

# *Socialist*Worker

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## Where's the 'real change'?



- \* Continuing TPP
- \* Continuing Bill C-51
- \* Continuin-g corporate tax cuts
- \* Continuing attack on mail delivery
- \* Continuing oil subsidies and pipelines
- \* Continuing war and fighter jets spending
- \* Continuing to arm Saudi Arabia & support Israel

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## Facts & figures

### 700

Number of people who lives in Fort McKay First Nation

### 5,000

Number of people Fort McKay First Nation has helped flee the Fort McMurray fires

### 90,000

Number of people evacuated from Fort McMurray fires

### \$50 million

Additional funds the Liberals are giving the tar sands in this year's budget

### \$3 billion

Amount the Liberals have allocated to public transit

### \$3 billion

Funds lost to corporate tax cuts started by Harper and continued by Trudeau

### \$21 billion

Funds that should be allocated for public transit, according to the Million Climate Jobs campaign

## In their own words

**“Climate change is real. We’re already seeing its effects. Here in Alberta in just the last five years we’ve seen destruction on an almost unprecedented scale.”**

-How Trudeau talked about forest fires last year before he was elected

**“Pointing at any one incident and saying well, this is because of or that, is neither helpful nor particularly accurate.”**

-How Trudeau talks about forest fires now

**“All the Syrians are saying, ‘I’m ready to give, I’m ready to give.’ It’s amazing. You have to understand how little these guys have. But they understand the idea of an entire city losing their home. That’s something they can easily relate to. They went through that.”**

-co-founder of Syrian Refugee Support Group on the solidarity with Fort McMurray

**“I compared the end of the fossil fuel industry as a forest fire that was approaching us and we were standing at the back of a river. The fire is behind us quite a ways yet. We have time to build proper bridges to get all of our people across that river before the fire engulfs us... and the bridges I’m talking about of course are new jobs, new opportunities.”**

-oil sands worker Ken Smith, calling for a just transition for workers, 10 days before the Fort McMurray fire



# Tell Trudeau: let resisters stay

by BRIAN CHAMP

**Despite growing public pressure, the Liberal government is still pursuing the litigation against war resisters that started under Harper, re-litigating issues that the Federal Court already found in favour of the war resisters.**

At the end of March, when it became clear that the federal government was intent on proceeding with the Federal Court hearings on April 5 and 6, the War Resisters Support Campaign (WRSC) asked supporters to send emails to the Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship John McCallum urging that these court cases be settled and that these matters be sent back to new immigration of-

ficers for re-determination. Hundreds of emails from supporters all across Canada flooded the ministers' inboxes.

Meanwhile, the federal court postponed the hearings due to scheduling issues, pushing them back to November 1. This temporary reprieve provides space and a timeline to allow the WRSC and supporters to build the campaign to demand that the federal government drop Harper's litigation against war resisters. We have from now until November to ratchet up the pressure on the Liberals.

The Liberal government's continuing of this litigation is at odds with the Liberal election campaign, the Liberal voting record in Parliament on the issue of war resisters and with the legacy of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's declaration during the Vietnam War that

Canada should be a "refuge from militarism," as he allowed that era's conscientious objectors to stay.

Prior to last year's election, the party issued a statement that "The Liberal Party of Canada has consistently held the view that the Canadian government should not turn its back on Americans who have refused to participate in wars in which Canada refused to participate and which had not been authorized by the UN Security Council. We believe that Canada should have allowed those seeking sanctuary in Canada for their opposition to the Iraq War the opportunity to apply for permanent resident status, so long as they did not have a criminal record."

In a town hall meeting in the lead up to the election, Justin Trudeau said he would deal with the issue of war resisters "with compas-

sion" when he was questioned by a war resister's partner. During the Vietnam war era, Canada not only allowed tens of thousands of draft resisters to seek refuge here, but also thousands of deserters.

Between now and November 1 we need to demand that the litigation against the war resisters be dropped immediately. We need to push Trudeau to follow in his father's footsteps on this issue, instead of pursuing the vendetta against these soldiers of conscience that was initiated by Stephen Harper and Jason Kenney.

The WRSC is urging supporters who live in ridings with a Liberal MP to write, email or phone them to let them know you want the litigation dropped. Ask for a meeting with your MP to discuss the issue. Resources and more information can be found at [www.resisters.ca](http://www.resisters.ca).

## Quebec solidaire local economy tour

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

**Quebec's anti-austerity party, Québec solidaire, has launched a series of tours of Quebec's regions to consult with local communities outside of the two big municipalities of Montreal and Quebec City.**

Québec solidaire (QS) grew out of those two urban centres, and is now trying to build a deeper base in Quebec's many regions outside them. The party has launched the regional tour at a time when Montreal and Quebec City are on the verge of receiving special status from Couillard's Liberal austerity government.

QS is also trying to develop a meaningful economic platform for the 2018 Quebec election, based on what will speak to people across regional differences who are concerned about jobs and the environment. It is based on a vision of job creation that is both environmentally sustainable and economically just, in part through development of local economies.

This vision ultimately involves nationalization of energy industries like wind and solar, and the creation of jobs in sustainable large-scale industry. But it is also about looking at what is going on at the smaller

scale. The tour aims to consult with local organizations and small business at a time when Couillard's government is dismantling local structures of decision-making, the Centres of local development (CLDs) and Corporations of economic and community development (CDECs).

Quebec solidaire's vision for sustainable economic renewal includes reversing the cuts to public services like health and education, which provide not only services but jobs—one-third of jobs in the Gatineau region, for example. But it also includes encouraging local production and local consumption to challenge both the carbon footprint and multinational control of the economy, as well as the unhealthy practices of big agribusiness.

### Regional tour in Gatineau

Manon Massé, QS elected member of the National Assembly responsible for women's issues and the environment, and delegate to the COP21 conference in Paris, led the tour of the Gatineau region on May 4-6. She was accompanied by Andres Fontecilla, co-spokesperson of Quebec solidaire.

Featured on the tour were cooperatives like the Laiterie de l'Outaouais, an

organic dairy coop unique in North America, local bakery Boulangerie Aux Deux Frères, and local growers and agricultural producers. Manon Massé travelled to the rural village of Ripon which holds a weekly farmers' market and held a meet and greet at the « Solidarity Cooperative » at the Place du Marché.

The tour hosted public events such as a panel on local consumption at the Marché de solidarité de l'Outaouais ("solidarity market"), a panel at the local CEGEP (college) on "Climate Change: what the Paris accord represents for Quebec and the Outaouais," and a meet and greet in downtown Hull. There were private meetings and focus groups with women's organizations, an immigrant women's association, and with people working in local arts and culture.

Manon and Andres held a media conference in Hull about why QS is holding these tours. They talked about the promise and potential QS sees in regions such as Gatineau, for sustainable growth and for an economy based on solidarity and justice. Coming out of the last election QS as a party made a commitment to prioritize including the regions in its vision for a Quebec free of austerity and neoliberalism. Building an

economic platform through consultation takes time, which is why the tour is happening now in anticipation of 2018.

### Fight for \$15

Although separate from the local economy tour, at the very same time as its launch Quebec solidaire also launched its public support for the fight for a \$15 minimum wage.

As the first step in an ad campaign to tell the public that the concerns of real, ordinary people are the concerns of Quebec solidaire, the party released a series of posters with photos of ordinary Quebecois that read "I think the minimum wage isn't enough... We think the same." These posters will appear across Quebec, in all regions.

Both this campaign and the local economy tours are a way for QS to share its belief more widely in the real possibility of an economy driven by the priorities of the 99%, not the 1% of Quebec's business elite like recently-resigned PQ leader Pierre-Karl Pelladeau and Liberal leader Couillard.

It is Quebec capital and multinationals that destroy both decent jobs and the climate. But it is local communities, progressive social movements and ordinary people that Québec solidaire wants to put into power.

## Attawapiskat solidarity

**May saw a wave of occupations across the country in solidarity with Attawapiskat youth, which began in the wake of Black Lives Matter-Toronto occupation in front of police headquarters.**

These occupations have brought to the forefront the ever present and increasingly detrimental colonial conditions that plague Indigenous communities in North America, as well as highlighting the strength and importance of solidarity between movements.

The INAC occupations came in response to various crises that the Attawapiskat community in Northern Ontario has been experiencing, most notably endemic suicide and the housing crisis.

### Suicides in the shadow of a diamond mine

This comes in sharp contrast to the conditions of multi-billion dollar businesses operating in the area. The Victor mine, located 90 km west of Attawapiskat and owned by the De Beers diamond company, is flourishing.

The mine is on traditional Attawapiskat land, but vested into the hands of the Canadian government through the 1930 extension to Treaty 9. As such, the company is not legally mandated to provide any royalties to the First Nation, nor many to the Canadian government either—while the mine made \$400 million in 2014, De Beers paid less than \$300 in royalties.

### Occupations and solidarity

When news broke about the suicide crisis, Indigenous activists and allies occupied the INAC offices in downtown Toronto, from April 12 to 21. This came only a few weeks after the BLMTO organized a two-week "tent city" occupation outside police headquarters, after the Special Investigations Unit cleared and kept secret the police officers who killed Andrew Loku. The mutual solidarity between the two occupations strengthened both movements and challenged their common oppressor: the Canadian state, built on colonialism and slavery.

The youth in the Attawapiskat community are calling for a list of demands that they have presented to the Canadian government. It includes such things as a youth centre, better education, sporting equipment, and overall the bare minimums of community resources.

## Socialist Worker

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# Iraq War diverts resources from dam

by BRIAN CHAMP

**In the early 1980s, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war, the “Saddam Dam” (now Mosul Dam) was built to consolidate the regime’s control over the region around Mosul, an area with a high Sunni population and a key part of the former regime’s power base.**

Engineering consultants at the time warned that the dam’s location on water-soluble rocks (karst) was problematic; they advised “thorough” grouting of the cracks in the rock under the foundation of the dam which would safeguard against the erosion of the dam’s foundation.

To save time and money, however, a combination of “blanket” grouting 25 m around the base of the dam’s foundation and a 150 m deep grout “curtain” under the dam’s foundation was used.

## Sanctions and war

The dam was completed in 1984, the reservoir filled up in 1985 and in 1986 leaks were first detected. From that time until ISIS forces took control of the dam in August 2014, continuous grouting was performed to fill up the sinkholes that formed under and around the foundation. Approximately 95,000 tonnes of concrete and other materials have been pumped into these cracks

over the last 30 years. Early on the danger posed by the dam’s collapse prompted the regime to construct the Badush dam a little farther downstream as an insurance policy; it’s construction was halted by the UN sanctions regime in the 1990s for lack of the required materials.

Although Iraqi government forces retook the Dam in September 2014, ISIS forces are still very close by; they also took much of grouting equipment with them when they left and the ability to perform the required maintenance is hampered by the proximity of the fighting.

“We used to have 300 people working 24 hours in three shifts but very few of these workers have come back. There are perhaps 30 people there now,” said Nasrat Adamo, the dam’s former chief engineer.

The sluices that could be opened to release the water pressure are jammed, and the spring meltwaters have filled the reservoir to a very high level. US and Iraqi officials are now warning that the dam called the “most dangerous in the world” by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 2006, could face collapse at any moment, putting at risk the communities along the river.

Readings from sensors left in the rock below the foundation in December of last year show that the gaps in the rock are forming faster

than they can be filled. In addition, other sinkholes downstream from and to the east of the dam have had to be filled recently.

## Ticking time bomb

If it did collapse, the city of Mosul would be devastated by the 20 m high wave that would hit it like a hammer.

The Iraqi government has told people to flee 6 km to either side of the river, which has been called “ridiculous” by another former engineer at the dam, Nadhir al-Ansari: “What are all these people, millions of people, supposed to do when they get 6km away? There is no support for them there. Nothing to help them live.”

“If the dam fails, the water will arrive in Mosul in four hours. It will arrive in Baghdad in 45 hours. Some people say there could be half a million people killed, some say a million. I imagine it will be more in the absence of a good evacuation plan.”

It would be difficult to have a good evacuation plan, since the river runs through territory contested in the current fighting, but something would be better than what’s on offer.

Instead, the Iraqi regime contracted the Italian engineering firm TREVI to maintain the dam for the next 18 months. They arrived in the middle of April, but labour and

material supplies are likely to be hampered by the ongoing fighting in the area. It remains to be seen if they can halt the deterioration before the dam collapses.

One thing is certain: if the foundation maintenance falls short, the dam will eventually collapse. According to Adamo, “Nobody knows when it will fail ... It could be a year from now. It could be tomorrow.”

As if the people of Iraq have not suffered enough, a dam built by Saddam Hussein to solidify his regime in the 1980s could turn out to be the biggest weapon of mass destruction that he is responsible for.

But the US led invasion and occupation of Iraq encouraged the sectarian divisions that now reign in the region. And the US military knew about the instability of the dam during the invasion in 2003. Why was nothing done in all the years of occupation to ensure that this ticking time bomb wouldn’t go off? Why wasn’t the Badush dam completed in the intervening time to contain the damage in the event of a collapse?

The billions spent bombing ISIS, which merely encourage it’s spread, should instead go as reparations to the people of Iraq so they can repair the dam and rebuild their country after years of imperial sanctions and war.

# Resistance in Brazil continues

by SEAN PURDY IN SAO PAULO

**In its first days in office, Brazil’s new government led by president Michel Temer has already faced spirited opposition.**

Some 20,000 took to the streets in Sao Paulo to denounce an illegitimate government, in a march led by the militant homeless workers’ movement.

The previous day Brazil’s senators voted to continue impeachment proceedings against former president Dilma Rousseff of the Workers’ Party (PT) for state accounting irregularities.

Vice president Michel Temer assumed the presidency temporarily for up to 180 days, signalling an intensification of the neoliberal political agenda started by Rousseff.

The Sao Paulo demonstrators marched on the headquarters of Brazil’s principal bosses’ union in opposition to austerity and cuts to social programs.

The next day Ministry of Culture workers protested in the capital Brazilia against the “parliamentary coup” and funding cuts with shouts of “Culture Yes! Coup No!”.

High school students in four states continue their militant occupation movement against local cuts to education funding. There are 33 schools occupied in the state of Ceara and dozens more in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. They face constant police repression.

Dilma Rousseff greets supporters after the vote to impeach her

Dilma Rousseff greets supporters after the vote to impeach her (Pic: JucaVarella/ AgenciaBrasil/Flickr)

Unable to win an election democratically, Brazil’s right-wing has used a huge kickback scandal in the state petroleum company Petrobras to exploit Rousseff’s impeachment.

## Allies

Temer’s first act as president was to appoint an all-male, all-white group of 23 political allies as ministers with key representatives from the evangelical Christian and agri-business sectors.

Yet seven of them are under investigation for corruption in the Petrobras scandal.

Their plan is to further privatise state assets, cut social programs and workers’ rights, and impose a strict law and order regime.

The new government and emboldened ruling class’s promise of a new wave of attacks backed up by police repression poses clear challenges for the unions and social movements.

The Workers’ Party is disgraced. Its adoption of neoliberalism has alienated much of its base. And while many PT militants are opposed to the coup, they are demoralised after years of anti-worker policies by their own party.

The small but growing socialist left is faced with the same challenge as before the political crisis erupted in 2015.

Whether the cutbacks come from the PT or the right wing forces who lined up behind the impeachment campaign the key task is to rebuild the movement against austerity.

# Trudeau: don’t deport Mohamed Harkat to torture

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

**The Trudeau Liberal government has just made a public commitment to sign on to the UN Optional Protocol Against Torture.**

This is laudable only if it is reflected in practice. The first test will be Mohamed Harkat, who faces immediate deportation to Algeria. The threat of torture is high, particularly because his name has been associated with alleged terrorism under a Canadian Security Certificate.

And yet, Harkat, who has lived in Canada for 20 years, has never been charged.

Nevertheless, he would be at substantial risk of torture, both as someone who fled Algeria as a refugee and given the false security allegations leveled against him. Harkat has never had the proper opportunity to refute these allegations, because Security Certificates

impose a secret hearing process that makes it impossible to challenge the evidence that forms the basis of the case.

To make any Liberal commitment against torture real, Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety, and John McCallum, Minister of Refugees, Immigration and Citizenship, must comply completely with the UN Convention Against Torture, to which Canada has long been a signatory, as well as the newly-signed UN Optional Protocol Against Torture. And that means allowing Harkat to stay in Canada.

## ‘Diplomatic assurances’

In a recent Appeals Court case in the UK a panel of judges from the United Kingdom’s Special Immigration Appeals Commission refused to deport six men to Algeria despite so-called “diplomatic assurances” that they would not be

tortured by the Algerian regime.

Like Canada, the UK is a signatory to the UN convention against torture, which prohibits returning people to countries where they face a substantial risk of torture or other inhuman treatment.

The U.K. judges said Algeria’s volatility undermined the government’s argument that “diplomatic assurances” could be relied upon to protect the six terror suspects from torture if deported.

International human rights organizations including Amnesty International have long insisted that “diplomatic assurances” in human rights cases are not worth the paper they are written on, and this appeal vindicates that position.

The Canadian government has also sought to downplay the level of risk in the Harkat case by obtaining similar diplomatic assurances from the Algerian government that he would not be mistreated if deported.

Harkat’s lawyer, Barbara Jackman, said the U.K. court ruling will now form part of her submission to the federal government arguing that the level of risk for Harkat cannot be downplayed on this basis.

## Let Harkat stay

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale has the statutory power to stop Harkat’s deportation if he finds that to do so is “not contrary to the national interest.”

The Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee has collected hundreds of letters and testimonials affirming that Harkat poses no threat to the Canadian public and should be allowed to stay.

But funds are also desperately needed for Harkat’s legal defence to stop his deportation to torture.

*To find out more or make a donation, go to: [www.justiceforharkat.com](http://www.justiceforharkat.com).*



# Austerity and LGBT oppression

**As summer approaches there will be Pride marches in country after country, celebrating the gains that have been made by the LGBT community, but also demonstrating the need to continue the fight against repressive laws and against homophobia and transphobia.**

Recently the Trudeau government here in Canada introduced legislation, Bill C-16 “that would ensure that Canadians will be free to identify themselves and to express their gender as they wish while being protected against discrimination and hate because as Canadians, we should feel free and safe to be ourselves.”

The Senate is dominated by Conservative party-appointees, among them Don Plett, who is one of those senators who voted against similar legislation in the past, specifically opposing transgender people using public washrooms that correspond to the gender they identify with.

The only thing that will force bigots like Plett and others to do the right thing and support Bill C-16 is the movement on the ground. Pride marches this year in Canada will be a good opportunity for all of us, LGBT and straight, to demand that Parliament pass this legislation.

We also need to know that we can’t depend on politicians to guarantee our rights. As has recently been proved by the so-called bathroom bill signed into law by North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, in March of this year. The legislation, the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, would require public school children to use facilities that match the sex they were assigned at birth. Similar bills have been introduced in other US states.

On the face of it, the legislation may seem ludicrous. But it’s no joke. Essentially it’s an attempt to punish transgender individuals who wish to use the washroom of the gender they identify with.

## Capitalism and the family

There are two main reasons why the question of transgender oppression is taken so seriously by the ruling class.

The oppression faced by LGBT people is closely linked to the question of women’s oppression and the institution of the family under capitalism. Rigid gender roles and women’s oppression are both consequences of the division of society into classes that Frederick Engels identified in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

As society divided into a class of people who essentially benefited from the exploitation of other classes, the division of labour which had previously existed in hunter-gatherer societies, but which had not translated into women’s oppression, came to have new meaning.

It became increasingly important for the men who came to dominate that they could trace their lineage and therefore ensure the inheritance of their wealth through the structure of the family. This was what Engels referred to as “the world historic defeat of the female sex” and it also had consequences for anyone who wanted to live outside the “norms” of the heterosexual family.

In studying pre-class societies, like many aboriginal societies, we find numerous examples of individuals who did not conform to gender roles: the third sex. This was once referred to as berdache, and is now commonly known as two-spirited people.

The reconstitution of the traditional family throughout the nineteenth century in many industrial nations meant an increasingly rigid family form, which excluded those who didn’t conform, such as lesbians and gays or independent women who chose not to marry.

The reason the nuclear family is so important for modern day capitalism is that it allows capitalism to depend on essentially unpaid labour to nurture and support the next generation of wealth-creators (workers) for capital. Part of the ideological support for the nuclear family includes the necessity to regulate the behaviour of individual members of the family, hence the attacks on LGBT people who challenge those norms.

Trans people, because they reject the rigid gender roles into which they are born, are a threat to the construction of “masculinity” and “femininity” and the nuclear family on which the system depends.

The second reason for the viciousness of ruling class attacks on the trans community has to do with the whole notion of divide and conquer. This is clear when we look at the politics of someone like Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. His whole platform is built on a thorough-going scapegoating of oppressed groups in society—Blacks, women, LGBT—in order to take people’s focus away from the realities that Bernie Sanders has been pointing out: that the top 1% in US society is directly responsible for the suffering and impoverishment of the rest of the population.

It’s instructive to know, for example, that the bill passed in North Carolina had other agendas. It overturned an anti-LGBT discrimination ordinance that had been passed by the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, it prevents local governments in the state from enacting similar ordinances, and it also prevents cities from raising their minimum wages higher than that of the state’s minimum wage.

The lesson we need to take to heart during this year’s Pride celebrations and beyond is that we need to stand together if we are going to wage an effective fight against the politics of austerity, which are also the politics of racism, transphobia and oppression.

# INTERNATIONAL



by EVAN JOHNSTON

**If you’ve never heard of bossnapping, it’s exactly how it sounds: workers kidnapping or detaining their bosses with the aim of pressuring them to concede to their demands. But who, exactly, are the targets of bossnapping, and what does it look like?**

It varies depending on the context, but the “bosses” being kidnapped range from managers and human resource directors to executive officers. The common feature of the targets are those who have some degree of power over hiring/firing and the overall labour process.

There is some flexibility, too, in exactly what constitutes a “bossnapping”. It can range from kidnapping your boss from their home (think National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation); kidnapping your boss from work and holding them in a separate location (think 9 to 5); to the most common form, which is keeping your boss locked up somewhere in the workplace, usually in their own offices.

In the jargon of industrial relations literature, bossnapping is sometimes referred to as “management sequestration,” which is really just a testament to the supreme ability of academics to suck the life out of everything exciting. But let’s stick with the excitement.

## Sud Aviation: Nantes, 1968

Bossnapping exploded into mainstream consciousness in 2009 after a series of widely reported incidents in France, but it has a long and venerable history linked to periods of rising class struggle. Perhaps one of the most notable cases occurred in Nantes, France during the factory occupation at Sud Aviation in 1968.

Workers at Sud Aviation had been holding symbolic 15 minute strikes in protest of cuts to wages and hours as a result of reduced demand for orders. At the same time, there were also rumors of a complete plant closure or lockout. As the general strike began across France, workers in one section of the factory refused to return to work after their 15 minute strike, and decided instead to march through the factory and convince the rest of the workers to join them.

The occupation was on, and approximately 2,000 workers barricaded themselves inside the factory. Then, as Andree Hoyles describes in *Imagination in Power: Occupation of Factories in France in 1968*, “a group of twenty members of management [were] detained for over a fortnight,” held in their offices, but generally treated quite well: access to food, water, and their families.

The bossnapping was not the rogue action of one or two impatient radicals, as is sometimes implied, but was instead part of a broader, co-ordinated process of worker self-organization during the occupation. “A group of over twenty strikers stood guard outside, in two-hour shifts,” writes Hoyles, and “at every general meeting, a vote was taken on whether to release them or not.” While the level of trade union activity was not

very high at Sud Aviation before the general strike, there were organized Trotskyists at the factory who helped to push for more militant action.

## Goodyear Tire & Rubber: Amiens, 2014

Jump forward to 2014, where in spite of laws passed by former French president Nicolas Sarkozy to clamp-down on bossnapping, it made a dramatic return at the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Plant in Amiens, France, about 150 km north of Paris.

On January 6, after a court rejected the union’s (CGT) appeal against the plant’s closure, workers occupied the plant and took took HR director, Bernard Glessner, and production manager, Michel Deilly, hostage until the company agreed to higher severance packages for more than a thousand planned layoffs.

Goodyear, an Ohio-based corporation, had been looking to close the plant for several years, citing the state of the European automobile and tire markets. According to CGT, the closure put approximately 1250 jobs at stake, and they demanded that severance packages being offered to employees be increased from €20,000 to €80,000 (from \$27,000 to \$108,000).

According to a statement released by the CGT: “We just want to continue to work and not swell the ranks of the unemployed and marginalized, and if for that we have to resort to extreme methods, we won’t hesitate to do that.”

Over 100 workers occupied the plant, and barricaded the managers inside for 30 hours until a settlement could be reached. However, the company refused to negotiate while Michel and Bernard were held captive, so they were released the following day.

Soon after, a settlement was reached, and CGT ended its occupation of the plant. In the end, while Goodyear refuses to release the details, CGT claims that they were able to win severance pay that was three times greater than what was initially offered. It was an important win for the union in incredibly difficult circumstances.

However, this bossnapping was not without consequences. While it is true that bossnappings generally do not lead to criminal charges, the Financial Times reported in January that eight former workers of Goodyear have each received 2 year jail sentences for their role in the bossnapping.

## Specialty Medical Supplies: Beijing, 2013

While mainstream news outlets were chalking bossnappings up to a peculiarity of the French working-class, workers in China were about to prove them wrong.

In June 2013, workers at the American-owned company Specialty Medical Supplies, located in suburban Beijing, held co-owner Chip Starnes hostage for 6 days. And as we’ve seen before, it was a co-ordinated action that saw the active participation of the majority of workers.

One news report suggests that 80 workers managed to barricade every

exit, and had shifts to ensure that they were guarded around the clock. While there were no reports of revolutionary music, they did regularly bang on the windows of his office and shine bright lights—but I can only assume this was to cheerfully remind him of how much they appreciated his business savvy and commitment to managerial excellence.

The reasons for the bossnapping should sound familiar: management had been expressing their interest in downsizing the company, and moving operations to India to cut operational costs. Workers feared for their jobs, and if the plant was going to leave, they wanted a fair severance package.

Workers had received word that 30 long-term employees had already received severance packages, but approximately 100 more workers became concerned that they would be left with nothing once the company decided to move.

“I feel like a trapped animal,” Starnes is reported to have said through the bars of his window, while workers who are confined to a cramped factory, have little to no say over their pay and working conditions, and are kept in the dark about whether their job will still exist in the days ahead, presumably have no idea what that feels like.

But after 6 day of captivity, Starnes and the Specialty Medical Supplies executives caved to the workers’ demands, and finally agreed to sign a new compensation agreement with the remaining 97 employees.

## Significance of bossnapping

The world of management has not failed to notice the threat that bossnappings pose to their livelihoods, and a small cottage industry has developed to help executives understand and navigate through such moments of crisis.

The working class feel solidarity with those who lost their jobs and the middle class may also reckon selfishly that ‘bossnapping’ is not as inconvenient as massive strikes in which everything from trains and schools to the post office is shut down. Hence, popular opinion appears to be positively tolerant regarding lock the boss up unharmed for a few hours so that the workers’ anger could abate.

While there is much more that can be said about bossnapping as a tactic, today is a day to salute the courage and creativity of those workers who have decided to kidnap their bosses in their pursuit of justice.

In the face of cuts, closures, and the most cruel indifference that is part and parcel of the capitalist system, workers have always found new ways to resist and restore dignity to themselves and their fellow workers. Bossnapping is one such tactic, a high-risk one at that, but one that speaks to the desperate situations that workers around the world are put into as capitalism’s global slump marches on.

*This is republished from 3leaps.wordpress.com*



# The Philippine election

*Anton Cu Unjieng analyzes the election results and prospects*

**The Philippine elections have been making international headlines for two reasons: because Rodrigo Duterte won a clear victory, and because Geraldine Roman just became the country's first transgender woman to be elected to congress.**

Roman's victory carries an historic significance for all transgender Filipinos and for the queer community generally, with whom she has explicitly expressed solidarity.

It should be remembered, however, that Roman is part of a wealthy and well established political dynasty and was the bet of the ruling Liberal Party (LP). Her election is a victory for trans inclusion, but it should not erase the memory of how much the queer community has suffered under LP rule or of how unreliable even the most liberal of the political elites have been in our struggles for liberation.

In contrast, the election of Duterte will no doubt be remembered as a historic low point for the Philippine's shabby democracy. He is an unapologetic homophobe, expressed regret at not having been included in the gang rape of an Australian missionary, and has promised to eradicate "heinous crime" (drugs, kidnapping, and—without apparent irony—rape) within the first six months of his presidency by inspiring "the people to take the cudgels for the country" and kill 100,000 criminals.

Less often talked about is the fact that Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. (son of the late dictator), who entered the arena of national politics in 2010 when he won a seat in the senate, made a run for the Vice Presidency.

## President Aquino, Jr.

The sudden and meteoric rise of Duterte to national significance, as well as the popularity of the son of the late dictator must have come as a surprise to the current President whose father's assassination sparked the first EDSA revolution and whose mother's presidency oversaw the transition to democracy.

President Noynoy Aquino spent most of his presidency patting his own back for the country's relatively consistent economic growth. He has credited this growth to the policy he called "daang matuwid" (the straight path) and to what he has characterised as his struggle against tax avoidance and corruption. Mar Roxas, his successor in the LP, ran on the basis of continuing along the straight path laid by Aquino.

But this path was paved against workers, against farmers, against the petty bourgeoisie — and, interestingly enough, against the old but relatively unproductive fractions of the Philippine ruling class.

The most dynamic sections of the class (eg the Makati business club) fully back the Liberal Party because his plan has worked extraordinarily well for them. Nevertheless, the last six years saw a (largely successful) attempt to restructure Philippine capital, and important sections of the ruling class were also left out in the cold in that process.

At the same time, inequality has only risen throughout this whole period of growth. But an



important inflection of this is that the provinces (whose wealth is simply siphoned off to Manila) have tended to feel the insult of this inequality most keenly.

This is perhaps most true of the resource rich Mindanao region, the site of a messy civil war. The administration had hoped to open it up for more stable development by establishing a peace in the region—which thanks to grass-roots organizing by Indigenous populations, the Bangsamoro, and the sections of the settler population, would finally have culminated in the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), giving the Bangsamoro greater sovereignty over the region.

Unfortunately, a year into the peace process, a military gaff on the government's part caused the death of 44 members of the Special Armed Forces at the hands of Moro resistance fighters. The resulting nationalist reaction scuttled the BBL, whose popularity had already been frail among the settler population and Filipinos generally.

The renewed civil war, the deplorable mismanagement by Imperial Manila of "its" provinces, and the sense that the country's growth has been limited to a small elite in the nation's core has meant that a politics that could be called "regionalism," which was always important in the Philippines, has gained in significance in this election.

Hence, Duterte had an overwhelming majority in his home region (Mindanao), while Marcos was able to count on his base in the "Solid North," and Robredo was strongest in Southern Luzon and Visayas. All three explicitly campaigned on the basis of representing their regions and bringing their interests into the national arena. But only Duterte managed to convince a majority of Filipinos in the rest of the country that his political training in his region enabled him to represent their interests generally as well.

## Duterte

The rise of Duterte begins with the abject and repeated failure of Malacanang to "manage" its rule over Mindanao. Duterte has a long record of (at least verbally) supporting an end to the civil war on the basis of a recognition of

the Bangsamoro and supported the Bangsamoro Basic Law and All Out Peace in Mindanao.

He opposed Estrada's "all out war" and has explicitly said that the armed Moro resistance groups need to be included in any peace. Appealing to the rapacity and officiousness of "Imperial Manila," he has brought the question of federalism back into political discourse.

He also made mistrust of the government a major electoral issue—betting correctly that massive inequality in the cities, the utter shambles of the roads and public transportation, the ever increasing precarity of life in the midst of consistent economic growth, has meant that anger is not limited to the periphery.

The presidential palace sits at the heart of a blisteringly discontented, desperate, and angry population. Of all the candidates, only Duterte was enough of an outsider to tap into this anger.

Duterte completely outflanked the Left on all these issues. His massively attended closing rally was called "Occupy Luneta," the byline on a poster of the campaign's facebook page read "we are the 99% who are tired of: corruption, crime, poverty, drama in the government, traffic, selective justice, war in the South, etc." and, amazingly, informs Duterte that he doesn't "need money to campaign! We are here to support you!"

This is nonsense, of course. Duterte, like every other Filipino politician of note is part of a powerful political clan.

## A Duterte Presidency

Duterte has played a dangerous game by stirring up the anger of the Filipino people. It is far from clear how he can meet the expectations he has raised among any of the significant social classes.

In spite of the radicalism of his rhetoric, his promise to go after contractualisation and poverty, and his self-presentation as representing interests other than those of the elites, Duterte's transition team has already promised to maintain the macroeconomic policy of the Aquino administration. He has also promised to keep the administration's target of 5 per cent of the GDP for

infra-structure spending, improving on their performance only by "addressing bottle necks."

Unsurprisingly, his transition team has promised to make Davao a model for the nation's development, arguing that "reducing crime in the area will ... increase the security of businessmen as well as the consumers," boosting the economy. We are likely to see an increase in impunity and police violence.

Duterte is going to find himself squeezed on many sides. He has already promised to shoot labour unions who may wreck his administration with strikes, and has even told workers to "give the Philippines a respite of about ten years" before organising themselves into unions. The strength of the organised working class is not the strongest it has ever been, but even in its present state, it is not likely to take such threats quietly.

## A return to instability?

Duterte will want to hold on to Aquino's achievements. But to do so he will need the special economic zones, the extraction economy, and contractualisation. Duterte will either by make good on his promise to continue Aquino's policies or by failing to, he cannot help alienating powerful sections of the ruling class.

The elections were not only a crisis for the Liberal Party. They revealed a political limit to Philippine capital. We are likely therefore to see a return to instability. This may mean the same fratricidal jockeying for power that has historically characterised the rule of the capitalist class in the Philippines. But this will be more virulent and not limited to maneuvers in the House of Representatives: the mass of the population is almost certain to be mobilised by the competing elites.

Assuming it can weather the state-sponsored violence that Duterte is likely to inflict upon it, the Left will have with new openings. Duterte's presidency will be difficult for the poor, for workers, and for the Left. But this election also proves, with heartbreaking clarity that the challenge of building an independent, principled, revolutionary Left remains as the fundamental condition for breaking the deadlock of Philippine capitalism.



# CLIMATE JUSTICE TRANSITIONS

*Jesse McLaren surveys transitions in the climate, the economy  
and climate justice politics*



## Transitions in the climate, the economy and politics

**The mainstream environmental movement was dominated by a narrow focus on consumerism, individual lifestyle choices, and single issue politics—taking for granted the broader context of colonialism and capitalism.**

The environmental movement talked about saving the planet in the abstract, without acknowledging the territories on which we’re living or supporting Indigenous communities defending them. There was even a racist campaign against the right of the Makah nation to hunt whales, which they’ve done sustainably for millennia.

The environmental movement talked about changing our individual consumer choices without questioning what we collectively produce and how workers themselves can be part of the solution. While the protests against logging in Clayquot sound successfully stopped company, it led to bitter divisions between environmentalists and workers.

Fast-forward twenty years and there was a Defend Our Coast mass sit-in in Victoria. It was led by Coastal First Nations, and had support from environmentalists/workers. As a CAW activist explained, “the ongoing risks that these tar sands pipelines and tankers pose aren’t worth any price. Tens of thousands of unionized and other jobs depend on healthy river and ocean ecosystems.”

The Yinka Dene Alliance has united First Nations against pipelines crossing territories and reached out to labour, Unifor and the BCTF signed the Solidarity Accord with the Save the Fraser Declaration, “We, the undersigned, say to our First Nations brothers and sisters, and to the world, that we are prepared to stand with you to protect the land, the water and our communities from the Enbridge pipelines and tankers project and similar projects to transport tar sands oil.”

Obviously this position is not shared by entire labour movement or NDP, as we saw in the reception of Leap Manifesto at NDP convention. But this conversation is in transition and it’s driven by changes to the climate and the economy.

### TRANSITIONS IN CLIMATE AND ECONOMY

The scale/urgency of climate crisis means it can’t be solved through individual behavior. There has to be massive shift in the economy away from fossil fuels and this means workers need to be involved in this process.

The disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on poor and racialized communities also means it can’t be understood as an abstract single issue. Increasingly unnatural disasters, from Hurricane Katrina to Typhoon Haiyan, have shone a light on environmental racism. As well as global warming, there’s also local impacts—disproportionately impact Indigenous communities, from cancer rates at Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, asthma rates Aamjiwnaang, and the threat of Line 9 to Chippewas of the Thames—highlighting colonialism.

At the same time there’s an ongoing economic crisis, which has cost 400,000 manufacturing jobs across Canada in past decade—which also disproportionately affect Indigenous and racialized workers. This has been double-edged.

For years we’ve been told that while oil economy might worsen climate crisis it’s the only solution to jobs crisis, reinforcing the old divisions between workers and the environment. But now the fall in the price of oil has exposed how unsustainable those jobs are not only for the climate but also for workers.

The same corporations/governments who have ignored Indigenous/climate concerns are showing how little they care for workers in their own industry. Oil corporations have slashed tens of thousands of jobs to maintain their profits. Governments who claimed there was no money for healthcare, education, social services are continuing to bail out oil companies with billion dollar subsidies while refusing to provide a just transition for workers who are suffering.

But the scale of climate and economic crisis, and disproportionate impact they have won’t automatically build movement against them. People can respond to climate crisis by blaming workers, or respond to economic crisis by ignoring Indigenous/climate, blame refugees.

But instead the climate justice movement has risen to unite all those affected—including Indigenous and migrant communities, environmentalists and workers, anti-poverty and anti-war organizations

### TRANSITION IN CLIMATE POLITICS

This is not just because of changes to climate and the economy but also because of a transition in climate politics. This is thanks first of all to Indigenous communities defending their territories—from healing walks and toxic tours exposing environmental racism, to blockades and land defense, and legal challenges to assert Indigenous rights

Through the process frontline communities are not only defending their own land, but also providing a climate justice framework for the whole movement. Climate politics are transitioning from consumerism to anti-colonialism, and from blaming workers to building a new economy.

The backlash against the Leap Manifesto included the accusation that it represents Toronto elites who are anti-Alberta and anti-worker. But Leap Manifesto reflects a climate justice movement led by Indigenous communities, many in the heart of Alberta, who are including workers in their vision for change.

As Melina Laboucan-Massimo of the Lubicon Cree First Nation explained, “Even since I was a child I have seen immense change to the land which infringes upon our ability to have access to clean air, clean water and live a healthy lifestyle. We have also seen massive oil spills on our traditional territory, with one of the largest in Alberta’s history just a few miles away from my family’s homes in 2011...Our communities deserves justice. For many of us from impacted communities the choices are literally life and death. It’s time Canada stopped burying its head in the tar sands and bring about the just transition. Workers deserve to be with their families instead of flying across the country to work in the tar sands only to leave their families for 3 weeks out of every month. In Canada we are so well positioned with such highly skilled workers that we can transition to long term green jobs. There are the economic alternatives for our families and communities. Even in the heart of the tar sands we can build a different kind of economy with clean energy and green jobs without compromising our families and communities.”

The transition in climate justice politics is also happening within the labour movement, which is building solidarity with Indigenous communities and raising its own demands for good green jobs for all to address climate crisis, economic crisis, disproportional impact racialized communities. As the Toronto and York Region Labour Council wrote,

“We don’t have to choose between the economy or the environment. Real climate action means investing in mass public transit, clean energy infrastructure and affordable housing. It means expanding low-carbon sectors like health, education and sustainable agriculture. By taking real climate action, we can create an economy that is more fair and equal and offers hundreds of thousands of good new jobs. We want an economy where workers win, communities have more democratic control, and those most impacted and impoverished are the first in line to benefit. An economy that honours Indigenous peoples’ rights and recognizes their role in protecting the land, air and water for everyone. An economy that respects the limits of the environment made clear by climate science.”



## Transitions in the tactics of the 1%, and the leadership of the movement

**The climate justice movement is raising the possibility of mass transition in society for Indigenous communities to regain control of their land and for workers to win control of their labour—both of which threaten the colonial state and the corporations it defends.**

So in response we’ve seen a transition in the tactics of the 1%: from Harper to Trudeau.

### TRANSITION IN TACTICS OF THE 1%

As Dene scholar Glen Coulthard wrote about Harper, “In the delicate balance of having to ensure that his social conservative contempt for First Nations does not overwhelm his neoconservative love of the market, Prime Minister Harper has erred by letting the racism and sexism of the former outstrip his belligerent commitment to the latter. This is a novice mistake that Liberals like Jean Chretien and Paul Martin learned how to manage decades ago. As a result, the federal government has invigorated a struggle for Indigenous self-determination that must challenge the relationship between settler colonization and free-market fundamentalism in ways that refuse to be coopted by scraps of recognition, opportunistic apologies, and the cheap gift of political and economic inclusion.”

Whereas Harper claimed Canada has no history of colonialism, Trudeau has announced nation-to-nation relationships without implementing it—leading Athabasca Chipewyan Chief Allan Adams to leave recent climat meeting. Whereas Harper used defunding as a weapon against First Nations Trudeau has promised billions of dollars without actually delivering them—leading Mik’maq activist Pam Palmater to write, “Trudeau’s promise of ‘renewed relationship’ with First Nations evaporated with Liberal budget.” Whereas Harper dismissed UNDRIP and TRC, Trudeau claims to support them but he continues to ignore its calls to action, including #92 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.” This includes not only pipeline projects like Line 9, but also hydro-electric projects like Site C dam on the west coast. Whereas Harper left the Kyoto accord, Trudeau announced a historic deal in Paris that has no mechanism to achieve it; and there were two critical issues to climate justice that were relegated to preamble, Indigenous rights and just transition for workers. Whereas Harper dismissed demands for green jobs, Trudeau has greenwashed his budget—spending a fraction of what is actually needed for real green job transition while using “clean growth” to justify

giving more funds to oil and gas.

Harper failed to beat the climate justice movement into submission so now Trudeau is trying to embrace the movement to smother it. The deficit that exists between Trudeau’s rhetoric and reality shows the next steps for movement, and highlights a transition in leadership

### TRANSITION IN LEADERSHIP

Speaking to the wealthiest of the 1% at the World Economic Forum, Trudeau said that

“Technology itself will not determine the future we get. Our choices will. Leadership will.” This is true, but it’s not Trudeau’s leadership that will bring real change.

Real change is coming from climate justice movement. Even before the federal election there was a climate welcome announced for new PM because no party echoed the climate justice movement and whoever was elected would need pressure from outside Parliament. Even with Trudeau’s “sunny ways” charm offensive 25,000 people marched on Ottawa the month after he was elected chanting “real change, not climate change.”

Real change is coming from Leap Manifesto and People’s Climate Plan, which is debunking false choices of jobs vs environment and articulating a vision for climate justice.

Real change is coming from the labour movement. Instead of waiting for Trudeau’s vague promises of green jobs there are labour campaigns for just transition for workers

The Canadian Labour Congress has endorsed the Million Climate Jobs campaign, which outlines in detail how spending a mere 5 per cent of federal budget could create a million jobs and cut emissions by 25 per cent in next decade.

We know the money is there. The release of the Panama Papers show all sorts of money hidden in tax havens. But the biggest corporate tax haven is Canada’s record low corporate taxes which have been cut by Liberals and Tories, and kept by Trudeau.

We know part of the infrastructure for just transition already exists. As the Delivering Community Power campaign for postal workers explains “Our postal service can deliver the sustainable infrastructure of the next economy: postal banking that finances green energy, services for seniors, farm-to-table food delivery, coast-to-coast charging stations for electric cars, and much more.”

And we know workers are increasingly asking for the just transition, including workers in the heart of the oil sands like Ken Smith who are defending their jobs and asking for just transition. Or like the organization Iron and Earth: “We’re calling on the government of Alberta to invest in training

programs, starting by retraining one thousand out-of-work oil industry electricians in Alberta in solar panel installation... By preparing the renewable energy workforce it is a win-win for Canadian workers, our families, our economy, and the environment.”

Real change is continuing to come from Indigenous communities—from ongoing movement for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women, to occupations of government offices to demand justice for youth Attawapiskat, to the legal challenge of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation.

A community shouldn’t have to fundraise huge sums to uphold their basic rights. Indigenous rights are supposed to be protected in Section 35 of Constitution but this section only exists and will only be respected from pressure. Pierre Trudeau omitted Indigenous rights from the original draft of the Constitution as yet another attempt to assimilate after the failed White Paper. It was only after mobilizations from Indigenous communities across country—including a Constitution Express that chartered trains from west coast to Ottawa that Section 35 was added, and its only ongoing pressure that will make it a reality. It was only after mobilizations by Metis people and Indigenous women that Section 35 was clarified to include all Indigenous people, and gender equity. But since then the Canadian state has ignored and violated this section repeatedly.

This fall the Chippewas of the Thames and Clyde River First Nations are going to the Supreme Court to challenge decisions by the National Energy Board to allow tar sands and fracking companies to use their land without their consent. This case is not a test of Indigenous rights, which are inherent and which predate the Canadian state. This case is a test of whether a colonial state will respect it’s own constitution, which depends on the balance of forces outside the courts, the strength and solidarity of climate justice movement.

Chippewas of the Thames have launched a legal defence fund, and everyone should transition money into this fund and ask their friends, neighbours, and organizations to do the same. Every dollar raised will help defend Indigenous rights and defend the climate we share and on which we all depend.

*Visit [gofundme.com/chippewas](http://gofundme.com/chippewas) to donate*



People’s Climate Plan

The Paris climate accord calls for reducing climate change to 1.5 degrees. This requires a plan to phase out the tar sands and transition to 100% renewable energy, and can be part of providing justice for those most affected.

But Trudeau’s “Climate Leadership Plan” won’t help the climate, ignores real climate leadership, and does not provide a plan.

‘Climate leadership plan’

Trudeau used the Paris climate accord to greenwash his government and pretend he’s taking climate action, while continuing policies that are driving the climate crisis. In the Liberal’s recent budget he is continuing the billion dollar subsidies to the oil and gas sector, continuing tax breaks for “natural gas,” and providing an additional \$50 million to the tar sands under the rhetoric of “clean growth” to make them more “efficient.”

When Trudeau talks about leadership he means himself, ignoring the leadership of Indigenous communities who are most affected by Canada’s energy economy and who are leading the climate justice movement. If Trudeau wanted to support climate leadership he would support the Unistot’en camp or the Yinka Dene Alliance resisting pipelines on the west coast, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation resisting tar sands at ground zero, or the Clyde River and Chippewas of the Thames First Nation going to the Supreme Court to stop pipelines and uphold their treaty rights.

And when it comes to a plan, the Liberals don’t have one. Trudeau supports “putting a price on carbon,” but instead of punishing polluters and funding alternatives this simply means a carbon tax that will disproportionately impact the 99% while doing nothing to transition us off oil

People’s Climate Plan

But there is a growing campaign for a People’s Climate Plan, which respects the climate science, supports people most affected and plans for mass transition

The People’s Climate Plan has three pillars:

“1. We want a plan that aligns with the science of climate change. Bold climate action ensures Canada meets its commitments to a 1.5 degree world by keeping its fossil fuels reserves in the ground

2. We want a plan that builds a 100% renewable energy economy. Bold climate action ensures Canada transitions to a 100% renewable energy economy by 2050, creasing over a million clean, safe and rewarding jobs.

3. We want a plan that is justice-based. Bold climate action enshrines justice and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples, ensures no worker is left behind in the transition to a clean energy economy, and takes leadership from those hit hardest by the climate crisis.”

These three interconnected pillars are key to combating the climate crisis. First they start with the scientific fact that we have to keep the vast majority of tar sands in the ground if we want a chance to stop the climate crisis. This directly challenges the Liberal’s claim that they can gradually transition to renewable energy while continuing to support oil and gas, or their attempt to only take into account “upstream” impacts of tar sands and ignore the downstream emissions. The only way to meet the climate commitments is to stop tar sands extraction.

Secondly, to achieve the massive transition required to achieve a 100% renewable economy by 2050 requires bold steps immediately. The Liberals are bragging about the \$3 billion they’ve allocated to public transit over the next three years. But according to the Million Climate Jobs campaign we should be speaking \$21 billion on public transit, as part of the \$75 billion plan over five years to create a million jobs and reduce our emissions by 25 per cent. This would only cost 5 per cent of the federal budget each year over five years, and it would achieve what the Liberals claim to want: to grow the economy and protect the planet at the same time. But this requires much more federal spending, which would mean reversing Harper’s corporate tax cuts that the Liberals have maintained.

Thirdly, the People’s Climate Plan puts justice front and centre in the climate plan, including justice for Indigenous peoples impacted by Canada’s extractive industries, justice for migrants impacted by global warming, and justice for workers like those in Fort McMurray who deserve a just transition to good green jobs. Last year saw the March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate, and some saw these as three separate issues, with workers on one side and Indigenous and migrant communities on the other. But this year’s People’s Climate Plan makes it clear that justice includes all of these groups.

Liberal MPs are organizing a series of townhall meetings to build towards their climate leadership plan, and this is an opportunity to support real leadership of the People’s Climate Plan.

Visit peoplesclimate.ca



ANALYSIS



Fight for \$15 and Fairness

by PAM FRACHE

Since its relatively modest beginnings in the fall of 2012 when a handful of fast food workers in New York and Chicago walked off the job, the Fight for \$15 has spread to more than 300 US cities and inspired a global movement—including across Canada and Quebec.

In Canada, the Fight for \$15 & Fairness grew out of Ontario’s successful Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage, a labour-community alliance that launched a \$14 minimum wage campaign just as the Fight for \$15 was emerging in the US. Within a year, the Ontario campaign had forced the Liberal minority government to implement a 75-cent increase in the general adult minimum wage and promise to adopt legislation that would modify the wage each year to keep up with rising prices (indexation). As a result, the minimum wage will be adjusted every October 1 to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The first 25-cent adjustment took effect on October 1, 2015. The 2016 adjustment of 15 cents will bring Ontario’s general adult minimum wage to \$11.40. Of course, workers need far more than \$11.40 an hour, but these modest gains show that, when workers fight as a class, they can win.

Just as importantly, the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage opened up an important public conversation about the nature of work, especially for non-union workers who comprise over 70 per cent of the workforce in Ontario. Because it is virtually impossible to talk about wages without also talking about the other factors that conspire to create bad jobs, the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage helped crystalize the conversation about decent work. It also put pressure on the Liberal government – returned as a majority government in June 2014 – to go beyond mere tinkering with the minimum wage to adopt legislative changes that would better protect workers. Bill 18, adopted in November 2014, implemented small, but important, measures to mitigate wage theft, make temporary agencies jointly responsible with their client companies for wages, and extend some modest protections to migrant workers.

But, rather than deflating the movement, every concession offered by the government has served to widen the public conversation about precarious employment and increase pressure on the government to go further. This dynamic helps explain why the Liberals felt compelled to launch a comprehensive review of both the Employment Standards Act (which sets out minimum employment standards for non-union workers) and the Labour Relations Act (which governs the way workers form unions,

as well as the way in which employers and unionized workers interact).

At the same time, major breakthroughs in the US Fight for \$15 movement were generating excitement in Canada. In 2013, the Seattle suburb of SeaTac voted in a referendum to adopt labour legislation (ordinance) that raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, provided a modest number of paid sick days, instituted fair scheduling with advance notice, mandated employers to offer work hours to existing employees before bringing in new hires, and more. Central to the campaign’s success were strong labour-community alliances that sought to draw workers outside the organized labour movement into a broad working-class campaign to win better working conditions for all workers in the jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, just next door in Seattle, the socialist Kshama Sawant put the Fight for \$15 at the heart of her municipal election campaign, successfully ousting an incumbent Democrat city councilor and generating widespread enthusiasm for a \$15 minimum wage ordinance that would include important additional provisions to stem the growth of precarious jobs in Seattle.

Fight for \$15 and Fairness

In keeping with the growing momentum in the US and in light of the pending Changing Workplaces Review in Ontario, the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage re-launched under the auspices of the Fight for \$15 & Fairness, where Fairness means:

- seven paid sick days;
- an adequate number of paid hours;
- fair scheduling with advance notice;
- better protections from reprisals when workers speak up for their rights or organize unions;
- proactive and publicly-provided enforcement of laws combined with stiffer penalties for employers found to be violating laws;
- an end to ESA exemptions that leave so many workers without the minimum legislative protections;
- an end to contract flipping that undermines workers’ wages, benefits and access to unions; and
- many other other measures that would make it easier for workers to organize and unionize for better work.

The Changing Workplaces Review is the most comprehensive review of Ontario labour and employment law in a generation. By reviewing both Acts at the same time, the government has presented the workers’ movement with an extraordinary opportunity to face off against the 1% as a united force—not one that is weakened by the artificial divisions between union and non-union workers. It provides workers with an incredible opportunity to build meaningful working-class solidarity, renew and extend rank-and-file networks inside and outside

the unions, improve the political terrain for workers, win meaningful reforms—and, in doing so, build the skills, experience and confidence of all workers for the struggles that lie ahead.

Renewing and rebuilding rank-and-file networks

Today, many labour-led campaigns rely heavily on officials in a top down model where the official leadership develops the strategy and members are deployed to attend pre-determined meetings, forums or rallies. However necessary these efforts are, it is not unusual for these kinds of campaigns to start and stop abruptly. And despite impressive mass meetings underpinned by paid book-offs and per diems, all too often very little independent activity is sustained in the wake of such impressive forums.

A campaign like the Fight for \$15 and Fairness can be a bridge between the energy created at the large forums and the crucially-needed, ongoing work of building an engaged, network of rank-and-file workers, both within their own workplaces and among other workers.

Because the Fight for \$15 and Fairness is predicated on workers’ own self-activity, workers can run with the campaign regardless of whether workers occupy official positions within their organizations or whether their union or students’ union has officially endorsed the campaign. Union and non-union workers alike can use the campaign tools to talk to their co-workers and neighbours about the need to organize for better working conditions, and in doing so, learn skills and hone their analysis in a way that makes them better fighters for the next round of collective bargaining. Do wage increases cause inflation? Will all the jobs just move away? How do temp agencies undermine workers solidarity? Do unions hurt the economy? How do workers form unions and why is a secret ballot to unionize not fair in the context of a workplace? By learning how to answer these and other tricky questions, the Fight for \$15 and Fairness offers socialists, trade unionists and non-union fighters a chance to identify a network of serious activists inside and outside the unions who can form the basis of a new rank-and-file network that is already active and not dependent on official leadership.

For Marxists, it is a rare occasion to be part of a campaign that builds local capacity while feeding a global movement. It’s the kind of campaign that builds working-class solidarity across workplaces, across sectors and across borders in a way that lends itself to socialist ideas and offers a wider audience for socialist publications. In short, it’s an opportunity to increase the number of organized socialists in workplaces, in unions, on campuses and in communities everywhere.



# Unpacking our racist baggage

**During a winter trip to the US, Justin Trudeau told a group of students that Canada was suited to peacekeeping roles because it lacks “some of the baggage that so many other Western countries have — either colonial pasts or perceptions of American imperialism.”**

Observers were reminded of Stephen Harper’s notorious assertion that “[W]e also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them.”

Trudeau’s defenders point out that when asked directly about Canada’s First Nations he responded: “We have consistently marginalized, engaged in colonial behaviours, in destructive behaviours, in assimilationist behaviours, that have left a legacy of challenges to a large portion of the people who live in Canada who are Indigenous peoples.”

The apparent contradiction poses no problem for anyone paying attention to Trudeau’s government: we are getting used to hear him speak out of both sides of his mouth. Witness the signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, followed almost immediately by fast-tracking approval of the Kinder-Morgan tar sands pipeline, which violates that very Declaration.

Trudeau isn’t the only Liberal out to obfuscate the history of Canada’s colonial past. Paul Martin weighed in. “I do not believe Canadians are racist,” he said recently. “I do believe, unfortunately, that the whole issue that we are talking about (First Nations) is invisible to so many Canadians.”

Martin has been around long enough to learn a rhetorical trick or two. Rather than address the systemic, institutionalized racism that has relegated First Nations oppression to invisibility, he flips the switch and makes it about individual racism. Whether or not a majority of Canadians is racist at any given moment does not erase the centuries of government policies and racist attitudes of colonial history.

Further, Martin’s claim of invisibility is nonsense. After the powerful rise of Idle No More, after the revelations about genocidal abuse practiced in the residential schools, after First Nations leading the fight against fracking and pipeline building, after the horrifying headlines about rampant youth suicide: how is the oppression of Indigenous peoples invisible?

It certainly isn’t invisible in Halifax, where Mi’kmaq people have called for the removal of a statue of General Edward Cornwallis, first governor of Nova Scotia and founder of Halifax in 1749.

## Cornwallis the terrorist

Cornwallis was an officer at the Battle of Culloden, and was put in charge of a regiment tasked with “pacifying” the west Highlands.

“Pacification” involved slaughtering livestock, rape

and mass murder; in particular Cornwallis and his men were fond of “boarding”, where people were crowded into homes, the doors and windows boarded shut, and the buildings burned.

In short, Cornwallis was a terrorist. But he was a successful terrorist and grateful powers in London sent him to use his talents in the “New World”.

There was nothing “New” about the Atlantic northeast for Mi’kmaq and other Indigenous peoples. The Mi’kmaq were part of the Wabanaki Conferacy of First Nations who lived in what we now call the Maritimes and New England. An earlier treaty signed with England stated that, in return for allowing an English colony in what is now Maine, no further communities would be established without agreement from the First Nations.

England already had a military stronghold at Annapolis Royal, designed to counter the French at Louisbourg, which Mi’kmaq leaders had allowed. But the new colony at Halifax, an important hunting and religious site, according to a letter sent by Mi’kmaq leaders to Cornwallis, was “a great theft that you have perpetrated against me.”

Mi’kmaq warriors defended their land, attacking military establishments and ships. Cornwallis fell back on his old tactics, putting a bounty on Mi’kmaq scalps. This was a common practice among English and French commanders looking to extend their colonial power, but Cornwallis paid top dollar.

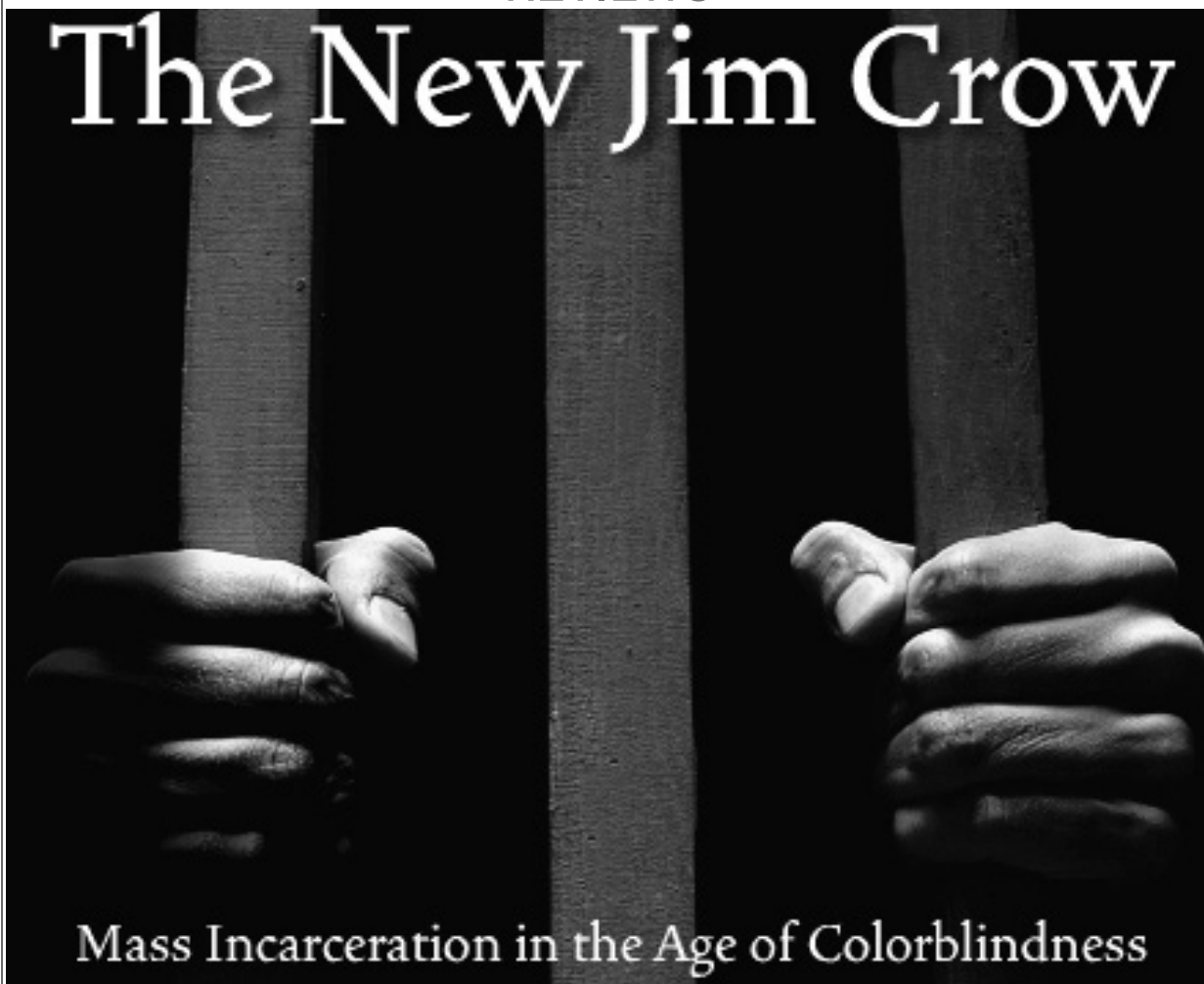
For years, Mi’kmaq people have tried to raise awareness to the fact that seeing the name and likeness of Cornwallis everywhere around them is an insult, a constant reminder of the lies and slaughter brought by colonialism. This is the “baggage” Trudeau says we don’t have.

Mi’kmaq activists and allies have raised the issue at Halifax City Council. A recent proposal to move the Cornwallis statue from the downtown park was designed to remove the “invisibility” of the real history of colonialism. The motion was narrowly defeated.

It should be noted that the proposal did not want the statue destroyed, but moved to an historic military site, where interpretive information could present a more honest view of Cornwallis.

Opponents cried that all this amounts to “rewriting history.” In fact they are right. Our official histories have deliberately erased or glossed over the real histories of Indigenous peoples. Colonialism is “nation building,” bringing “civilization” and “progress.” In fact, it was theft conducted by a combination of genocidal brutality and trickery. Cornwallis excelled at the former.

Now is the time to turn the old histories on their heads, to tell the story from the victims’ point of view. It is an essential process if we are ever to turn our society on its head, and make it work for the majority instead of a tiny elite.



*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*  
By Michelle Alexander  
Reviewed by Peter Hogarth

**As the Black Lives Matter movements continues to gain international prominence and challenge police brutality and systemic racism, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness is a valuable resource.**

Michelle Alexander’s book has the potential to arm activists with the arguments about what racism looks like in a country where there can be an African-American president, but also thousands of completely disenfranchised and oppressed African-Americans.

The premise of the book rests on the point that in “color-blind” America there is a profound misunderstanding regarding how racial oppression actually works. In the wake of the civil rights movement and in a time and place where a majority of white people will say that racial discrimination is wrong and have voted for a Black president, the New Jim Crow is something much more insidious.

The system of mass incarceration, what Michelle Alexander has identified as the New Jim Crow, is an elaborate system of control, complete with political disenfranchisement and legalized discrimination in every major area of economic and social life. It is produces racial meaning and racial boundaries. Following the incredible victories of the civil rights movements

of the 1960s and 1970s, Conservative Americans had to find a new way to say the same old things. The idea of being “tough on crime” became a stand-in for long held racist ideas about Black predators and the safety and supremacy of white families.

In the mid to late 70s, the Republican party leaned hard in the direction of being tough on crime, rooting out the “social pathologies” of poverty, and targeting illegal drug use. As sociologist Katherine Beckett notes, “the alleged misbehaviours of the poor were transformed from adaptations to pverty that had the unfortunate effect of reproducing it into character failings that accounted for poverty in the first place.”

All of these social ills could be identified with the impoverished communities around the country, but in the public discourse and the social imaginary, the campaigns of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr. these social ills became almost totally identified with urban Black communities. The War on Drugs became “a legitimate outlet to the expression of anti-Black resentment and animus—a convenient release valve now that explicit forms of racial bias are strictly condemned. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer permissible to hate blacks, but we can hate criminals.”

This racialization of crime in the media and political discourse means that the system of mass incarceration and control of black men, can operate without seeming overtly racist at all. Black police officers, and lawyers

prosecute it, some prominent members of the black community cheer on “tough on crime” measures, but “the War on Drugs was declared as part of a political ploy to capitalize on white racial resentment against African Americans, and the Reagan administration used the emergence of crack and its related violence as an opportunity to build a racialized public consensus in support of an all-out war—a consensus that almost certainly would not have been formed if the primary users and dealers of crack had been white.”

The New Jim Crow is an incredibly concise, yet powerful indictment of the politics of colorblindness and Alexander poses questions and offers radical ideas that could build a movement to oppose the systemic racism of mass incarceration. Her solutions offer an alternative to the trickle-down strategies of racial justice that have become the norm for many civil rights organizations in the past few decades and takes an “all of us or none of us” approach to justice that includes unifying with poor and working class whites to demand a better system.

Read this book. Get copies for your friends, family and co-workers. Talk about it. It is an incredibly accessible and valuable resource that can move us from the paralyzing and shaming of identity politics so common with any discussions of race and oppression and move towards a conversation about the systematic oppression that disenfranchises and degrades and real ideas about how to fight to end it.

## Obituary: anti-war activist Daniel Berrigan dead at 95

By Reg McQuaid

**One of the iconic opponents of the Vietnam War, US Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan, passed away in New York on April 30, nine days short of his 95th birthday. Together with his brother Philip, also a priest, they led a group of mostly Catholic radicals in several high-profile acts of civil disobedience over a 20-year period extending into the early 1980s.**

The most famous of these was the public burning of draft records in Catonsville, Maryland in May 1968. After a lengthy trial the “Catonsville Nine” were sentenced to three years in prison in 1970, but the two Berrigans went underground and eluded arrest for several months, during which time they were on the FBI’s most-wanted list, and eventually on the cover of Time magazine.

Daniel Berrigan was a university lecturer in several Northeast universities, but mostly at Fordham

University in the Bronx. He was also a biblical scholar and poet, the author of some 50 books.

In 1968 he travelled to Hanoi with historian Howard Zinn in a gesture of opposition to the Vietnam war. In 1980 the Berrigan brothers were also involved in a high-profile act of civil disobedience in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, where they were part of a group who symbolically damaged some nuclear warheads. The eight intruders, known at “The Ploughshares Eight,” were charged with various offences, and after a 10-year legal battle, sentenced to two years in prison.

The Berrigans saw racism, poverty, militarism and capitalist greed as interconnected parts of an unjust society. They confronted the religious bureaucracies as racist, accomplices to war, and hostile to the poor. Daniel remained a Jesuit all his life, but Philip left the priesthood to found Jonah House, a faith-based community centred on non-violence and resistance. Philip passed away in

2002, having spent a total of 11 years in prison for acts of civil disobedience. Daniel took part in the Occupy Wall Street in 1990.

It is worth noting that the current Pope, who has taken several progressive steps, is also a Jesuit, the first member of that religious order to hold that office. Also, in El Salvador the Jesuits were vocal supporters of the revolutionary cause during the civil war, which led to six of them being assassinated by the military in 1989.

Full credit should be given to the Berrigan brothers for helping put the anti-war movement on the national agenda, and encouraging others to oppose the military draft and the war in Vietnam. Sadly, however, after 50 years the US continues to pursue military solutions abroad, and to maintain a nuclear arsenal. Their actions were primarily symbolic, hoping the conscience of others would be awakened and that change would result.



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

*Another world is needed. Together, it is possible!*

MONTREAL - 9-14 AUGUST 2016

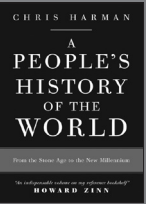
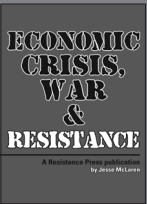
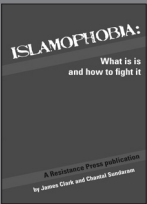
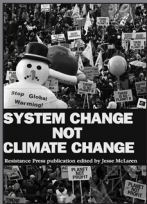
fsm2016.org

International Socialist events

visit [www.socialist.ca](http://www.socialist.ca)  
for updates

OPEN SATURDAYS, 12-3pm

427 Bloor Street West, suite 202, Toronto ; 416-972-6391; [www.facebook.com/resistancepress](http://www.facebook.com/resistancepress)





## JUSTICE FOR GILARY

By Valerie Lannon

**About 100 people joined the downtown Toronto rally and march on Mother's Day, May 8, to support Gilary Massa.**

The Ryerson Student Union (RSU) fired the Black Muslim woman while she was on maternity leave. To make matters worse, the RSU new executive placed many of Massa's job duties into a new management position, then filled the position with one of their white buddies.

The noisy crowd included unions—including her own CUPE local—students, the Ryerson Faculty Association, the university's anti-racism coalition, and community members.

Massa has been an active member of her bargaining unit since she was 19, and is not about to back down now. Speakers denounced RSU not only for the firing, but for not recognizing the Supreme Court of Canada decision many years ago that declared that disciplinary action during maternity leave was illegal.

*Follow the campaign on Facebook at [istandwithgilary](#)*

## AIRPORT WORKERS UNITED

By Peter Hogarth

**On May 1, International Workers Day, unorganized workers from the Fight for 15 and Fairness campaign joined workers from the Airport Workers Council, members of CUPE, new OFL president Chris Buckley and others for a May Day celebration at the Departures ramp at Terminal 1 at Toronto's Pearson International Airport.**

Workers, on duty and off, took some time out to enjoy treats from Ice Cream and Churro trucks parked outside the entrances and spread the word to fellow workers and departing travellers that they want \$15 wages for everyone at the airport (and around the province) and an end to contract flipping at the airport. Traffic was snarled as workers danced, chanted and spread the word.

Below is the May Day statement from the Airport Workers Council:

"We are workers united.

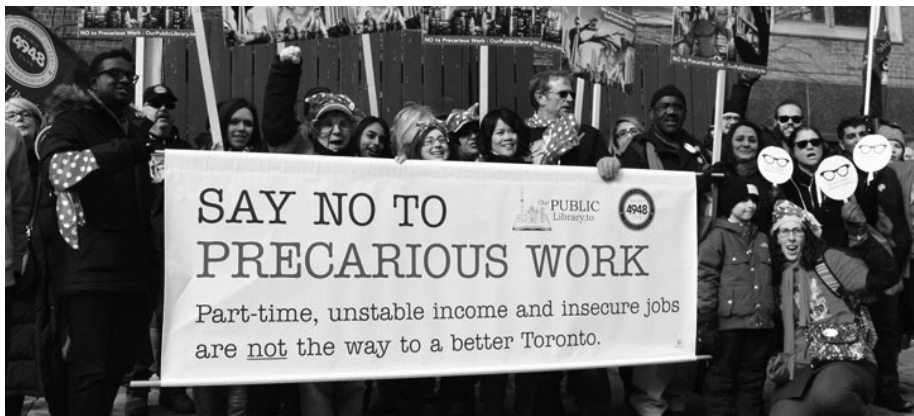
Whether we work on the ground or in the sky, we all face the same agenda that attacks our wages and working conditions. No community can survive when the drive for profits is more important than the needs of its people.

We no longer quietly accept their race to the bottom. We demand:

- All airport labour is paid at least \$15 an hour
- All airport workers receive at least 7 paid sick days
- Equal pay for equal work
- Guaranteed hours of work
- No more contract flipping!

We are workers united. Together we can change our community."

## TORONTO LIBRARY WORKERS RESIST CONCESSIONS



by PAM JOHNSON

**Toronto Library workers in CUPE 4948 stared down all the concessions that Mayor John Tory was attempting to extract in recent contract negotiations. Library workers called the mayor's bluff, signalling their readiness to hit the picket lines on the May 2 deadline if the city didn't come up with a better offer.**

CUPE local 4948 president Maureen O'Reilly characterized this round of negotiations as no different than the last time in 2012 when Rob Ford was mayor and library workers struck.

The city was asking for major concessions including, mandatory Sunday shifts at straight time for full timers and two-tiered job security for part timers. The union indicated it was willing to go on strike if either of these two issues remained on the table. Both were struck in the final offer.

### From Ford to Tory

In 2012, the library workers were the only municipal workers that managed to resist Ford's attack on

city workers. They hit the picket lines after building a big campaign that engaged the library-loving public, including Margaret Atwood, with rallies, regular communications and public read-ins.

The strike pushed Ford off his game and many concessions, although not all, came off the table, unlike the situation for other city workers in CUPE 416 and 79.

In 2016, library workers started on a more confident and pro-active footing, fighting for gains at the bargaining table, and reactivating the networks with library supporters from the 2012 strike.

Margaret Atwood again weighed in to support with her million twitter followers, the union held a Teddy Bear picket at Nathan Phillips square that brought out library supporters and their families.

While Tory was able to once again squeeze concessions out of inside and outside workers in CUPE 416 and 79, library workers successfully fought off all concessions. This is rare a vic-

tory and breaks the pattern of insidious erosion in which huge initial concessions and wage freezes offered by the employer are whittled down to smaller ones with miniscule wages increases.

There have been other recent examples of building new resistance on previous success. Chicago teachers held a one-day strike in April calling for more funding for education. The confidence to build a strike on a political demand and not just an economic demand is a result of the base of support built in the successful strike in 2012.

Quebec public sector workers also pushed back concessions in a recent series of strikes, including the largest general strike in Quebec history on December 9. This was built, in part, on the success of the student strike in 2012.

What Toronto library workers, Chicago teachers and Quebec public sector example show is that when unions organize effective campaigns to engage members and the community they can directly challenge employers' attacks.

## Quebec's municipal workers fight back

By Chantal Sundaram

**On May 12, thousands of unionized Quebec municipal workers greeted elected municipal officials with a protest at the opening of the annual sitting of the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) in front of the Congress Centre in Quebec City.**

The Quebec government is considering a bill that would limit the rights of workers to freely negotiate by giving elected officials the power to impose working conditions on their municipal employees.

The protesting workers, members of CUPE, were there to remind officials that interfering in negotiations is a direct and unacceptable attack on a fundamental right of all Quebec workers. They

were also there to target Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard, who was present to give the opening speech of the UMQ meeting. In the words of Denis Bolduc, Secretary-General of CUPE-Québec: "This would be unprecedented in the history of labour relations in Quebec! Elected officials want to offload their financial problems onto the backs of their employees. It's odious!"

The protest saw some tense moments with the riot police, who held the line for more than an hour in front of workers who were blocking the entrance to the Congress Centre, but there were no arrests.

The Quebec government describes its intentions in giving new powers to employers as restoring the balance of power between municipalities and the unions. It

is part of a new fiscal pact with municipalities.

Marc Ranger, the Quebec director of CUPE, told the crowd: "We got screwed with Bill 15 [on pensions], but now, there's no way! This fight, we're going to win. The government better stop listening to two or three overexcited mayors."

Union leaders targeted the new president of the UMQ, Sherbrooke mayor Bernard Sévigny, accused of having received illegal party contributions. The protesters promised to « greet » him again when he holds a meeting in Sherbrooke May 19.

This is yet another example of the ongoing struggle against austerity in Quebec, which only rarely makes the news in English Canada, but continues nonetheless.

## 'Spirit of Hope' draws war criminals to Toronto

By Stephen Ellis

**On May 26, 2016, about 100 feisty demonstrators from Actions4Palestine welcomed some of the planet's biggest war criminals at the Metro Convention Centre.**

The occasion was a fund-raising dinner sponsored by the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies featuring

the granddaddy of all war criminals, Henry Kissinger, former Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres and former Israeli ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren.

Without a hint of irony, the event was billed "to foster dialogue about some of the most relevant issues of the day, looks at the big questions including globalization, human rights, freedom and democracy,

the Middle East and international affairs in an effort to make sense of the world in which we live."

Protesters should shouted "Henry Kissinger, you can't hide – we charge you with genocide!" Those attending the gala had to walk through were greeted with shouts of "shame". As one organizer said, "we may not have stopped the dinner, but we certainly gave them indigestion."

## STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

## French workers on the move

**The so called "Socialist" government in France is under siege, though you would never know it with the limited press coverage in Canada.**

Prime Minister Hollande is trying to push through changes to labour law which would undercut national agreements locally, force workers into longer hours and make firing easier for the employer.

Huge demonstrations and work stoppages are taking place that are shaking the country, but workers here could only learn about it through social media.

### Nuit Debout

Momentum has been building for months. After demonstrations on March 31st people began nightly occupations, Nuit Debout, of the Place de le Republique in Paris. Wide ranging discussions and debates took place and the spirit was much like we saw in the Occupy movement.

There is a tremendous disillusionment with electoral politics and a very real sense that there has been a total betrayal of any democratic principles by the Socialist Party. Working people are desperate for an alternative.

### Workers and students

Labour has gone on the offensive. Newspaper workers refused to put out any paper but the left wing L'Humanite because the rest refused to print an article by a labour leader from the CGT, Philippe Martinez.

Across the country oil refineries were blockaded, auto workers were in the streets. General meetings were being held in workplaces where strike votes were being held. Ferries and flights had to be canceled. 20,000 dock workers marched in Le Havre. Posters were put up stating "No Amendments No Negotiations".

Workers were given confidence by the mass demonstrations to push for local work place demands as well such as at Peugeot. It

brings to mind May 1968, though the times were very different, but the coming together of students and workers is a very powerful force.

Young people see their futures at stake and don't believe the lies coming from Hollande and his ministers that this is all being done for them.

The police have viciously attacked student rallies and occupations at their universities. The repression has brought more militancy and resolve from the youth, which in turn has inspired the workers.

In spite of the government trying to blame the unions, saying a minority of workers do not have the right to govern the country, the majority of the population (in a number of different polls) are backing the strikes and oppose the legislation.

National elections are only one year away and Hollande is extremely unpopular. He has used some legislative trick to pass the changes without a vote which has enraged people even further.

### International

Strikes are also happening in Belgium and transit workers are about to walk out in Barcelona. There is a mood of resistance and the fact that in France the population is siding with the workers, because they feel they are fighting for all, is hugely important.

Working people and the poor are tired of the austerity agendas of governments. They are tired of the racism and sexism of the state, the homophobia, the attacks on those with disabilities, and the cuts to services that are making life so much harder for so many.

Hopefully the French workers and students will keep up the fight and push back the government which seems to be committed to bringing them to their knees. We are seeing the power of the organized working class let's hope it will prevail and give confidence to workers everywhere.





# SocialistWorker

## Fort McMurray needs green jobs

**A massive forest fire has consumed more than a third of a million hectares, and forced the 90,000 people of Fort McMurray to flee.**

As the local fire chief said, “it’s been the worst day of my career. The people here are devastated. Fort McMurray has been overrun by wildfire.”

While this is a disaster localized in Fort McMurray it has affected people across the country, as the Fort McMurray economy draws people from coast to coast.

### Support

There has been an outpouring of support for the town. First responders have worked tirelessly to fight the fire and help evacuation, including firefighters who have seen their own houses burn to ground and keep working to help others.

People across the country have opened their hearts and their pocket books, donating nearly \$90 million to the Red Cross in the first 10 days of the blaze, and much support have come from those previously impacted by disaster.

Residents of Lac Mégantic, whose town was incinerated by exploding oil train have collected funds for Fort McMurray. Syrian refugees, who know first hand the impact of displacement and the need for support, have reciprocated solidarity.

Indigenous communities whose territories have been undermined by tar sands have welcomed people fleeing the fire. Fort McKay First Nation, home to 700 people, have welcomed 5,000 people; Beaver Lake Cree First Nation, which was devastated by an oil spill in 2011, have also offered support.

Greenpeace and Sierra Club, who oppose the tar sands have appealed for



donations to Red Cross, saying

Support for Fort McMurray has been widespread. Where the division exists is between those who offer empty words of support while supporting policies that stoke the flames, and those building solidarity as part of providing alternatives so we can prevent the next catastrophe.

In campaign mode last year, Trudeau said “Climate change is real. We’re already seeing its effects. Here in Alberta in just the last five years we’ve seen destruction on an almost unprecedented scale.” But now he has tried to disconnect fire from climate change, saying that “Pointing at any one incident and saying well, this is because of or that, is neither helpful nor particularly accurate.”

Mulcair simply echoed Trudeau, saying: “It’s not

the time to start laying blame.”

Even Elizabeth May said that “Some reports have suggested that wildfires are directly caused by climate change. No credible climate scientist would make that claim and neither do I.”

Of course climate change, and tar sands, are not the only reason for the fire: there are other climate phenomena, like El Nino, and local factors like the endemic fire rate, and the specific conditions of wind and humidity. We can’t do anything about these factors and that’s the point of talking about climate change: because it’s something we can change, unless we want to condemn more communities to climate disasters.

### Un-natural disasters

Climate change is bringing increasing “natural disasters.”

In 2003 heat wave across Europe that killed tens of thousands; in 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans; in 2010 flood immersed Pakistan; in 2013 Typhoon Haiyan smashed into Philippines.

Canada is not immune from climate disasters. Fort McMurray forest fire was preceded by Slave Lake fire in 2011 and west coast fires last year that raged in 100 areas in each of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

This will only get worse if we don’t take climate action. As NASA scientist James Hansen said, “if Canada proceeds (with tar sands)... it will be game over for the climate.”

While there’s been much media coverage of the devastating impact fires there’s little coverage of devastating impact of tar sands themselves. They have destroyed so much boreal forest they

are visible from space, they waste water to produce dirty oil, and they generate carcinogens that have caused a cancer epidemic in downstream Indigenous communities like Athabasca Chippewyan First Nation.

For years we’ve been told to ignore Indigenous communities, ignore climate change and ignore 400,000 job losses during the economic crisis because Fort McMurray provides jobs. But now Fort McMurray has experienced a devastating series of crises that have highlighted the impact of economy based on boom, bust, and oil, which sacrifice workers and communities for profits of big oil.

Oil companies make billions from Fort McMurray but 2010 director of women’s shelter went on hunger strike to demand more space after turning away 400 women the previ-

ous year.

In 2013 Fort McMurray declared a state of emergency due to unprecedented floods.

Since then oil companies have engaged in mass layoffs, and this has contributed to a rise in suicide rates. And now the fire.

There’s discussion on rebuilding Fort McMurray and bringing things back to normal. But will this be old normal that destroys Indigenous territories and the climate and that sacrifices workers/families for corporate profits? Or will there be a transition to a new normal, with respect for Indigenous communities and just transition for workers?

### Just transition

The organization Iron and Earth that is calling on Alberta government to retrain 1000 out-of-work oil industry electricians in solar panel installation.

Last month Leap Manifesto was being slammed for being naïve, for moving too quickly, and for not considering the livelihoods of people in Alberta. Fort McMurray fire shows how urgent these policies are, including for Alberta.

Despite corporate media attacks, echoed by the NDP leadership, recent polls shows the Leap Manifesto has majority support from NDP/Green voters, half of Liberal voters and even 20% of Tory voters.

As Martin Lucacs wrote in *The Guardian*, “This is the political paradox of the climate crisis: what is feasible to the media and corporate class is catastrophic to the climate. We can break the narrowly defined box of what is considered politically possible, or we can break the ecological carrying capacity of the planet.”

## WSF: another world is possible

By Peter Hogarth

**The World Social Forum (WSF) is coming to Montreal. August 9-14 will see thousands of activists from around the world descend on the city to discuss solutions to the pressing problems facing us today.**

The forum will have workshops, panels, and artistic performances from the campaigners, union activists and participants in the social justice movements shaping the response to the inequality in the world.

The first WSF was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January, 2001. The event was launched under the banner of “another world is possible” and emerged in a context of a global anti-capitalist movement.

Tracing its roots to the Zapatista rising in Chiapas in 1994, the French public sector strikes of 1995 and really experiencing a coming out party with the battle in Seattle to shut down the World Trade Organization meeting in 1999, the WSF was an expression of a global anti-capitalist sentiment to take on corporate power and propose alternatives while building international solidarity.

The WSF was conceived of as a place where the strategies of resistance against the programs of the WTO, the World Bank and IMF could be discussed and coordinated.

The possibilities and potential of the WSF was revealed by the enormous demonstrations against the war in Iraq, between February and April 2003,

including the single largest day of protest that the world has ever seen on February 15.

Despite these successes, the WSF had a rule that political organizations should not take part directly. The rationale was that the problems should be handled directly by the grassroots movements affected by them and organizing against them.

However the experience over the last 15 years has made it more obvious to many that ignoring the state and the question of power and elections cannot be ignored. The experiences of the last 13 years of imperialist intervention in the Middle East, the revolutionary movements across the Arab World, the Occupy Wall Street movement and the economic crisis and resistance in Europe have

starkly exposed the importance of political expressions of grassroots social movements.

The echoes of these movements can be felt in the electoral successes of Jeremy Corbyn, Bernie Sanders, Syriza and other radical left parties around the world, including Quebec solidaire.

Considering the victories, setbacks and challenging terrain facing the worldwide movement of those interested in building alternatives to capitalism, this year’s WSF in Montreal is important for discussing and coordinating challenges to the system.

*For more information and to register, visit: fsm2016.org*

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