

Fighting right wing extremism in our unions

**Nora Loreto for the CALM/ILCA joint mini conference
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What is right-wing extremism?

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One definition:

Anti-social, individualized ideology that blames the other on social problems while seeking its salvation from a strong man leader.

What is right-wing extremism?

Another definition:

Explicit racist, bigoted, hateful attitudes towards others.

What is right-wing extremism?

A problem with definitions:

While white supremacist beliefs are often coded as extremist, they are also baked into all of our own structures, including our unions.

The role of capitalism

Racial capitalism, the kind that Canada and the United States have been built upon, is justified through the same logics as far right.

Unions often have a stake in racial capitalism because they represent the workers whose livelihoods depend on it.

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Capitalist democracy's end game?

And so, what's really happening here?

- **Decline of Liberalism**
- **End of post-war prosperity pact**
- **Loosening grip on racist hierarchy within society**
- **Rise of “extremes” in relation to the centre**

What we're calling extremism today is an intensified, individualized ideology that many Americans and Canadians have lived under for generations

For this presentation, we will explore extremism as it relates to individual union members who might express ideology consistent with ...

Angry hatred: Racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, bigoted, etc.

Problems defined by conspiracies: COVID-19 is fake, BLM is a Marxist plot, QAnon, Pizzagate, etc.

Solutions: insurrection, Trumpism, right-wing of the GOP or Conservative Party

Why is far right extremism a threat to labour?

- Anti-social**
- Anti-solidarity**
- The existence of the far right stands in direct contrast to the**
- principles of union organizing**

How might it manifest in your unions?

- Comments, flyers, angry social media posts**
- Campaigns against vaccination, human rights**
- Organizing to run for positions within the union**
- Acute acts of violence or harassment among workers**

What might attract someone to the far right?

- Loneliness, isolation**
- Easy answers**
- Radicalization through online platforms**
- Family members or friends**
- Need for belonging**
- Justify hateful opinions**

What might attract someone to the far right?

- **Crumbling social conditions**
- **Lack of services**
- **Online communities/belonging**

How do we confront the far right?

Individual:

- **Loneliness, isolation? Build community and bring people together.**
- **Easy answers? Popular education**
- **Radicalization through online platforms? Popular education, supports for worried family and friends, forums on the process of radicalisation**

How do we confront the far right?

Individual:

- **Family members or friends? Popular education, locations for discussion/debate, support networks**
- **Justify hateful opinions? Anti-racism popular education, anti-racism campaigns**
- **Online communities/belonging? Create real-life communities**

How do we confront the far right?

Systemic:

- **Crumbling social conditions? Fight for social justice both through collective bargaining and in the community**
- **Lack of services? Advocate for service improvements, consider the union as a location where services could be delivered**

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Systemic:

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How do we confront the far right?

Systemic:

- **Livable communities**
- **Better working conditions**
- **Real-life community building**

The far right vs. the far left

History shows that the only ideology that can meaningfully fight the far right is the far left.

Labour in and of itself is not a far left institution, but elements within labour can be.

The far right vs. the far left

Labour must

- **Understand itself as a bulwark against fascism**
- **Fight accordingly**

The end