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MESSAGE TO TRUDEAU: TIME FOR REAL CHANGE



SCRAP HARPER'S POLICIES

- *stop pipelines
- *repeal Bill C-51
- *end Saudi arms deal
- *stop war on Iraq/Syria
- *Stop TPP
- *Save Canada Post

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16
Number of Canadian air-strikes in Iraq since Trudeau was elected to end the war, including a strike a month after the election that killed up to thirteen people

36
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47
Number of people the Saudi regime recently executed, including activist Sheik Nimr al-Nimr

163,000
Number of First Nations children the federal government has been discriminating against through under-funding of child and family services

\$5 million
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\$15 billion
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In their own words

“Almost all our allies are selling weapons to Saudi Arabia.”
Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion defending the Saudi arms deal

“What I’m more afraid of than jail right now is, what happens if we don’t take action against Line 9.”
Aamjiwnaang land defender Vanessa Gray who was arrested for shutting down the 40-year old Line 9 pipeline, which Enbridge wants to use to pump toxic tar sands

“It is vital that Canadians watch the government’s actions closely to ensure the ruling is implemented and inequalities in other First Nations children’s services such as education, health and basics like water and housing are fully addressed.”
Cindy Blackstock, director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, on the next steps after the successful human rights tribunal decision



Victory for First Nations children

by VALERIE LANNON

January 26, 2016 saw a landmark decision by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. It came down in favour of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada (Caring Society), who argued that the federal government discriminated against First Nations children in its funding of child and family services in First Nations communities.

The decision has far-reaching implications, arguably as significant as Supreme Court decisions that have favoured First Nations in land custody and constitutional rights suits. The human rights complaint was launched in 2007. The Harper government obfuscated (via delays in sharing key documents) and actually tried to stop the complaint going forward (saying that the Tribunal had no jurisdiction), plus spied on and harassed the Caring Society’s Executive Director, Dr. Cindy Blackstock.

She was able to win a separate Human Rights Tribunal case for the latter action and received \$20,000 in damages, which she donated to children’s charities.

What does it mean?
Child and family services are those operations that intervene in child abuse situations. They are offered both by the provinces for off-reserve families and in many cases in on-reserve situations, as well as some 105 mandated or delegated First Nations agencies across Canada and Quebec.

Kill Bill C-51

A year ago Stephen Harper introduced Bill C-51, which initially had popular support in the wake of the Ottawa shooting. But once people discovered what Bill C-51 was about, there was mass opposition across the country.

Bill C-51 criminalizes dissent, gives more powers to Canada’s secret police, extends detention without charge and secret trials, and strengthens no-fly lists. Harper used it to whip up Islamophobia to justify bombing Iraq and Syria, and to criminalize Indigenous

But, as the AFN and the Caring Society argued, federal funds to provinces for services off reserve are often 38 per cent higher than what the federal government gives to First Nations. This allows off-reserve families to receive more supports and prevention services. The impact is a disproportionate number of First Nations children being removed from their families and taken into the foster care system, the number far higher than the total that suffered through the residential school system at its height. Often the foster homes are away from the child’s family and community, resulting in extreme cultural and personal alienation, which all too frequently leads to addictions and mental trauma. Children in care suffer far higher school drop-out rates, greater involvement with the criminal justice system and longer term health problems. Cindy Blackstock has pointed to these problems as contributing to the high number of vulnerable girls and women who go missing or murdered.

What else is needed?
But Blackstock and the AFN also point out that equity in funding for child and family services has to be matched with equity in funding for all programs “on reserve,” including education, health, housing and infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water. The horrors in Attawapiskat, from the falling down school building to widespread substance misuse, made headlines a few years ago and this week saw the murders in La Loche, Saskatchewan,

committed by a youth who went untreated for apparent depression. Underfunding of needed health and social services contributes massively to these tragedies

What will the government do?
AFN Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde said he is optimistic that the Trudeau government is listening. He pointed to Trudeau’s meetings with the national Chiefs, removal of the very old 2 per cent funding cap for First Nations programs, the commitment to an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, and Trudeau’s commitment to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Indeed, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett and Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould said they welcomed the Tribunal’s decision, committed to more funding in the upcoming federal budget, and to overhauling the child and family service framework for First Nations.

But to genuinely improve the quality of life for First Nations children, it will be essential to not only focus narrowly on child and family services, since these kick in only once a family is in distress. All the other services mentioned above—housing, education, health, etc.—not to mention robust economic development (which hinges on settling and honouring treaties and inherent rights) need to be addressed. And complying with First Nations’ views on pipeline expansion and other resource extraction will also contribute to the well-being

of children and families. At this point, it is likely that the Liberals will be unable to address all these needs while continuing to allow tarsands expansion and while spending money on the military instead of First Nations.

What should we do?
The Caring Society shares these concerns and has an excellent website where you can see the Society’s tracking of the government’s responses. The next three weeks are to be used to design a process to oversee the implementation of the Tribunal’s decision. *Watch and see what the government does in the upcoming budget to not only respect the Tribunal decision, but to ensure adequate funding for the range of services needed by children and families in First Nations communities. *You can support any and all actions undertaken by First Nations to assert their inherent rights. *Press the NDP to hold the Liberals accountable because we cannot expect the Official Opposition—the party of Harper that tried so hard to suppress this complaint—to do so.

Both the Caring Society and the AFN said they will go to court again if the government does not respect the Tribunal decision and fix the current child and family service system, as recommended by the Tribunal and Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They will not be letting up. Neither should we.

Visit fncaringsociety.com and join the I am a Witness Campaign.

after scandal has occurred on their watches: secret renditions, illegal detentions and torture, warrantless interceptions of literally billions of communications. The list goes on and on. Worse, such committees have on occasion simply served as cover for the security agencies, wittingly or unwittingly.”

If the Liberals want to continue claiming they are the “party of the Charter” who brought “real change,” then they need to repeal Bill C-51 and stop the wars and pipelines that led to its adoption in the first place.

Fish and the climate crisis

by D’ARCY BRIGGS

The world has been at peak fish for almost 20 years now. As global catch rates have been increasing, stocks have been dwindling.
Climate change has put an immense pressure on fish stocks, as has the rate of catch in order to not only feed ourselves, but livestock as well. The increase of waste being put out to sea has also had a detrimental impact. All of these problems stem from one fact: capitalism is a machine built to consume.

According to the most recent report from the WWF, stocks of tuna, mackerel, and bonito have fallen by about 75 percent; however, all fish species that are utilized by humans in some capacity have fallen by 50 percent. This also spells bad news for plants and animals that rely on fish to survive. Three quarters of currently active coral reefs and threatened and, if global climate trends continue, the world’s oceans will be too hot by 2050 for reefs to adapt. Oceanic “dead zones” are on the rise. These areas lack enough oxygen and other nutrients to sustain any sort of aquatic flora or fauna.

What is the Canadian government doing about this? Nothing. The collapse of the Newfoundland cod fishery should act as a prime example of poor economic practices, and while the species has recently shown signs of recovery, it has not yet returned to pre-collapse levels. In fact, scientists urged the federal government to classify Atlantic cod as endangered in 2010, but no such action has been taken.

The ocean is in crisis. Three billion people rely on fish as a major source of protein, with two thirds of Indigenous peoples living in northern areas of North America and Europe relying on fish as the main source of protein.

There are, however, many instances of successful campaigns to defend sustainable fishery practices. Last Spring, the Heiltsuk First Nation, in the Central Coast region of British Columbia, challenged and defeated the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in a dispute over commercial fishing. An occupation of the DFO regional office in Bella Bella by chief Marilyn Slett and over 150 others, as well as blockades, formal requests, and public support from other First Nations and allies saw the fleet leave the area and new guidelines for future commercial ventures are now being discussed.

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Trudeau: stop arms deal

Three months after he was elected on a mandate of “real change,” Trudeau refuses to cancel Harper’s \$15 billion arms deal to the Saudi dictatorship that recently executed 47 people—including Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr.

While the government sent out a small and useless press release raising “concern” about the mass execution, Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion made it clear the government is more concerned about profiting from repression: “Almost all of our allies are selling weapons to Saudi Arabia. It’s part of the world in which we live.”

Al-Nimr & the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring erupted in 2011 to change the world in which we live, and Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was a key activist in protests that spread to Saudi Arabia. The regime’s attack on him and others only increased resistance and unity.

As *Socialist Worker* reported at the time, “According to activists, security forces shot Nimr in an attempt to assassinate him. He was injured and then arrested by Saudi police. Pictures of him covered with a blood-stained white blanket in a police car were circulated in social media. Hundreds of outraged protesters occupied Qatif Roundabout and flooded surrounding streets. Saudi security forces opened fire. Two protestors, Akbar Shakouri from Awamiya and Mohamed Filfil from Qatif, were killed. . . More than 30,000 demonstrators participated

in the funeral of Muhamed Filfil chanting ‘Down with Al-Saud.’ The ruling class in Saudi Arabia is threatened by a deep movement against oppression that unites people under the famous chant “No Sunni, no Shia, we are all brothers.”

The regime claimed that al-Nimr was a terrorist, and initially threatened him with crucifixion. But his real crime in the eyes of the regime was fighting for peace and justice. As *Socialist Worker* reported, “Closely observing Al-Nemr speeches in the past couple of years since the Arab Spring began, it’s clear all his demands have been social justice, equality and an end to oppression. In all pro-democracy protests in Qatif, Al-Nemr was in the frontline encouraging men and women to fight for their rights. He strongly opposed all the dictatorships in the Arab region, including the Western backed Saudi monarchy.”

Arming counter-revolution

That’s why the Saudi regime executed him, and that’s why Canada and the West continues to arm Saudi Arabia. The West uses the dictatorship to crush dissent in the region: bombing Yemen, sending troops to Bahrain to uphold the regime that houses the US Fifth Fleet, and arming sectarian groups in Syria and Iraq.

The executions were also a way for the Saudi ruling class to deflect attention from a worsening economy and an unprecedented austerity drive that has fuelled opposition

within the country. In December of 2015 the Saudis released a budget with major cuts to subsidies for fuel, utilities and water and have called for privatization of health care and education.

This is a country reliant on increasingly declining oil revenues. Military spending—including billions spent on prosecuting the war on Yemen—has drained the ruling family’s war chest and the recent lifting of sanctions on regional rival Iran has created a huge amount of uncertainty about the future economic prospects in the oil rich nation. This is going to fuel more opposition and an even more volatile mix of economic and military factors in the region.

It’s this counter-revolution, the Western-backed defeat of revolution in Egypt and Syria, that gave rise to ISIS, which the West then used as an excuse to launch yet another war on Iraq—which is only fueling the misery on which ISIS depends. Canada had a long history of arms sales to Saudi Arabia under both Conservative and Liberal governments, and Trudeau has signaled he has no intention of this changing.

During the federal election last fall, Harper defended the arms deal as a job provider, saying “I don’t think it makes any sense to pull a contract in a way that would only punish Canadian workers.” But Harper did nothing in 2012 to stop Caterpillar from selling off Electro-Motive Diesel, the London plant that built trains for 60 years—lead-

ing to the loss of 600 good green jobs. Now the plant that once made trains has been leased to General Dynamics, the corporations making armoured vehicles.

Keep demanding real change

The Liberals are claiming the contract can’t be challenged, but that hasn’t stopped people from mobilizing. Hundreds rallied on Parliament Hill last week to demand real change from the Liberal government. “We’re here today to ask the government to rethink its policy when it comes to Saudi Arabia. The hypocrisy has to stop,” said Asad Jafri. “They killed our leader, our scholar al-Nimr, for no reason, and our government is quiet? The deal speaks more loudly than their words. It’s a shame, it’s upsetting, especially when Trudeau’s platform was all about change.”

The huge desire for change hasn’t gone away, and the increasing Liberal hypocrisy can fuel more demands. Trudeau hasn’t yet been in power for three months and he has already seen two climate justice protests and a rally against the arms deals. Trudeau should cancel the arms deal and redirect investment into good green jobs.

Sign the Canadian Peace Alliance petition to stop the war, welcome refugees and cancel the \$15 billion arms deal: visit canadianpeace.org

Canada out of Iraq and Syria

Despite Trudeau’s insistence that the bombing campaign would end when he was elected, we are now more than three months into the Liberal mandate and the bombing continues.

The Liberals have been characteristically vague about next steps. The new Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan has said that Canada will develop a “robust” new plan for intervention that may include increasing troop trainers—who are often involved in combat—and a “humanitarian” component. They have also hinted that this may be expanded in some way into both Lebanon and Jordan.

Pressure continues to grow from the Tories, the punditocracy and from other NATO partners who

argue that Canada needs to keep the planes in the fight. Unless we are able to bring some opposing pressure to bear on the Liberals, it is likely that they will continue to drag their feet and may, in fact, extend the mission when it is up for debate at the end of March.

Canada’s contribution to the war is relatively small but for other NATO partners it is important for political reasons.

Any county that threatens to pull out of the bombing challenges the notion that more imperial violence will somehow solve the problems plaguing the region.

That makes it all the more vital that we build a movement to challenge imperialism in Canada and to make sure that the warplanes are brought home.

Regional rivalry

The US and Russia are both pushing for an end to the conflict in Syria and have developed a plan for peace talks. The scheduled talks on Syria have been bogged down in fights from the beginning and some of the key actors in the region are being shut out—like the Syrian opposition not backed by Saudi Arabia, and Kurdish groups resisting ISIS

Meanwhile, the contours of the terrain in the greater Middle East continue to change. The Iranian nuclear deal ended sanctions on and resulted in a shopping spree by both the Iranian state and corporations. In a string of visits to European states, Iran inked \$60 billion in deals on everything from car production to oil distribution to

a mammoth purchase of more than 100 jets from Airbus.

For a struggling European economy, Iran has become a godsend. But the nuke deal has angered the Saudi ruling class, which considers Iran a main rival.

As these regional and global rivalries heat up, there will be more calls for military responses and calls for people to settle into one of the various camps in the fight.

We need to challenge this by building a movement to challenge our government’s support for war. There are actions all over the world on March 19-20 against war and racism. This will be a good opportunity to push the new Trudeau government to end the bombing, bring the troops home and cancel arms sale to the region.

Challenging rape and racism in Germany

By Silke Stöckle and Marion Wegscheider

The New Year’s Eve festivities in Cologne, Hamburg and other German cities witnessed a high number of sexual attacks on women including at least one alleged rape.

Sexual violence against women in Germany is a large and long term problem. Women are frequently sexually harassed at large festivals including the Oktoberfest in Munich and the Carnival in Cologne.

Sexual violence

One in seven women in Germany experiences sexual violence, according to a new study commissioned by the ministry of family affairs. One in four is exposed to domestic violence.

So there are more than enough reasons for an outcry over sexism and sexualised violence in Germany. But both phenomena are closely connected to the dominant image of women, and accordingly sexual assaults are all too often not taken seriously.

In Cologne local politicians have lectured victims about “rules of behaviour for mass gatherings”, as if they could have negotiated their way out of harm.

Women are continually portrayed as sexual objects in films, advertising and mass media. And women’s oppression is structurally anchored in our society, as shown by differences in pay, employment opportunities or dominant role models.

Racist scapegoat

Politicians and the media establishment haven’t connected the events in Cologne and Hamburg to everyday sexist violence. Instead they have focused above all on the alleged perpetrators’ backgrounds and on questions of public security.

This has been used from the get-go, in line with a classic racist line of argument, to stereotype Muslims and refugees. Mainstream media and politicians are stoking pre-existing anti-Muslim racism and further strengthening a smear campaign against refugees.

The feminist Alice Schwarzer has long sympathised with conservatives and even expressed “understanding” for the core ideas of the racist Pegida movement. Now she is singing their tune, speaking of a misguided tolerance towards Muslim men.

This debate has been ripe for the picking by the far right. Neo-Nazi groups and the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) demand Germany stop all refugee intake to protect “our women.” Yet women must protect themselves from exactly these groups, which propagate or explicitly demand deeply misogynist social roles and structures for women.

We must all take to the streets against sexism and racism. The next opportunity will be International Women’s Day march on Saturday 6 March in Berlin.

This is republished from Marx21

#OscarsSoWhite

The widely used and shared hashtag #OscarsSoWhite has served to highlight the fact that for the last two years there have been no Black actors (or indeed any actors of colour) nominated in any of the acting categories.

Compelling movies about Black lives like Creed, Straight Outta Compton and last year’s Selma did receive some recognition, but with Creed and Straight Outta Compton nominations were either for white writers (“Compton”) or a white performer (Sylvester Stallone in “Creed”). The Black directors of all three movies were shut out, as well as many of the non-white actors.

Some might say this isn’t important because the Oscars are largely irrelevant, an annual mind-numbingly boring celebration that congratulates the 1%—those who are among the most highly paid in an industry and a profession where the majority of working actors cannot rely on acting jobs alone to feed themselves and pay the rent.

However, awards like the Oscars do matter in terms of industry-wide recognition and the ability to get the money or exposure to get other acting jobs or to raise money to make films.

Marlon Brando famously refused to accept his Oscar for the Godfather in 1973. His speech, delivered by Native American actress Sacheen Littlefeather who attended the ceremony in Brando’s place, reverberates with the ongoing obliteration of whole segments of the population that continues in Hollywood to this day:

“The motion picture community has been as responsible as any for degrading the Indian and making a mockery of his character, describing him as savage, hostile and evil...I think awards in this country at this time are inappropriate to be received or given until the condition of the American Indian is drastically altered.”

Brando in his statement offered support for the American Indian Movement (AIM) and referenced the ongoing situation at Wounded Knee, the South Dakota town that had been seized by AIM members the previous month and was then under siege by US military forces.

How refreshing this is compared to some of the truly appalling reactions that have come from some white actors about the lack of recognition of Black, Hispanic and other underrepresented groups at the Oscars.

Racism and resistance

Charlotte Rampling, a British actress nominated this year for her performance in 45 Years, claimed that the uproar over the lack of diversity in this year’s nominees is “racist to white people.” Likewise, Michael Caine advised black actors to be “patient.” Speaking to the BBC he said: “You can’t vote for an actor (just) because he’s black. You can’t say: I’m going to vote for him, he’s not very good but he’s black, (so) I’ll vote for him. You’ve got to give a good performance.”

Comments like these sound exactly like the self-serving arguments that were and are used against any attempts to challenge systemic racism and sexism in the workplace or in higher education. When affirmative action was instituted to some degree in institutions of higher learning, because of the fightbacks of the civil rights and student movements of the 60s, the composition of students on college campuses began to change to reflect society.

In the 80s many of these short-lived gains began to be rolled back under the right-wing politics of US President Ronald Reagan. The backlash against attempts to win some kind of equality was couched in the language of reverse racism or reverse sexism, as if Whites and men suffered systemic oppression.

Following the widespread criticism when the nominations for this year’s Oscars were announced, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences approved a series of changes, in terms of voting and recruitment—all part of a goal to double the number of women and diverse members of the Academy by 2020. Considering that approximately two thirds of the 6,262 voting members of the Academy are white men over the age of 65 it’s not surprising that there is very little diversity in the films that they nominate.

The only reason there is such a huge outcry is because of the context: Black Lives Matter. The revelations about the poisoning of the water system in Flint, Michigan, which is affecting mainly poor Black families, goes hand in with a system that reflects racism at all levels, including the kind of entertainment that is sold to us, who has the money and who gets access to the hearts and minds of the viewers.

But of course that’s not the end of the story. Many independent filmmakers, actors and others struggle to bring to the screen the kind of stories that are not often told in Hollywood, with much less money and much fewer rewards. One of these movies is Nat Parker’s The Birth of a Nation, which recently premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. The film is the portrait of African-American preacher Nat Turner who led an insurrection of fellow slaves and freed Blacks in 1831, three decades before slavery would be abolished in America.

There are audiences for those films, as well as for the more mainstream movies, such as Twelve Years a Slave, Malcolm X, Suffragette, which against all odds, try to tell us some truths about the world we live in.

Not surprisingly some are not attending this year’s Oscar ceremonies, including filmmaker Spike Lee and actors Will Smith and Jada Pinkett. Black comedian Chris Rock has confirmed he will be hosting the Oscars. One can only hope on Oscar night that he will follow in the proud tradition of another brilliant Black comedian and actor Richard Pryor, who as co-host in 1977 skewered the Academy and highlighted a problem that is still very much with us 40 years later.



Egypt: hope continues

Egyptian revolutionary socialist Sameh Naguib spoke with Judith Orr about the 2011 revolution, the ongoing counter-revolution and hope for change.

When did you realise these protests were different to anything that had happened before?

We saw that very quickly. The demonstrations started at around noon. But the speed at which people started to join them, turning them into mass protests, shocked activists and the police.

The police were not prepared. For the first time in decades they become an ever smaller minority in front of a huge wave of people.

Everyone’s natural inclination was to go to Tahrir Square in Cairo. Nobody expected to reach it.

When the police began losing the battle we reached the square in a state of exhaustion. But there was also exhilaration and excitement, and meetings and discussion of what to do next.

What were the most significant moments of the first 18 days of the Revolution in Egypt?

Within two days Hosni Mubarak’s regime shut down internet and mobile communications. It wanted to make it difficult to build for even bigger demos on the Friday 28 January.

The real revolution started on that day. All the police stations in Cairo were burned down and the police as a force disintegrated.

The scene in Tahrir was almost surreal. You could see the ruling party’s headquarters on fire with smoke pouring from it and there were no police whatsoever.

The sheer numbers of people coming into Tahrir throughout the day was something I had never seen before, ever.

The second significant event was on 2 February when police and thugs attempted to break into Tahrir. Pitched battles broke out throughout the night.

Different political tendencies organised structures together to defend the square. Many people died.

The third peak moment was when Hosni Mubarak made his last TV speech saying he wasn’t going to go. People got ready to march on the presidential palace and storm it.

Seeing the reaction to the speech was amazing. I’ll never forget the sight of hundreds of thousands of people waving their shoes and screaming at the screens.

The level of anger was matched only by the level of exhilaration on 11 February, when the vice-president finally announced Mubarak was leaving. Celebrations went on through the night.

Looking back over the subsequent events, what were the weaknesses

of the revolutionary movement?

The main mass political opposition organisations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, allied themselves with the ruling military junta—SCAF—which took power after Mubarak fell.

They wanted to push for a procedural democracy and stop the waves of the revolution. These waves kept bringing new sections of the oppressed into struggle as well as sparking more workers’ strikes.

The radical left did not have the mass organisation that could deepen the revolution. We were too weak compared to the main reformist organisations, and the main currents of the left have been Stalinist. These wanted to limit the revolution.

This legacy made it very difficult for the radical left to build organisations that could challenge the Brotherhood and other reformist currents.

The ruling class has built an effective counter-revolution. How was this possible?

The Brotherhood kept making concessions to the military, even before coming to power. They wanted to try to portray themselves as responsible. They wanted to show they could control the masses and stem the revolt on the streets. This allowed the police and military establishment to regroup and rebuild their forces.

They built a wave of fear through mobilising against the Brotherhood. They claimed the Brotherhood was going to turn Egypt into a theocratic dictatorship and lead the country into chaos.

When Brotherhood supporter Mohamed Mursi ruled, state forces fuelled a sense of instability among the middle classes. Cars were stolen, there was kidnapping and mugging.

The military said it could bring a return to stability, jobs and normal life. This resonated with wide sections of the middle class—especially as Mursi had nothing to show for the revolution. His policies continued neoliberalism and opened the way to the counterrevolution.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is the face of the counter-revolution. Has he been able to crush all resistance?

Despite unprecedented repression there are still strikes and demonstrations that have that same spirit and slogans of the revolution. I doubt the Sisi regime has the capacity to completely destroy that.

Sisi doesn’t have a new political machine. He depends on the same corrupt businessmen, generals and old ruling party bureaucrats that led to the revolution in the first place. There is no new economic project or political party.

And repression is back. In November alone, 13 people were

tortured to death in police stations around Egypt. The police are returning to treating people with extreme forms of abuse. This was another trigger of the revolution.

The experience of ordinary people of revolution has not been extinguished. And the old regime has nothing to offer.

Socialists understand revolutions as a process, rather than a single event. What are your hopes for the future?

I’m very careful not to minimise defeat. But Egypt after the revolution will never be the same as Egypt before the revolution. It changed people’s hopes, aspirations, expectations and opens the possibility for a second revolution.

Because the other side know this they have to be more repressive than Mubarak ever was. The ruling class is scared and is trying to crush the spirit of the revolution. Life under Sisi is unbearable and unsustainable—and will not continue.

So there is a lot to be hopeful about in the coming years.

We have to rebuild the revolutionary movement that has experienced temporary victory and defeat, and can learn the lessons of the revolution.

Egypt is the biggest and most important country in the region. What impact has the struggle there had in the wider region?

The positive impact of the success of the Egyptian revolution on the region was huge. You saw revolts in Bahrain, Syria, Libya and Yemen using the same slogans and organising.

The current success of the counter-revolution in Egypt has the same regional impact. But the positive effect of the revolutionary period on the experience of millions of Egyptians will not die easily.

Can more be done to expose the reality of the Sisi regime while he is being courted by Western leaders?

International solidarity is central. The degree of solidarity in the West for the movement against Sisi is less than it should be. In November, 40 people disappeared.

Dozens have been raped or tortured in police stations and prisons. Prisoners are left without food, blankets and medical care. Islamophobia and attitudes to the Muslim Brotherhood are part of the reason that there is not more international solidarity.

We need a louder campaign against this regime. Solidarity counts.

This is republished from Socialist Worker (UK)

Claudia Jones: intersectional Communist

Claudia Jones fought sexism and anti-Black racism through a working class strategy and socialist politics, writes Jesse McLaren

“I was deported from the USA because as a Black woman Communist of West Indian descent, I was a thorn in their side in my opposition to Jim Crow racist discrimination against 16 million Black Americans in the United States, in my work for redress of these grievances, for unity of Black and white workers, for women’s rights and my general political activity urging the American people to help by their struggles to change the present foreign and domestic policy of the United States.”

With these words, in an interview in 1956, Claudia Jones summarized her political activity that combined struggles against anti-Black racism, sexism, capitalism and imperialism—and for this she was incarcerated, deported, and erased from history. As a new generation radicalizes against capitalism and an intersectional approach to fighting multiple forms of oppression, we can learn from the life and work of Claudia Jones.

Early life

She was born in 1915 in Trinidad, then a British colony, and migrated with her family to Harlem in 1924. Under the combined impact of racism, sexism and exploitation, she contracted tuberculosis and her mother died of meningitis: As Jones described, “The conditions of non-union organization, of that day, of speed up, plus the lot of working women, who are mothers and undoubtedly the weight of immigration to a new land where conditions were far from as promised or anticipated, contributed to her early death at 37...I was later to learn that this lot was not just an individual matter, but that millions of working-class people and Black people suffered this lot under capitalism.”

She drew these connections in 1935, when she became involved in the defense campaign for the Scottsboro Nine, Black youth who were framed in a rape charge and sentenced to death by an all-white jury. The Communist Party played an important role in their defense campaign, and Jones joined: “It was out of my Jim Crow experiences as a young Black woman, experiences likewise born of working-class poverty that led me in my search of why these things had to be that led me to join the Young Communist League and to choose at the age of 18 the philosophy of my life, the science of Marxism-Leninism—that philosophy that not only rejects racist ideas, but is the antithesis of them.”

Intersecting oppressions

Claudia Jones emerged as an important theorist of the Communist Party in the 1930s and 1940s—fusing the fight against sexism and anti-Black racism with working class struggle against capitalism and imperialism, in a way that today would be considered intersectional.

As she summarized, “The triply-oppressed status of the Black woman is a barometer of the status of all women, and that



the fight for the full economic, political and social equality of the Black woman is in the vital self-interest of white workers, in the vital interest of the fight to realize equality for all women.”

The best example of her writing is her 1949 essay “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women” (her use of the word “Negro,” the terminology of the time, has been changed to “Black” in this article). In this essay she described the historical and contemporary experience and leadership of Black women in America, and called for the labour movement and broader left to fight anti-Black racism as a central strategy to winning women’s equality and building working class struggle.

As she explained, Black women workers experience racism and sexism, both of which sharpen their economic exploitation: “Black women—as workers, as Blacks, and as women—are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population... The super-exploitation of the Black woman workers is thus revealed not only in that she receives as woman, less than equal pay for equal work with men, but in that the majority of Black women get less than half the pay of white women.”

Racism and sexism (and other forms of oppression) are not just additive, but interactive: As Jones described, the sexism that Black women face is racialized and experienced differently than white women. To reduce sexism to the experience of white women ignores the experience of Black women—who disproportionately work for poverty wages as domestic workers—and therefore the fight for women’s liberation has to fight anti-Black racism. As she explained, “The bourgeois ideologists have not failed, of

course, to develop a special ideological offensive aimed at degrading Black women... They cannot, however, with equanimity or credibility, speak of the Black woman’s ‘place’ as in the home; for Black women are in other peoples’ kitchens... The whole intent of a host of articles, books, etc, has been to obscure the main responsibility for the oppression of Black women by spreading the rotten bourgeois notion about a ‘battle of the sexes’ and ‘ignoring’ the fight of both Black men and women—the whole Black people—against their common oppressors, the white ruling class.”

Working class strategy

Claudia Jones differentiated between the ruling class that generated and that benefited from oppression—through cutting wages and dividing workers—and the working class that internalized oppressive ideas and behaviors despite their class interests. As a consequence, her intersectional approach was a call for working class unity based on fighting oppression: “Chauvinism on the part of progressive white women is often expressed in their failure to have close ties of friendship with Black women and to realize that this fight for equality of Black women is in their own self-interest, inasmuch as the super-exploitation and oppression of Black women tends to depress the standards of all women... The responsibility for overcoming these special forms of white chauvinism rests, not with the ‘subjectivity’ of Black women as it is often put, but squarely on the shoulders of white men and white women.”

Highlighting the role of Black women workers in strike waves of the 1930s, Claudia Jones called

on trade unions to fight for the most oppressed of its members, organizing domestic workers and fighting for the full range of jobs for Black women.

By centering the experience and leadership of Black women workers, Claudia Jones theorized the intersection of Black liberation, women’s liberation and socialist revolution:

“Only to the extent that we fight all chauvinist expressions and actions as regards the Black people and the fight for full equality of the Black people, can women as a whole advance their struggle for equal rights. For the progressive women’s movement, the Black woman, who combines in her status the worker, the Black and the woman, is the vital link to this heightened political consciousness. To the extent, further, that the cause of the Black woman worker is promoted, she will be enabled to take her rightful place in the Black-proletarian leadership of the national liberation movement and, by her active participation contribute to the entire American working class, whose historic mission is the achievement of a Socialist America—the final and full guarantee of woman’s emancipation.”

Tragically Jones became a victim of McCarthyism, which incarcerated and deported her, and then Stalinism which purged her politics and erased her from history. But as a new generation is radicalizing against capitalism and oppression, we can learn from and continue her fight, summarized on her tomb stone next to Karl Marx: “Valiant fighter against racism and imperialism who dedicated her life to the progress of socialism and the liberation of her own Black people.”

CLIMATE JUSTICE & JUSTIN TRUDEAU

Jesse McLaren surveys the growth of the climate justice movement over the years, while Kiera Porisky and Eric Lescarbeau report on the how the movement is challenging the new federal government

From Copenhagen to Paris: the climate justice movement rises

By Jesse McLaren

On the final day of the Paris climate protests, Naomi Klein compared the mood to the Copenhagen conference in 2009: “The mood was so heavy (in Copenhagen), it felt like the end of the world. We felt really helpless. There was a dynamic between people and politicians where we were almost begging them to act. The mood is not despair today, it’s clarity: we know what they won’t do, and we know what we have to do. There’s grief about what we’ve already lost, but there’s also joy about what we’re building together.”

From Copenhagen to Paris, there has been a significant growth in the climate justice movement. Below is a brief timeline of some of the developments of the climate crisis and climate justice resistance.

2010-2011

Copenhagen was followed by two major climate disasters in 2010: the BP spill in the gulf, and the Enbridge spill in Kalamazoo River. But the year also saw Indigenous peoples rising up to lead the climate justice movement. Internationally there was the Cochabamba conference on Rights of Mother Earth. Locally there was the first Healing Walk by First Nations at ground zero tar sands, the Save the Fraser Declaration uniting 130 First Nations on the West Coast, and the start of the ongoing Unist’ot’en camp. In 2011 the Occupy movement exploded around the world, and the next climate conference in Durban showed growing polarization and development of climate politics.



2012

The year 2012 saw the Frankentorm Hurricane Sandy, which disproportionately affected colonized population in Haiti and the poor and racialized populations of New York. But there were growing climate justice protests. In the context of the Quebec student strike there was a massive Earth Day protest in Montreal against Plan Nord. And on the West Coast 5,000 joined sit-in on the Victoria legislature against Enbridge and Kinder Morgan pipelines. The Yinka Dene Alliance organized a Freedom Train across the country, and there was a Toronto conference to broaden opposition to Line 9—learning lessons from Indigenous communities from the Coastal First Nations to Aamjiwnaang. Then the year ended with the explosion of the Idle No More movement, from coast to coast to coast.

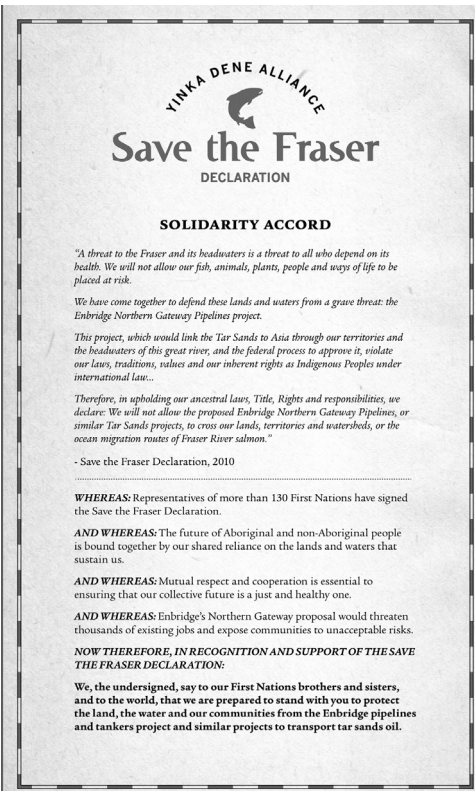


2013

In 2013 concentrations of CO2 reached 400ppm, in the context of which there was Tar sands flooding and Typhoon Haiyan devastated Philippines—and the year also saw the Lac Mégantic Disaster. But the climate justice movement continued to grow, with 40,000 people protesting in front of the White House.

The NDP election loss in BC was said to have been because they opposed the Kinder Morgan pipeline, a theory disproven by the growth of the movement.

A thousand youth joined the Powershift Conference in Victoria, hundreds protested coal terminal on West Coast and rallied and marched against Line 9 in Toronto. There was growing solidarity with First Nations leading the climate justice movement—from the Solidarity Accord with Save the Fraser—which Unifor and the BCTF endorsed—to solidarity with Elsipogtog First Nation in their resistance to a paramilitary assault to drive a fracking company off their land. At the end of the year there were a hundred climate justice protests across the country under the banner of “defend our climate and defend our communities.”



2014

The 2014 broke another record for the hottest year but also for the climate justice movement. There were huge fundraisers, from the Neil Young tour raising funds for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, to Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois raising \$300,000 to fight Energy East. There was growing awareness, from the Mi’kmaq Warrior Society speaking tour, after their victory in Elsipogtog, to the Powershift conference in Halifax and People’s Social Forum in Ottawa. There was growing solidarity with Indigenous communities, from Unist’ot’en camp to Grassy Narrows. There was a growing divestment campaign across the US and Canada.

There was also growing climate protests. Thousands marched against Line 9 in Toronto, and against Northern Gateway in Vancouver, and there was the historic People’s Climate March that mobilized 400,000 in New York and hundreds of thousands more around the world. This coincided with the release of Naomi Klein’s best-seller This Changes Everything. And the year ended with mass protests driving Kinder Morgan off Burnaby Mountain.

At same time oil prices fall, causing crisis for tar sands with mass layoffs, driven by a surge in fracking and reduced demand from recession. The recession also leading to layoffs of workers who could be building climate solutions, like at Bombardier.



2015

The year 2015 saw more climate disasters, from a spill in Vancouver harbor to forest fires on the west coast. Harper went on the offensive with Bill C-51, which in part seeks to criminalize Indigenous land defenders. But this sparked mass opposition and didn’t dent the climate justice movement.

Protests drove TransCanada out of using Caouna as a port for Energy East, the Lax Kw’alaams reject \$1 billion LNG pipeline, and Heiltsuk stopped DFO from fishing in sensitive waters. Change also came to the Alberta government, with the NDP’s surprise win, after the drop in oil prices caused an economic crisis. There were escalating protests, including 25,000 marching in Quebec City in April and 10,000 marching in Toronto in July for Jobs, justice and the climate. There was also the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, including “obtaining free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.”

In the federal election the NDP could have become a megaphone for the climate justice movement and risen in the polls, but instead it promised balanced budgets and collapsed. But the movement continued—including the largest toxic tour to date against oil economy, the Chippewas of the Thames challenge to Line 9, and the Leap Manifesto about real alternative.

Two weeks after the election there was a sit-in in front of Trudeau’s residence—which coincided with Obama’s rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline—and on the eve of the Paris climate talks 25,000 marched in Ottawa, with thousands more marching across the country.

This growing movement forced governments in Paris to announce a target of 1.5 degrees warming, and the next step is to hold them to account. While Trudeau has hoped that his progressive rhetoric can mask his ongoing support for Harper’s oil economy, the climate justice movement is continuing.



People’s injunction challenges NEB hearing

by KIERA PORISKY and ERIC LESCARBEAU

Kicking off ten days of protests, climate activists served the National Energy Board yesterday at its Vancouver offices with a people’s injunction against the Kinder Morgan pipeline review process to chants of “NEB and Trudeau, Kinder Morgan we say NO!” Hearings continued from January 19 to 29 in Burnaby and were met with staunch resistance from a coalition of indigenous, environmental, community and student activists and organizations.

Coming out of the Paris Climate talks hopes had been high that Trudeau’s Liberal government would live up to their elections promises and take meaningful action to meet their commitment to capping global temperature increases at 1.5 degrees Celsius. Initially it seemed that they were when they announced a ban on tanker traffic on BC’s north coast, effectively killing Enbridge’s widely unpopular Northern Gateway pipeline. However, Trudeau also made clear during his election campaign his support for Kinder Morgan as long as it was “done right.”

Trudeau’s oily ways

While the Liberal government openly acknowledges the flawed review process introduced by Harper in 2013, they are continuing to use it to approve risky pipelines projects. Not only is this unchanged process being applied to the Kinder Morgan expansion but to TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline as well. This clear act of choosing oil company profits over the environment, over consent from and a blossoming relationship with First Nations in Canada, and over the trust of ordinary people, shows all too clearly what the Trudeau government values and what it is willing to lose.

Shortly after his appointment as Natural Resources Minister in November, Jim Carr backed away from Trudeau’s commitment stating that the review process would continue while they worked on instituting changes. The main concern for Carr is not the climate but a global crisis of overproduction in oil and carbon based energy sources that has driven prices into the ground and threatened the viability of high cost Tar Sands producers. Carr made clear that the purpose of revamping the review process is to remove the “dirty oil” tag and ensure a market for Tar Sands oil while softening support for the anti-pipeline movement. “Ultimately we are faced with the challenge of assuring our markets, our customers and our citizens that the assessment process factors in everything one ought to consider important as we develop our resources sustainably.”

Carr and Trudeau have never publicly entertained even the possibility that the review process could reject the Trans Mountain pipeline, so whether these changes are made before, during or after the review seems to make little difference to the outcome in their minds. On Monday, Carr expressed the Liberal government’s support for expanding pipeline capacity and told reporters, “There has to be public confidence in the regulatory process if we are going to sustain the movement of these resources to tidewater.”

Yet despite their “sunny ways” the Liberals have failed to gain “social license” to build pipelines because of the courageous opposition from First Nations and mass mobilizations like the Global Climate March at the end of November and



the weeks-long protests/mass civil disobedience on Burnaby Mountain in 2014.

People’s injunction

Inspired by the words of Trudeau himself “Ultimately governments grant permits, but only communities grant permission”, the people’s injunction states that the Liberal Government does not have permission to proceed with Kinder Morgan expansion:

“The following is considered sufficient evidence for this people’s injunction:

1. The National Energy Board’s failure to consider the contribution this pipeline will have on climate change, despite Canada’s endorsement of a 1.5C limit to global temperature rise at the COP21 this December.
2. The National Energy Board’s failure to uphold the provincial and federal government’s duty to meaningfully consult with First Nations communities, despite Canada’s commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which requires, free, prior and informed consent.
3. The National Energy Board’s failure to meaningfully consult with communities and respect their right to reject projects which endanger their homes, livelihood, and the future livability of our planet.
4. The National Energy Board’s failure to consider evidence of upstream and downstream socio-economic and

Climate justice movement continues fight for real change

By Eric Lescarbeau

In a victory for the climate justice movement, Prime Minister Trudeau, Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr and Environment Minister Christine McKenna announced during the last week of NEB hearings that a decision would be delayed by four months to December 2016 in order to allow for changes to the review process to be implemented before a final decision is made. This means four more months to build opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

A new climate test was also announced that would supposedly include the upstream climate impact of increased Tar Sands emissions although details have not been released yet. Trudeau has repeatedly drawn a distinction between his Liberal government’s more “objective” approach and the former Harper government’s cheer leading of pipeline projects, but it is one of style rather than substance. Because the Kinder Morgan review hearings have now been completed, NEB CEO Peter Watson made it clear in an interview with Bloomberg News last week that it would be up to the government to take into consideration any new rules including a climate test. This means that far from being an objective, democratic, science based review of climate impacts it will be a purely political decision likely made by Trudeau’s cabinet.

As a growing chorus of opposition voices from indigenous leaders to NGOs to climate activists rose through the course of the NEB hearings in the last two weeks it was Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre’s pointed opposition to the Energy East pipeline that was singled out by pro pipeline pundits and politicians for a disgusting display of anti-Quebec scapegoating.

Anti-Quebec chauvinism

Saskatchewan Conservative Premier Brad Wall led the way stating on his Facebook page, “This is a sad day for our coun-

try when leaders from a province that benefits from being part of Canada can be this parochial about a project that would benefit all of Canada, including these Quebec municipalities.” He later tweeted, “I trust Montreal area mayors will politely return their share of \$10B in equalization supported by west #EnergyEast”

Not only does this deliberately misconstrue where the money for transfer payments actually comes from (Quebec taxpayers pay far more into government coffers every year than those of any of the western provinces), it also displays utter contempt for the workers and students of Montreal and Quebec who have led the way nationally in building mass mobilizations against pipelines and for climate justice. This is the opposition that Coderre and the 88 Montreal area mayors were speaking to. It is the same pipeline opposition that Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson and Burnaby Mayor Derrick Corrigan have for years spoken to in the west that has helped get them popularly reelected, yet it is conveniently ignored when politicians want to use divide and rule tactics to pit English against French.

The display of national chauvinism didn’t only come from right wing politicians but also from sometimes progressive comedian Rick Mercer, usually noted for his support for social justice causes. In what is sure to go down as his most shameful rant ever, Rick echoed Brad Wall and went even further claiming that Coderre didn’t care about an Alberta that was “hurting” and that Canada “needed this project”, referring to the tens of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs in and around the Tar Sands. This is nothing more than a repetition of the oft repeated lie that jobs or the economy must come at the expense of the climate. Yet it is the climate justice movement in Quebec and across the country and the world that has consistently stood up in support of a just transition for oil and gas workers who are thrown out of work while oil executives continue to collect fat paychecks. It is

environmental impacts; including tanker traffic beyond 12 nautical miles, existing storage tanks and infrastructure, and greenhouse gas emissions and water contamination.”

This injunction was presented in actions at NEB offices across the country. In an open letter to Trudeau, Cam Fenton, national Tar Sands Campaigner for 350.org put it clearly: “If you will not show the necessary leadership to stop these reviews, people will.” Another letter published by three First Nations assemblies across Canada made clear that Trudeau’s promises to rebuild the government’s relationship with First Nations was also at stake.

After Paris it is clear that the only realistic alternative to climate destruction lies not in the polished rhetoric of politicians like Trudeau but in the unity of the Indigenous and climate justice movements. Some in the movement have questioned the value of fighting over the review process given that it seems predestined to approve every pipeline. But by arguing for a truly inclusive review process grounded in science and respect for indigenous peoples, the climate justice movement exposes the hypocrisy of the Trudeau government and demonstrates for all that ordinary working class people have the ability to make a just, sustainable and truly democratic society that puts people and the planet before profits.

also the workers and students of Quebec who continue to lead the fight against austerity, also supposedly in the national interest.

Gabriel Nadeau Dubois adeptly pointed out the hypocrisy of these attacks in a scathing column for Ricochet: “These statements (widely circulated on social media) vividly testify to the persistence of a feeling of contempt and superiority over Quebec in the rest of Canada. When Ontario, which also receives equalization payments, announces its position on Energy East you can bet no one will accuse it of living off the coattails of Alberta. This catchphrase, history has shown, is reserved for Quebecers: “eat your gruel and shut your mouth.”

Which side are you on?

Trudeau did not speak out against this anti-Quebec chauvinism when he held a press conference following a hastily arranged meeting with Coderre in Montreal days later. Instead he stated that while he was happy to hear input from all across the country his job was to put the national interest first. “My responsibility as prime minister is to make sure that on national projects, we’re behaving in a way that both contributes to the economy, to a secure environment, to bringing people together and mostly to creating a better future.”

Yet it is clear that the interests of the Canadian Tar Sands industry are diametrically opposed to those of working class people across Canada and Quebec. Jobs for Alberta workers do not have to mean toxic oil spills for local communities and climate disaster for the world.

Trudeau has made it clear which side he and his government will ultimately stand on. The climate justice needs to do the same. We need thousands of tweets, instagram photos, letters of support sent to Denis Coderre and Quebecers that send the message that the climate justice movement in English Canada stands united with them.

Corrections officers and capitalism

By Pam Johnson and Peter Votsch

In January a strike by 6,000 Corrections officers (COs) and probation/parole officers (POs) in Ontario’s criminal justice system was narrowly averted after a protracted round of bargaining between OPSEU, the workers’ union, and Wynne’s government. A day before the strike deadline, a deal was made to send to the disputed agreement to binding arbitration and begin the process of making corrections work an essential service.

Although many workers are satisfied with this outcome, it comes at a price: the loss of the right to strike. The willingness to give the strike option away was motivated by the horrible conditions in Ontario’s correction facilities, including chronic overcrowding and understaffing. Years of chaos have created tension and frustration both for inmates and COs.

Corrections workers have been repeatedly raising the alarm about the deplorable conditions for inmates that also impact their working conditions. They have also, repeatedly, asked their union, OPSEU, to be more proactive in pressuring the Ontario government to do something to address the issues. These efforts have largely gone unheeded and it is this frustration, including a fear for their safety, which has caused these workers to see binding arbitration and the designation of their work as an essential service as a way out of a desperate situation.

Binding arbitration also means that the workers will not get to vote on their contract. Ironically, this follows a long battle in the bargaining process in which many corrections workers used their voting power to push the ratification of the “unified” part of bargaining that covers all Ontario government employees down through a “No” campaign. They, then, successfully turned down a tentative agreement for their own sector, which nearly led to a strike.

Although binding arbitration may lead to better wages, in line with “first responders” like firefighters, this solution is no guarantee that conditions will change in the prisons. Any “justice” system under capitalism mirrors the inequalities in the system as a whole. But, like every institution within the system, working people depend on the jobs the system creates to survive and they have no control over the conditions of their work.

Prisons and capitalism

COs have been a bone of contention for many on the Left, who correctly support the rights of prisoners, but incorrectly put the blame for bad conditions in the jails on the COs themselves, and their unions. In so doing, they ignore the systemic causes of the day-to-day brutality that continues in prisons everywhere.

No doubt, individual or groups of COs are responsible for acts of violence against prisoners. But they act within a context which is not of their own making. Prisons are tools of the capitalist class to discipline the working class and the oppressed. When workers step out of line by refusing to accept their living conditions, they are sent to prison. As such, the vast majority of prisoners are charged with crimes related to addiction, often times crimes against property.

COs are in effect guarding a population made up of the exploited and the oppressed. The prison population is increasing, as the right-wing attempts to further criminalize behaviours of workers, as opposed to the behaviour of their own kind. The culture in which COs exist is one that mirrors the worst aspects of capitalist society: a top down, command structure based on military-style obedience.

The brutality of individual COs is tolerated, if not encouraged by senior management, who then publicly (and hypocritically) wash their hands of it. If they, as managers, ordered such brutality stopped, COs would be forced to obey, and it would stop. But they don’t. For them prisons are all about punishing the oppressed, and COs are the tools.

Workers

COs are hardly alone when it comes to the repressive arm of the capitalist system. Workers in shelters, halfway houses, group homes for example often play a similar role. The violence that can be out of control in those facilities is quietly condoned, if not encouraged by senior management. Workers, there, like COs, take the cue, as they need to make a living. Under capitalism, that means doing what the boss says.

The denial of benefits to social assistance recipients can be considered a form of violence, especially when it leads to someone losing their housing, their health, their families via Children’s Aid etc. Capitalist society is full of workers who play punitive roles. Why focus on COs alone?

Socialists argue that the answer is to be found in ridding ourselves of capitalism, not blaming those who do its dirty work to survive. Unions are part of the answer. As with COs, who are organized provincial or federal government workers, many workers who end up playing to some degree a punitive role are unionized public sector employees.

When these workers but forward demands for better conditions in the workplace, most often this can also affect the living conditions of inmates or clients positively—and as such, these workers, and their unions should be supported.

Sanctimonious finger pointing at other working class people will never bring change. Building unity between unions and the exploited and oppressed who are forced into such facilities is the only way to effect real change, build a challenge to the system we all have an interest in defeating.

ANALYSIS



Sanism, ableism and racism

by TRACY MACK

A fundamental aspect of Canada’s creation, which also consistently maintains systems of sanist, ableist and racist oppression, is violence. Sanism is discrimination against Mad people and the devaluation of mental difference.

State violence and killings are not chosen acts, they are required in order to maintain the oppressions that white supremacy, able-bodiedness, mind normativity and capitalist exploitation are founded upon. The most prominent form of state sanctioned violence is the policing apparatus.

Racism, ableism & sanism

On the morning of November 1, 2015, Santokh Bola, a racialized man with physical and intellectual disabilities, parked his vehicle behind his family business. As the unarmed 21-year-old exited his car, two Toronto police officers rushed towards him shouting commands with their guns drawn, after confusing him with another suspect. The videotape recording captured by a witness to the incident shows police repeatedly kicking him on the ground as he shouted his innocence. Bola describes the arrest as a “brutal” arrest in which he suffered head injuries and emotional trauma due to excessive use of force and resulted in a \$5 million lawsuit being against the police.

A parallel story of police “suspect” misidentification unfolded on August 1, 2011. Charles McGillivray, a 46-year old man who had an intellectual disability and hearing impairment, was out for a walk with his mother when police tackled and restrained him until he turned blue and then died. At the inquest, the jury ruled McGillivray’s death as accidental and focused on the victim’s heart condition rather than the unlawfully violent apprehension and excessive force used by police. The jury also disregarded the officer’s engagement of profiling McGillivray as “non-compliant” on the basis of appearance and behavior without taking into consideration the possibility of disability-related causes.

On the evening of July 27, 2013, police targeted an individual perceived as “non-compliant” on a Toronto streetcar, with equally horrific outcomes. Sammy Yatim, an 18-year-old Syrian-born man, did not have a psychiatric history; however, it is speculated that he may have been experiencing mental distress that fatal evening as his behavior was completely out of character as he yelled and waved a small knife. With Yatim alone in the streetcar posing no immediate threat to anyone, Constable James Forcillo shot Yatim three times, paused and then shot him another five times. With legal acrobatics available only to police officers, Forcillo was found guilty of attempted murder for the second round of shots he fired, but

not guilty of the murder because the first three shots that killed Yatim were deemed to be in self-defense.

The videotape recording in Otto Vass’ case (killed in the year 2000), revealed that officers threw the unarmed Hungarian immigrant to the ground, then one officer held him down while three others beat him to death. The four officers were found not guilty of manslaughter, after they claimed their use of force to subdue him was justified based on their convincing appeal to the stereotype of Mad people as violent.

In Christopher-Reid’s case, a 26-year-old Black man who was experiencing mental distress in 2004, the officers were also cleared of any wrongdoing despite the evidence against them. Officers accounts were inconsistent with the forensic evidence, which revealed that Christopher-Reid, who had not committed any crime, was running away from the officers when he was shot; not lunging towards the officers as they claimed.

In Byron Debassige’s case, a 28-year-old homeless First Nations man, police shot him to death in 2008 for stealing a few lemons and holding a knife. The SIU report did not include the non-police witness statements that were inconsistent with those of the police, while also lacking crucial contextual information, such as Debassige’s psychiatric history.

Normalizing violence

In the name of “security,” police violence is normalized. This violence—especially when the victim is racialized, socially disadvantaged, disabled and/or Mad—is perceived as legitimate, necessary, and justified from the perspective of the state, rather than being viewed as excessive. In all the cases mentioned above, a decontextualized narrative emerges whereby officers state they had no other option but to kill the victim. Police excuses—they were protecting the public, they thought they saw a weapon, they were threatened by the 3-inch blade or were feeling threatened by an unarmed person—have negated accountability and due process and legitimized police violence.

This legitimacy is ingrained into the foundation of our social structure, evident by jury members repeatedly and consistently deeming officers not guilty, even after they have been confronted with evidence that clearly demonstrates the inconsistencies within the officer’s statements. These police killings are not an error or an unfortunate outcome; they are an element of police power, a legitimized practice of the state and of the social order that authorizes it.

Policing capitalism

Without accountability a pattern is clearly being repeated: officers

attempt to force a subject to comply, which then reduces the individual to an object—which then justifies using a higher level of force required relative to the resistance of the suspect and the fabrication of situations that lack legitimacy. Police violence is therefore not solely a matter of the legal system; it is part of police procedure. These killings are committed within a specific cultural structure: a racist, sanist, and ableist collectivity, in which institutional solidarity protects officers with procedure. After every killing, police procedure is merely a performance to the cultural norm rather than to a judicial process.

The over-arching purpose of lethal demands for police compliance is to reinforce and stabilize their policing status position in society through forced recognition: police commands and dictates are unquestionable. The positionality of the police grants them the power to target certain marginalized populations, direct their actions through the imposition of lethal threats for compliance, and to recreate explanatory narratives that justify any and all actions that surface from non-compliance in any number of incidents.

The trend of impunity granted to police after committing a forced attrition of a Mad person reinforces the stereotypes surrounding this population as being criminal and pathological; when the person is also racialized, the prejudices multiply. This is not a technical problem: police violence and the impunity officers are granted for committing these acts is an institutional divide between who is granted humanity and those who are deprived of it. It is a political and social refusal to grant equality and human status to racialized people with disabilities and racialized Mad folks. Police violence is part of social violence, as the social institutions supposedly existing to protect members of the public from criminal violence, fundamentally produce that violence. Police violence and state killings are explicitly conjoined with the existing social structure that authorizes police power.

But in recent years, public support for the police is waning—driven by mobilizations of families and their allies, from the protests against the killing of Sammy Yatim to Black Lives Matter and the fight for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women. These movements, along with Disability Pride and Mad Pride, expose and challenge the multiple oppressions that police violence relies on and reproduces, and the capitalism system that police violence serves.

For further reading, see “The Mad and the bad: The lethal use of force against Mad people by Toronto police”: <http://cdd.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cdd/article/view/39664>



Anti-racist Western

MOVIE

Movie: *The Hateful Eight*
Director: *Quentin Tarantino*
Reviewed by: *Faline Bobier*

Tarantino’s new movie has many of the features that mark it with the typical Tarantino brand: the over-the-top violence, the American vernacular, the striking soundtrack, and the fast-paced and funny dialogue. However, the release this past December of *The Hateful Eight* has gained new significance because of the political context in which the film opens.

Tarantino has come under attack from various US police unions because of a short speech he made at a rally for Black families who had had a family member killed by the police, in which he appropriately called police murderers.

It’s a little rich that police officials are calling for a boycott of Tarantino’s new film by decrying the violence in his movies. The violence in Tarantino’s movies, like the violence used by many other filmmakers (Scorsese and Peckinpah come to mind), is a cinematic device, not real violence meted out on the bodies of living human beings.

For that kind of real violence one need look no further than the many murders of Blacks at the hands of the same police that Tarantino was talking about in his speech. Just recently it was announced that there will be no charges laid in the police shooting of Tamir Rice, a 12-year old Black boy who was playing in a park with a toy

pistol on November 22, 2014.

The Hateful Eight is not just another violent romp by Tarantino. Like his previous movie, Django Unchained, The Hateful Eight is set in post-Civil War America for a reason. It’s about the power of racism in the US, the roots of that racism in the institution of slavery, but it’s also clearly a comment on the persistence of that racism today.

Of course it’s also a movie with a strong narrative since it’s a Tarantino film. The film is divided into chapters and in some ways it’s a very literary movie—a variation on the locked-room mystery that mostly takes place in one room—Minnie’s Haberdashery—a saloon/rest stop on the way to Red Rock where “the hateful eight” of the title take refuge in the middle of a huge blizzard.

Major Marquis Warren, a former soldier in Abraham Lincoln’s army, played to great effect by long-time Tarantino collaborator Samuel L. Jackson, is a bounty hunter transporting the bodies of three outlaws to the town of Red Rock. On the way he hitches a ride on a stagecoach occupied by John “The Hangman” Ruth (Kurt Russell), who is escorting gang member Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) to Red Rock to be hanged and to collect the \$10,000 prize on her head.

On the way they pick up Chris Mannix (Walter Goggins), a former Southern militiaman, who claims he is going to Red Rock to be sworn in as the new sheriff. When they arrive at Minnie’s Haberdashery they find Minnie and her husband Sweet

Dave have gone to the other side of the mountain to visit Minnie’s mother. There is a motley collection of characters already there, waiting out the storm.

The next three hours are like a cat and mouse game where the audience try to figure out who are the good guys and who the bad. But the whole point is that there are no innocents.

Jackson’s character is in some senses the moral centre of The Hateful Eight, although he is also not above seeking revenge for the murder of captured Black Union soldiers by Smithers during the course of the war. Major Warren is someone who has learned that to survive he must play the white man’s game. When Hangman Ruth discovers that Warren has lied to him about something, feeling betrayed, Warren responds by saying that the only way Blacks can survive in a white world is by playing the role that whites expect: “You don’t know what it’s like to be a Black man facing white America.”

Tarantino will no doubt be criticized for his use of the ‘n’ word throughout the film. I would argue that here it is used as a hammer blow against the very racists who use the word to attack Jackson’s character, a Black man who proves himself to be definitely the most intelligent and canny survivor (of sorts) of Tarantino’s Hateful Eight.

What is clear is that Tarantino is being influenced by movements around him like Black Lives Matter, and it’s without a doubt these movements that offer the strongest challenge to racism.

persons with the moral authority and knowledge to save Indigenous peoples from themselves. Indigenous suffering becomes something non-Indigenous people will ameliorate, and public discourse shifts from land claims to rescue.”

Decolonization

As Razack highlights, recommendations reduce a colonial relationship to mere cultural differences, where notions of Indigenous culture are narrowly defined and removed from rights to the land.

Dying From Improvement is essential reading to understand colonialism’s tactical variations and how to respond. As Razack concludes: “If we start with the reality of an ongoing colonialism, we can better reflect on the inhumanity that such a project requires. Then an only then will we be able to reject the fantasy of settler civility and refuse the game of improvement. Instead, we can work for Indigenous sovereignty and towards the relations of respect it necessarily installs. To develop relationships of genuine reciprocity with Indigenous peoples, we non-Indigenous peoples must embark on this anti-colonial journey.”

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Trudeau and tactics

In January Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took to the stage at the World Economic Forum to state that he was a “feminist.”

“We shouldn’t be afraid of the word feminist, men and women should use it to describe themselves anytime they want,” Trudeau said.

So what to think? The first thing that came to my mind was: “Bullshit!” I’ve heard too much Liberal happy talk, witnessed too many Liberal cuts and betrayals.

And then I gave myself a shake. Because I realized that the first thing that pops into my mind should not necessarily be the first thing to pop out of my mouth. There are millions of people who have not experienced those betrayals, or have forgotten them, or are just hoping this time will be different. If all I have to say is “Bullshit!” there is no hope of starting a conversation with them, one which might eventually encompass topics like why women’s oppression is a requirement of capitalism, not an accidental byproduct.

So what to say? The first thing to say is: “Great.” Think about the young women who might be talking about feminism for the first time with their friends.

What a sigh of relief it must be for activists and organizations that have been under a decade-long attack on their past gains. And I savour the thought of the stab of pain that Stephen Harper and his minions must have experienced when they heard it.

The second thing is: “Wow. He’s sincere.” He was being himself, the poster-boy for the kinder, gentler government Canadian voters overwhelmingly chose. If we ignore this, or make the mistake of thinking he’s just another cynical politician, we are again more interested in scoring smarty-pants points than in opening people’s eyes.

I am well aware that problems abound with his statements. Not least is the venue: the annual WEF in Davos, Switzerland, is a conference/playdate for the 1%, where the ultra-rich and their political representatives gather to posture, preen and talk about the big picture. The real business takes place behind closed doors.

On the panel Trudeau was flanked by Melinda Gates, wife of the world’s richest man, and Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook. To say this trio hardly reflects the lived reality of the world’s women is an understatement.

Further, as far as I can discover, Trudeau did not go beyond labels and ideology—there was no announcement of any practical step to improve the circumstances of women.

Harper vs Trudeau

So yes, there is a gap between rhetoric and reality here that can rightly be called hypocrisy. But for some leftists of my acquaintance, the first thing to pop into their brains and out of their mouths is: “Trudeau is just the same as Harper.” This is wrong factually and tactically.

Remember when Stephen Harper came to Davos (2012) and spoke about women’s issues. Far from using the platform to promote feminism,

Harper put the blame for awful conditions facing women in the so-called third world on the too high living standards of western workers: “Is it the case that in the developed world too many of us have in fact become complacent about our prosperity? Taking our wealth as a given, assuming it is somehow the natural order of things, leaving us instead to focus primarily on our services and entitlements?”

When he returned to the Davos stage in 2014 it was to brag about his assault on health care, education and pensions, and how he was transforming Canada. All pretense of generosity was gone. It was a right-wing sales pitch to international investors. He smiled as he announced cuts to science and reiterated his intention to privatize services and gut pensions.

Unlike Trudeau, there was no gap between talk and action, no hypocrisy, no deception. Here was the hateful, anti-democratic Reform Party essence that passed as the heart of the Tory party. This was the party of Tory Senator Nancy Ruth who, in 2010, told women’s groups concerned about family planning and abortion rights to “Shut the fuck up.” No feminists there.

If we make the mistake of thinking that Trudeau is the same as Harper, we miss the tactical opportunity that the actual difference offers us.

So, congratulations to the abortion rights advocates who seized on Trudeau’s “feminist” statement to call him out in support of abortion services. 28 years after abortion was decriminalized, women in Prince Edward Island still have no access to services. Real feminists started a petition and social media campaign (#JustinTrudeau #feminist) urging him and his friend and ally, Liberal premier Wade MacLauchlan, to fund abortion services.

I wasn’t born yesterday, and neither were the people conducting the PEI abortion rights campaign. I know that at the end of the day, the Trudeau government will be little better for women than the Harper gang.

I know that in practical terms, the most important statement Trudeau made from Davos was not the feminist claim, but the appointment of Michael Wernick, Stephen Harper’s Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, as Clerk of the Privy Council.

Not only was Wernick the true author of Harper’s anti-aboriginal campaign for eight years, but as a member of Carleton University’s Board of Governors he condemned peaceful student protestors as “Brownshirts.” He is the face of the vile, neo-liberal economic reality behind Trudeau’s rhetorical mask.

With Harper there was no mask—he was proud of his ugly face. So our approach to Trudeau, to exposing the face behind the mask must be different.

So let’s say thanks for the Liberal feminism, and for the repeal of anti-union Bills C-377 and C-525. Now give us universal day care, full access to all health services including abortion, and protect workers’ pensions from predators like US Steel.

WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

Socialism and workers' power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs.

Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Oppression

Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real, social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people.

We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers' revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Elections and democracy

Elections can be an opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. But under capitalism, they can't change the system. The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class against the workers. These structures cannot be simply taken over and used by the working class. The working class needs real democracy, and that requires an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers' unity and solidarity.

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The Revolutionary Party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed.

If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project and join the International Socialists.



Activist calendar
movement events



International Women's Day
Toronto, Saturday March 5
iwdtoronto.ca

FIGHT FOR
\$15 & FAIRNESS

Day of action for Fight for \$15
and Fairness
April 15
15andfairness.org



May 7-15
Events around the world
Visit breakfree2016.org



World Social Forum
Aug 9-14, Montreal
fsm2016.org

International Socialist events

IDEAS FOR REAL CHANGE

MARXISM 2016

April 22-23
University of Toronto

Register at marxismconference.ca

Fight on every front:
join the International Socialists

Do you oppose exploitation, war,
oppression and climate chaos?

Do you want to be part of building
resistance movements to all these
symptoms of capitalism, towards
a revolutionary transformation
of society?

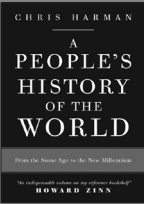
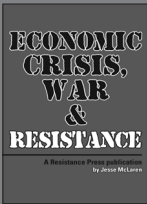
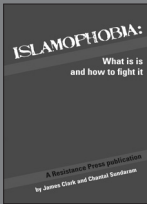
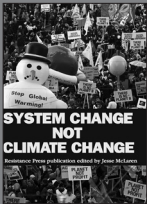
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NO LINE 9

Oil giant Enbridge thought the coast was clear and they could start pumping toxic tar sands through the 40-year old Line 9 pipeline.

The Ontario government refused to conduct an Environmental Assessment, and the National Energy Board (a rubber-stamping mechanism to approve pipelines) gave the go ahead.

But Indigenous communities most impacted by the climate crisis have continued to resist.

Aamjiwnaang

Aamjiwnaang First Nation is surrounded by Canada's "Chemical Valley," the highest concentration of petrochemical companies, which have made the land the most polluted in North America. Enbridge's plan to use Line 9 to expand tar sands production would bring even more toxins to Aamjiwnaang, and increase the climate crisis.

Aamjiwnaang activist Vanessa Gray and two allies shut off the pipeline and are now facing criminal charges for "mischief endangering life."

"It is ironic that they are being charged with endangering life. Enbridge is the one endangering life with this reckless project. It is our duty as Anishinaabe women to defend the water," said Janelle Nahmabin from Aamjiwnaang.

As Lindsay Gray said, "Government and industry are being reckless with our water supply and dishonouring of the original peoples of this land by failing to have proper consultation around projects that impact First Nations communities the most."

Chippewas of the Thames

At the same time, the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation are appealing the NEB decision and taking their case to the Supreme Court.

Line 9 runs through their territory and the NEB approved Enbridge project without meaningful consultation as is their duty according to Section 35 of the Constitution.

Furthermore the recent Truth and Reconciliation recommendations call on industry to "commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects."

There is growing support for the Chippewas, from labour, community and student organizations, as well as from individuals. Recently Rachel Thevenard ran the entire length of the pipeline, more than 800km from Sarnia, Ontario to Montreal, Quebec, to raise awareness about Line 9 and to encourage people to donate to the legal defence fund of the Chippewas of the Thames.

To contribute to the Chippewas of the Thames go to www.gofundme.com/chippewas

KILL A WORKER, GO TO JAIL



by BRIAN CHAMP

On Christmas Eve in 2009, at around 4:30pm, four workers died and one was seriously injured after the collapse of a work platform called a swing stage. They were rushing to meet an end-of-year deadline repairing balconies on a high rise apartment building in northern Etobicoke in order to collect a bonus.

The investigation revealed that there were only two lifelines in the area and that the platform itself had a faulty design and the welds used for assembly were inadequate and inconsistent—some of the welds were already cracked prior to the collapse.

Metron, the construction company, was fined \$200,000 initially in Ontario court, but the award was more than tripled to \$750,000 on appeal in 2013. Swing N Scaff Inc., the supplier of the swing stage, was fined \$350,000 in 2014. But the CEOs of these companies escaped jail time. However, the construction project manager, Vadim Kazenelson was charged and convicted of four counts of criminal negligence causing death and one count of criminal negligence causing bodily harm last October.

On Monday, January 11, Ontario Court Judge,

the Honourable Ian MacDonnell, set an historic precedent by sentencing him to three and a half years in jail for each count, to be served concurrently.

"I hope this verdict sends shivers down the spine of employers across Ontario. The message from this Ontario court echoes the campaign of the Ontario Federation of Labour: if you kill a worker, you will go to jail," said OFL president Chris Buckley. "No prison term or financial penalty can bring back the workers who died or undo the pain felt by their families, but this sentence has the power to prevent other workers from suffering a similar fate."

Capitalism kills

This a victory for the labour movement as a whole, and the OFL "Kill a worker, Go to jail" campaign that was launched immediately in the wake of the Metron tragedy.

The convictions were based on the law enacted in 2004 with a new framework of corporate liability in Canada. The section relevant to this case is section 217.1, which declares that employers are "under a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent bodily harm" to workers or any other person arising from the work they are assigned. The legal definition of

criminal negligence is the failure to meet a legal duty.

The United Steelworkers (USW) spearheaded the lobbying effort for this bill, following the Westray mine disaster in 1992 where 26 miners were killed in methane gas and coal dust explosions. While criminal negligence and manslaughter charges were laid against mine managers, the charges were eventually dropped—sparking the campaign for legal reform.

According to the OFL, in Ontario more than 80 workers die each year in on-the-job accidents; another 200 die slow, agonizing deaths from occupational diseases, and 200,000 more are maimed at work. From 2008 to 2013—in the context of the economic crisis and austerity attacks on workers—the incidence of workplace fatalities increased by 36 per cent.

While the sentence will hopefully make employers provide safer work environments, legislation like this is not enough to make sure that workers don't have to work in unsafe conditions: they are endemic to an economic system that puts profit before everything else, including those on whose labour it is built. The only guarantee for workplace safety is for workplaces to be under worker's control, and for that we need a revolution.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Solidarity with Hamilton Steelworkers

Buses from all over Ontario rolled into Hamilton, Ontario on Saturday, January 30 to support workers at US Steel. The company is trying to ride rough shod over the union members, retirees their spouses and the community.

A judge has ruled that the company no longer has to pay benefits to the retirees and their survivors or even pay taxes to the city of Hamilton. It is a case of the robber and the robbed. One more time the courts have taken the side of multinational corporations over the workers who have spent their lives creating the wealth that the shareholders feel is theirs, and only theirs.

United Steelworkers local 1005 has a proud and militant tradition. The historic strike in 1946 put Hamilton on the map as a proud union city. Strikers stood up for themselves and all working people across the country. The residents of the city stood with them, providing food and resources so that the families could outlast the company. 1005 has maintained that tradition through strikes and lock-outs over the years that have called on all of us to stand with them as they fight once again.

They have a strong history of solidarity. A number of years back when workers were locked out by Rio Tinto in Alma, Quebec, Local 1005 as well as Steelworkers from Toronto, drove the 13 hours to support them. It was a French speaking Steelworker local in the heart of sovereigntist Quebec. Most did not speak English, and there were tears in the eyes of many of the Anglophone workers who had come, as well as the five hundred or so locked out workers and their families, who greeted their brothers and sisters from Ontario. In the end the Alma workers won the lock

out and beat the company back. They have been vocal in their appreciation of the support from their fellow Steelworkers from Ontario and they returned the solidarity on January 30.

Quebec has just been through the largest one day strike in its history when 400,000 public sector workers went out. The fight back against the austerity agenda has affected the entire working class in the province and the mood is militant. A sense of that was brought to the streets of Hamilton when French flags were raised as we marched through the streets of the city demanding justice.

The climate justice struggle has brought the case for climate jobs to the fore. We need green jobs for all. In Germany the second largest use of steel outside the auto industry is in the production of wind turbines. There is no reason for the steel mills in Hamilton to be shut down. A call has been raised to nationalize US Steel and keep the jobs that have sustained the city of Hamilton for generations.

The benefits that are being ripped out of the hands of the retirees and the thousands of widows who have survived them must be maintained. The courts must rule in support of working people. But we cannot depend on a judge to do it for us, we have to take to the streets again and again and demand that the governments and the company treat these workers with the respect and dignity that they deserve. Local 1005 is a rank-and-file controlled local that has fought courageously and will fight again. We have to stand shoulder to shoulder with these workers showing US Steel that they have to take on the entire working class in this fight. Justice for Hamilton steelworkers!

Greece: general strike against austerity

By Dave Sewell, Athens

Workers across Greece were set to walk out in the third general strike against new pension cuts February 4.

A wave of strikes, over the pension attack and various sectional demands, have added to the pressure on union leaders to call action.

Last week saw a 48-hour strike on the ferries as well as walkouts by journalists and Athens metro and national rail workers.

Farmers escalated their daily blockades of major roads last Thursday. Their 5,000-strong rally forced agriculture minister Vangelis Apostolou to pull out of opening a major agricultural fair in the second city Thessalonica.

On the same day local government workers occupied town halls as workers at the largest pension fund struck. Notaries joined an ongoing indefinite strike by lawyers.

One of the leading unions in the fightback has been that of health workers in Athens.

Trainee surgeon Zanneta Lysikatoú told *Socialist*

Worker, "Workers are very angry at the government. They understand the pension law is no good and they are ready to fight.

"This means we have to do it right on the day of the strike—and bring everything to a stop."

Union leaders wanted to delay the general strike until prime minister Alexis Tsipras announced the date of the vote in parliament.

But actions called at a local level have helped push them.

Guerrilla

Radiologist Christos Arghyris calls this "Guerrilla trade unionism—like Che Guevara in the hospitals.

"We do something in one hospital, and we spread it and tell other workers look, you can do this too," he said.

Zanneta added, "People are very disappointed with the union bureaucracy. They want to take things into their own hands."

The failure of the left government was meant to show there was no alternative. Some said workers would give up on the left and return to Tory party New

Democracy.

Instead Syriza won September's election and now it's New Democracy that's struggling.

Only 400,000 people voted in its recent leadership election—about half as many as last time.

New leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis wants to oppose the government, but won only narrowly over those who want to support cuts.

But that doesn't mean workers accept Syriza's cuts. Even in its own ranks, despite thousands leaving, many members back the strikes against its measures.

Thessalonica student and Syriza Youth activist Dimitris Arkoudis, told *Socialist Worker*, "We support the general strike.

"The pension law does have some good things—it takes from those who can afford it. But there are things we have to fight.

"Workers and farmers will have to struggle for something better."

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Socialist Worker

Quebec against austerity

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

It has been a roller-coaster ride in the fight against austerity in Quebec over the last 5 months.

In December and January the Common Front, the largest concerted challenge to date by organized labour to the assault on public sector jobs and services, produced both a massive general strike and significant dissatisfaction at the deal resulting from it.

That deal was accepted and recommended by the Common Front union leadership overall, but there was a call to reject the deal by sections of local union leadership and membership, and also some surprise votes against the deal by members of unions within the Common Front who went against the recommendation of their own union leaders.

Common Front

An alliance of 400,000 public sector workers across Quebec, over the past year the Common Front was engaged in legal bargaining with the Quebec government over salaries and other working conditions. It was allied with teachers in a separate union and had broad support in the community: they came together to fight for a deal that would restore years of underfunding and salary erosion in the public sector.

At the same time, member unions of the Common Front negotiating local agreements in their own hospitals, schools, and government service offices on issues that affected both working conditions and access to services.

Following a general strike of nearly 450,000 on December 9, the Quebec Liberal government arrived at a tentative agreement on



salaries with union leadership at the central table of the Common Front on December 17.

On December 21, the 34,000 members of the Quebec autonomous teacher's federation, the FAE, outside of the Common Front but coordinated with it, rejected the same deal.

And on December 23, the FSSS-CSN (Federation of Health and Social Services), the largest union in health and social services and a major section of the CSN—one of the major trade union federations inside the Common Front—announced that it intended to oppose the deal and asked its 110,000 members to vote against it. This was the only voice of opposition from official leadership within the Common Front, but it was a major one.

Salary erosion

Public sector salaries in Quebec have been under pressure for 35 years. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that some felt the courage to say the offer was not enough, especially in the context of a high level of visible resistance to austerity in Quebec.

The underlying question was: who should pay the price for provincial budget "shortfalls"? The strike movement pushed the Liberals to promise a certain amount of restored funding in addition to salary. But the truth is that both fall far short of what they owe both public sector workers and the public.

According to the deal most FAE teachers will only see around a 2.5 per cent increase (and even that not until 2019) and 15,000 of

FSSS-CSN members will see no increase except the 5.25 per cent over 5 years, far below inflation and cost of living—and although this is a minority of its 110,000 members, some of whom will see higher increases, the leadership called for all members to vote against the deal in solidarity.

This deal hardly offers the "catch-up" on salary erosion the Common Front organized itself to fight for, much less a challenge to public service underfunding, and after five days of strike action by nearly half a million people it is understandable that some have campaigned against it. In the words of FAE negotiator Michel Lauzon: "We didn't mobilize just to live five more years of poverty in public schools in Quebec."

Public education

This was also a fall of massive public support for public education, particularly by parents. At the beginning of each month, parents staged human chains around schools with their kids, leading up to a demonstration for public education in front of the National Assembly in Quebec City prior to the general strike.

Support from parents is clearly what has given confidence to the FAE to hold out for a better deal. The FAE message now is that their struggle is not just for a union agreement but for the defense of learning conditions for children.

In a press conference about why they are turning down the same salary deal offered to the Common Front, the FAE emphasized that this is not just about

salary but about funding. The FAE stated that they believed their rejection of the offer to be the will of thousands of citizens, especially parents, who continue to mobilize to protect public schools.

The FAE appealed to parents and the community to show their support on January 16 in Montreal. They called a demonstration for the defense of public schools in the low-income neighbourhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, where three schools have closed due to their poor state. On that day hundreds marched past schools that serve children with special needs or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents were visibly represented under the banner of the human chain movement, "Je protège mon école publique." ("I protect my public school").

And, significantly, the FSSS-CSN was also visibly present at the January 16 education rally, marching alongside the FAE.

Resistance continues

As we go to print, the final vote on the Common Front deal is unknown. Significantly, two large teacher locals, in Quebec City and in the Eastern Townships, voted to turn down the deal.

The struggle will also continue on the streets. The parents' group that organized human chains around schools in the fall has vowed to continue mobilizing parents. They have called for a mass rally in Montreal on February 7.

From the ballot box of union deals to the streets of protest—and to the everyday lives of those who use public services—resistance continues.

Sunday February 21

**Langara College
100 west 49th ave, Vancouver**

10am - 5:30pm

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