of 2011. Outgoing CEO James Owens received \$22.5 million for 6 months of work and a defined benefit pension plan worth \$18.7 million. In the past year, Caterpillar has opened new locomotive plants in Brazil, Mexico and Muncie, Indiana, in order to take advantage of their low-paid and exploited workforces.

Illinois (Griffin, 2004; Moody, 1998).³ EMD was the only manufacturer of locomotive engines in Canada and the sale brought control over key technologies to CAT. Four months after the EMD sale, CAT announced plans to convert a factory in Muncie, Indiana into a union-free locomotive assembly plant.

In December 2011, the company issued a final offer to its London workers that would cut hourly wages from \$35 to \$16.50 per hour, while slashing pensions and benefits, even though Caterpillar enjoyed record profits and a 20 percent boost to production over the previous year (MacDowell, 2012). The bargaining unit and local leadership refused and the company locked out its workers on New Year's Day.

The union local, with the support of the National CAW, began a campaign to challenge and isolate the employer, and demand that they bargain seriously and withdraw the demands. The OFL called a "Day of Action" for 2012 January 21, drawing attention to the failure of the Harper government to protect Canadian jobs and interests when domestic companies are acquired by foreign multi-nationals. The demonstration drew upwards of 5,000 people, but was little more than a rally.⁴ The union did not occupy the plant. On February 3, after a month of campaigning, EMD publicly announced the impending closure, and after a tense period, the union bargained a decent severance and closure package that the membership ratified on February 23rd (Grant and Keenan, 2012).⁵

The closure of this facility in the face of the bullying by Caterpillar is important – and will be addressed further in this article. But more important is the nature of the resistance – and the limitations of the strategic approaches used. The Electro-Motive/Caterpillar experience is an example of a gross attack by a ruthless employer on a group of union members. The ultimate goal was not to get a wage cut, but to set the stage for a workplace closure and in the process, humiliate and defeat the union, thereby contributing another setback to the larger union movement. The union, CAW Local 27 refused to accept these outrageous demands and waged a locally-based campaign of resistance, on terms that traditionally would have meant something powerful, but in the cur-

3 A six-year struggle in the 1990's defeated the UAW, one of a number of key defeats that the union suffered at the hands of this ruthless employer.

4 Participants simply listened to speeches – difficult to hear with a faulty PA system. Some went to the EMD site and talked with the workers on their protest line, but there was a great deal of frustration and disappointment from many of the protesters. The author was also there.

5 Later, at the CAW-Detroit-3 contract talks in September 2012, the CAW was able to bargain job openings for 160 former GM workers from EM at the auto assembly, at Oshawa and CAMI. Those working in Oshawa would be able to add to their pension time, and retire at a full rate, while CAMI has an independent pension plan (Grant and Keenan, 2012).

rent era, turned out to mean very little.⁶

The kind of resistance chosen was unsatisfactory and, although the worst did not happen – the ultimate outcome was a decent severance package – it signalled both a serious defeat and a major opportunity lost. There is little to celebrate out of this episode. It should be sobering, disheartening and a learning moment, about what *not* to do and what must be done to win in this era. In a union culture that is unable to deal with defeats and retreats and learn from them, where every challenge must end up appearing as a ‘victory’ of sorts, it is difficult to learn the proper lessons and use that learning to make change.

The union resistance was positive in a number of ways, but ultimately proved to be too limited. It resulted in a defeat that hurt the CAW, the rest of the labour movement and the Canadian working class. It helped contribute to the ongoing destruction of Canadian manufacturing capacities, and therefore our sovereign capacity to build a different kind of economy. It helped the capitalist class and its political allies move forward in their efforts to deepen the neoliberal defeat of the working class. We need to look at what was done right and wrong.

Finally, this is not something that is limited to the CAW. It is chronic throughout the Canadian labour movement and is reflected in the recent defeat of the CUPE municipal workers in Toronto⁷ and the Steelworkers locals at Vale Inco and US Steel in Hamilton (all of which had very different leadership structures and even ideological orientations).⁸

LARGER ISSUES

As it was unfolding, it was clearly on the radar of labour and people around North America and the world, who correctly, saw this as a kind of private-sector Wisconsin, with all of the issues that this entails (Yates, 2010). The interest in CAT was, in a sense, a kind of culmination of the frustration that so many working class people have had to live with in this era of the re-constitution of neoliberalism. It touched a nerve with

6 Local 27 is an amalgamated local – meaning it includes a number of bargaining units, including auto parts, manufacturing, public sector workers and members for other sectors. It has a long history of activism in the community, politics, in the CAW and in the larger union movement. The current local president is also the president of the CAW Council (Russell, 2011).

7 With the notable exception of the public library workers unit of CUPE that waged a strike – after building public support – and came out rather successfully. (CUPE, 2012, March 30). Steelworkers at Rio Tinto in Quebec also staved-off defeat (Jamasmie, 2012)

8 Even the CAW, in its merger documents and at its major convention of August 2012, acknowledged the nature of these defeats and some of the underlying reasons for them (CAW-CEP 2012; Rosenfeld, 2012).

many people. Even mainstream pundits critiqued the larger phenomenon of blackmail against working people (and saw in it, the reality in most workplaces these days). It also linked up with the Occupy narrative – of the unfairness of income and wealth inequality, in the face of the crisis unleashed by the financial elite. This sense of outrage diffused across North America, and, as was clear to all who would listen, working class people across cultures and labour market segments embraced the theme of the 1% versus the 99% as their own.

It was a living example of the de-industrialization process and the loss of key manufacturing capacities; of large mega-corporations, moving capital investment at will just to pressure working class people to reduce living standards to accommodate private profit accumulation. It symbolized the threat to Canadian sovereignty and the survival of our communities that capitalism has become. It was clearly part of a new and dangerously aggressive round of attacks on the working class in both the private and public sectors. It reinforced some key defeats in the private sector. There were times where the unions simply gave up and accepted the logic of competitiveness. These included 2 tier wages in auto in the US, acceptance of concessions in the Canadian auto plants in recent bargaining rounds, situations where defeats were imposed by the state (e.g. auto concessions in 2008); and, even where the unions did mount a battle for resistance such as at Vale Inco, St. Mary's Cement and US Steel, where there were key defeats, anyway (Rosenfeld, 2009; 2012). The losses in these situations were aimed at particular targets, such as wages, defined-benefit pensions and benefits. The attacks that Electro-motive/CAT imposed on workers, took this to another level

The main thrust in the most recent period has been in the public sector, where these attacks have dovetailed with efforts to eliminate unionism completely (Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, etc). In Ontario, BC, and now through Ottawa, attacks on unions threaten their very survival. The terrain of the current attacks are different in many ways than the previous rounds. They take advantage of capital mobility made possible by free trade. They seem to be centred in employers that have been favoured by government, either through negotiated aid deals or other forms of support (and are usually related to larger, continent-wide restructuring strategies). The demands of the employer result in either the destruction or dramatic weakening of the union and a radical shift in the rights of the workers. They mark a new level of defeat for the labour movement and affect the willing-

ness and capacity of workers to organize collective resistance. They undermine the rights of all working people – from those of us in the better paid jobs, to those of us out of work, on social assistance and in precarious jobs.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE RESPONSE TO THE EM LOCKOUT AND CLOSURE?

There are many issues to raise with the response of the CAW. Both the national and the local leadership had very limited horizons and goals. They saw themselves as addressing the immediate needs of the workers in the EM unit: refusing to accept the threatened wage cuts, but planning for a plant closing that seemed inevitable. The plan was to build a base of community and labour support in the London area and the larger labour movement, get material support for the workers during the lockout period and then work to bargain severance and pension rights. Many of the political themes raised were the right ones: corporate greed, the need to maintain manufacturing capacity, how the attacks on the workers contrasted with the wealth of the corporate elite and the 1%, the role of Harper and efforts to have the rest of the Canadian Auto Workers and the Ontario Federation of Labour support them. Their tactics and strategy reflected those goals. Their local campaign built widespread support across the London community. They engaged the provincial government behind the scenes to pressure CAT for pension and severance. They blockaded the movement of goods in and out of the workplace and began a campaign to place information pickets outside CAT outlets in Southern Ontario.

But both their goals and their strategy were extremely limited and problematic. There was no move to occupy the workplace or extend and deepen the campaign to pressure Caterpillar, or raise *political* demands to pressure the Canadian government to stop an impending closure. They argued that “we didn’t want to turn people in the community off”, or threaten the possibility of bargaining a decent close-out agreement.⁹ The situation required a dramatic tactical move to politicize the struggle. A plant occupation, rather than “turning people off” could have galvanized already-existing concerns of working people across the province and continent. It could have created an opening to call for state intervention – in the form of nationalizing EMD – as part of a larger project of building Canadian capacity

9 While some might argue that there were differences inside the union, between the local, national and bargaining unit, the public face of the union at all levels clearly looked to downplay any radical actions, such as an occupation. Any differences might be better explained with hindsight, but further research would be necessary.

to manufacture heavy transportation equipment, through the public sector. Certainly, Caterpillar is known as a ruthless employer, impervious to the claims of workers, unions or communities. No one seriously argued that actions could change their minds. But the struggle needed to be directed at the state – federal and provincial – to intervene to protect jobs and the manufacturing infrastructure that was clearly threatened.

Instead, the union's perspective was local and short-term. There was absolutely no interest in making this a larger, political battle. There was blindness to the opening and opportunity that this universally condemned action by capital represented. It was almost as if the union was basking in the sun of public pity. The idea of pressuring Harper for state intervention was seen as a pipe dream, beyond the pale of what and who the union is. An occupation could have concentrated interest and anger in London and created a platform to place nationalization on the public agenda, but this was the farthest thing from their sense of the possible. The tactic of occupation was portrayed as possibly threatening short-term interests of the workers at EMD. (Aside from the narrowness and strategic incompetence this represented, it made the positive links the union built with the Occupy movement, rather hypocritical and embarrassing – ignoring the tactical and strategic audacity and originality of Occupy).¹⁰

HOW MIGHT A DIFFERENT KIND OF CAMPAIGN PROCEED?

The union could have expanded the campaign in London to include challenging government offices, banks, larger industrial employers, all of whom suddenly became "allies" in the union's perspective. It could have built a campaign across Southern Ontario – that might have included new and exciting educational materials and challenges to employers. There could have been a boycott of CAT products around the Tar Sands and construction projects. There might have been a new educational effort with the members so that they are no longer afraid of "turning off the rest of the community". Education turned the tide during the Ontario Days of Action in the 1990's, which relied on the organizational and educational capacities of many of the same local activists in London today to win over workers who had voted for Tory Mike Harris, to a protest movement against him.

¹⁰ It is one thing to speak out against inequality and give material support to protesters occupying public spaces to challenge injustice, but it is quite another to take similar control over the private property of capital, to demand that it become the property of the community.

Where is the will and capacity to develop and build those mobilizational and educational resources today?¹¹

The CAW has had experience with bold campaigns that challenge employers in the past. The 1997 contract bargained at GM successfully dealt with the issue of outsourcing. It was preceded by a strike and campaign waged by the union. In that campaign, the union was able to win over public opinion by appealing to common experiences in dealing with job insecurity. There were many workplace occupations in the early 1980's and late 1990's. True, they were mostly organized over demands for decent closeout agreements, but there is no reason that the tactic couldn't also be used to be the central sparkplug for a larger political campaign to keep a workplace open. The CAW has the institutional memory to carry out such a campaign. Certainly, the times and context are different today – but the CAW had no intention of considering an occupation for more than severance and a decent close-out.

Indeed, the current defeat of the labour movement and the working class as a whole – the strength and hegemony of employers and the entire, united, capitalist class – demands that bold actions and radical approaches be taken to help inspire an awakening in the labour movement. Certainly, there is no tactic or individual struggle that can magically transform the dismal situation the labour movement faces overnight. But a more ambitious plan could have possibly helped get the labour movement off dead centre, where it remains. Waiting until the political and economic balance of forces 'improves' is equally problematic – as if the stubborn power of capital can ever be challenged without an upsurge of some kind from below.¹²

This moment constituted “the” critical opening to deal with the unspoken issues and concerns of working people across the country. The moment was there to raise and answer questions like:

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- 11 In the period preceding the hugely successful London Day of Action, local and national union activists and leaders came to London to engage with members, many of the latter whom were reluctant to oppose Harris, let alone strike employers or picket. This was a major game-changing educational effort, which made the early one-day general strikes possible (La Botz, 2011). After a few minutes in conversation with workers at EMD in front of the locked-out plant, it wasn't difficult to see that the union could have quite easily convinced the membership to take part in an occupation.
- 12 Can one seriously claim that tightening labour markets could, by itself, miraculously produce a surge in militancy, or a growth in radicalism? It seems that every new concessionary agreement coming from unions like the CAW is couched in a discourse lamenting the unfavourable larger balance of forces, and claiming the “we will live to fight another day”. The latter, like tomorrow, never seems to come.

- Why should we accept the constant threats to jobs in the name of cost-reduction and competitiveness?
- Why should CEO's receive massive incomes, when we have to accept wage and benefit cuts?
- Why must we and our children "get used" to the lack of good, secure, well-paying jobs, and instead, accept the normalization of part-time, low paid, precarious work? If workplaces like this are going to close without any alternative plan – what have we to look forward to?

But there are other political issues that could have and should have been raised as part of a fight to keep this workplace working:

- Why can't we defend our right to produce locomotives in this country? Isn't it central to our needs for political sovereignty? Isn't it important for efforts to create a transportation system that is environmentally sustainable? What about mass transit investment for urban areas?
- While Harper continues to negotiate new Free Trade agreements, doesn't the EMD closure create an opening for us to raise the call to challenge and ultimately abrogate existing agreements that allow the free movement of investment and capital unregulated by democratic institutions?
- Wasn't Harper vulnerable on all of these points? His government intervened with the postal workers and repeatedly did so at Air Canada to supposedly protect the national interest. He was also seen to be in cahoots with CAT in his praise of subsidies to the employer. While the P.M. claimed that the EMD closure was between a union and a private employer and a matter of provincial jurisdiction, the hypocrisy of all of this made the federal government a legitimate target.
- It poses the question of the role and limitations of the Investment Canada Act. The demands of the union movement (often echoing the limitations of social democracy) have been largely limited to soft nationalistic issues of foreign takeovers; getting tradeoffs for financial help to help foster investment and local, provincial or national procurement policies. Those are all important and positive. But, as in previous struggles, these are limited demands and will not address the larger issue of capitalist restructuring.

- Shouldn't Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's government be held to the fire, as well? Ongoing corporatist illusions seemed to colour union's comments about McGuinty's 2012 January 31 limited public condemnation of CAT. One can understand the union's concerns about pressuring the province about severance issues, but it is quite another issue to be satisfied with mealy-mouthed statements from bourgeois politicians. Corporatist relations with the Liberals should be publicly repudiated.
- Demands to have the state finance and run a secondary manufacturing capacity (and in this case, heavy machinery, locomotives and engines and mining equipment) practically beg to be raised in this instance.
- Won't the outcome of key private sector struggles such as this also affect the outcome of public sector struggles, such as the fight against cuts and privatization in Toronto, B.C. and elsewhere?
- Then, there are issues of the rights of unionization and the right of collective bargaining, both being undermined by this sort of activity;

This experience must be understood in the context of previous struggles, such as Vale Inco, US Steel (Hamilton) and St. Mary's Cement. In each, there was important support from surrounding communities and other locals and unions, but there were no efforts to organize collective forms of direct action, such as rotating work stoppages in other workplaces or occupations. The struggles remained centred in their individual communities, with support from across the country in the form of picket lines and solidarity messages, but no co-ordinated efforts to pressure employers and/or governments. Aside from the local unions involved, the campaigns were not transformed into large-scale movements, with educational components, geared towards reaching the entire working class. They were not tied to larger effects that working class and unionized workers have been experiencing – or to political strategies to shape the future of each of these sectors (steel, mining, cement, etc.)

CONCLUSION

There are two general areas that come to mind when summarizing the lessons of the EMD-CAT experience: one, relating to the strategic challenges it raises for the union movement and second, larger economic and political issues raised by the loss of the Electro-Motive facility itself. The broader labour movement – even in its strongest and most militant

spaces – is still reeling from previous political defeats, the economic offensive of employers, the heritage of defensiveness and at times corporatist or concessionary tactical retreats, dependence on employers and the low-level of collective experience of political as well as industrial struggles that the neoliberal era has brought. In a seemingly never-ending series of responses to vicious attacks, they repeat the same limited strategies. At best, they include local-based campaigns to get support for jobs, investment and livelihoods, looking for sympathy (“feel sorry for me”) and forms of solidarity, but never learning from mistakes and weaknesses of this strategy.

They call for defending collective bargaining rights and protecting against foreign corporate predators, but the larger political demands are very limited and don’t challenge any of the rules of neoliberalism. There are no efforts to combine struggles with political demands that put capital on the defensive and plug into the real concerns of millions of Canadians and Americans. In order to address these weaknesses, the union movement must move in new directions and embrace the following strategies:

- Audacious industrial actions which challenge the power of the employer, and reinforce that challenge in the eye of other workers;
- Reliance on some of the more creative collective traditions of the respective unions;
- Seizing the moment to create political campaigns that tap into the almost universal revulsion with the attacks on living standards and jobs that come along with competitiveness requirements of neoliberalism;
- Putting forward demands for manufacturing investment and jobs, with a new and robust role for the state – including nationalization of manufacturing, finance and creation of new capacities, tied to industrial strategies linked to working peoples’ needs (transportation, health care, environmental transformation). We need demands that argue for a logic other than competitiveness and open up space for challenging our dependence on competitive export regimes and private sector accumulation in a crowded field – or worse, resource extraction. Audacious demands need to be raised in the context of audacious actions, such as workplace occupations and strikes.
- Engaging members and working people in general on these themes.

- Developing a different relationship between unions and community-based organizations and needs. For example, what kinds of links COULD have been built with working class communities over this struggle – communities literally dying for decent-paying and secure jobs?
- Reflective and self-critical “renewal” projects – which, I believe requires a socialist politics outside and inside unions.

The consequences of not doing this have been unfolding right before our eyes. About two weeks after the ratification of the agreement at Electro-Motive, there was an announcement circulated in the local newspapers about a new collective agreement with the CAW at Lear Seating, in Kitchener. That contract was said to contain wage reductions of about 30 percent over the four years of the agreement and the workers are supposed to get a \$40,000 transition payment to cushion the permanent wage cut. New hires would start at about half what the workers had been paid, allowing the company to bid on future work with a lower labour-cost base. (QMI Agency, 2012)

One wonders if this embarrassing agreement was in the works when the Electro-Motive struggle was going on. If it was, it certainly raises a number of questions about the way the lockout was handled. Even if not, it provides a sorry, but all too predictable lesson about the consequences of not stepping up to the challenges raised by Electro-Motive. Aside from the move into retirement for some of the 160 former GM workers laid off from EMD, bargained by the CAW in September 2012 (Grant and Keenan, 2012), others haven't been as fortunate.

A journalistic account in the *Globe and Mail* from October 5 2012, shows a story of financial and emotional strain: marriage breakups; low-paid, part-time work for most; severance running out; food bank usage and so forth (Grant 2012). But there is more. In the middle of August 2012 (as this essay underwent revision) Caterpillar and the International Association of Machinists local union in Joliet, Illinois, signed a six year collective agreement that settled a four month strike of 780 workers making hydraulic parts. The contract freezes the wages for all workers hired before May 2005, provides a 3 percent one-time wage increase for workers hired after that date and doubles the cost of health care premiums, eliminates pensions and reduces seniority rights. This settlement took place in the context of hugely successful sales and profits for the company (second quarter profits of \$1.75 billion, up 67 percent from the previous year) (Cancino, 2012; Keenan and McFarland, 2012).

Numerous commentators around the U.S. noted that this Caterpillar settlement reflected a fundamental change in the balance of forces between labour and capital. The subtitle of the *Chicago Tribune* article cited above says it quite distinctly, “Manufacturer breaks link between profits, workers’ pay; settlement raises wage issues for industry in general, labor experts say.” In other words, corporate behaviour towards workers that used to be considered “egregious” or beyond the pale, has now become the norm. It doesn’t take too much imagination to think about how this might have turned out differently, had the Electro-Motive struggle been expanded, deepened and fought to its potential conclusion.

Also in August of 2012, the merger talks between the Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers of Canada culminated in a proposal for new union. The documents accompanying the project – some of which have been cited in this essay – are rife with references to shortcomings in the collective resistance mounted against attacks by government and employers. With the timetable set for the formation of a new union, whose mandate will include efforts to addressing these weaknesses, one hopes that the lessons of the Caterpillar experience will be critically evaluated – especially in the light of the other defeats that the labour movement has suffered in the past period (CAW-CEP, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2012).

Finally, the lack of any serious discussion about strategies to create environmentally sustainable manufacturing capacities (aside from mild nationalistic commentaries from progressive academics and the bourgeois press¹³) was critical. Militant resistance is absolutely essential, but it has to be tied to new sectoral strategies and approaches that challenge the neoliberal straightjacket that is dramatically weakening working class life and institutions. Put another way, fighting back makes a difference, but it must be paired with independent working class strategies for rebuilding and re-imagining industrial and sectoral capacities.

It should be clear that unions themselves are incapable of posing alternative industrial strategies that reject corporatism and dependence on progressive-sounding schemes for competitive private sector projects. This requires a larger socialist and anti-capitalist movement – left of social democracy – that could research, debate and place a range of alternatives into the large political arena. But even within the broader

13 Actually, some of the commentaries posed key questions and raised issues that the labour movement seemed unable to put forward. (Yates, 2012; MacDowel, 2012; Olive, 2012; Walkom, 2012ab).

left, this is not yet happening (although some of Jim Stanford's ideas for development of manufacturing industries tied to resource extraction is a legitimate contribution (Stanford, 2012). Changing this will require thinking through alternative plans for manufacturing and service job creation and political demands associated with them at local union and community levels, as well as through the creation of theoretical, organizational and political projects on larger national, provincial and municipal levels.

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