

# Socialist Worker

www.socialist.ca

\$2 | no. 540 | April 2012

## Quebec Spring STUDENTS & WORKERS FIGHT AUSTERITY



**ON MARCH 31, 8,000 people—including workers from across Quebec, Canada, and the world, and striking Quebec students—converged in Alma, Quebec to support workers fighting a lockout.**

Quebec students have been on strike since February against government plans to increase tuition by 75 per cent. Despite media and government attempts to divide them, and police attacking them, the strike wave has continued. For the first time anglophone students at Concordia and McGill have joined the strike, and Québec solidaire, Quebec's left-wing electoral alternative, has been a vocal supporter.

There has also been solidarity from students on campuses in the rest of Canada—at McMaster, University of Toronto, Carleton, and University of King's College in Halifax—in addition to support from the Canadian Federation of Students and the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

A high point of the strike wave was the magnificent demonstration on March 22, when 200,000 students and their allies marched in

Montreal—the largest demonstration in Canada since the 2003 protest that stopped Canada from going to war in Iraq.

The last mass student strike in 2005 was started by a smaller coalition of student unions, CASSÉ, but grew to involve the larger student unions FEUQ and FECQ. This forced the government back on its plans to cut \$103 million from student grants, but a debate opened up in the student movement—with the larger unions declaring victory but the more militant sections insisting on continuing the strike and even denouncing the end of the strike despite its winning its initial demand. This time around, Quebec student organization CLASSE is larger and more rooted than CASSÉ but similar debates are emerging about goals and also tactics—about how to continue the strike against a government that so far refuses to budge.

### Printemps érable

The sheer size of the strike is already building broader movements, from April 22 Earth Day protests to May Day workers' protests. Some have called the movement "le print-

emps érable"—which means "Maple spring" but in French sounds similar to "Arab Spring". The involvement of workers has been key to the Arab spring—it was mass strikes by workers, inspired by student protests, that finally drove out dictators in Tunisia and Egypt—and the Quebec students could also act as the spark for the labour movement.

On March 19, Aveos workers blockaded a road outside Air Canada offices in Montreal to protest a mass layoff and only moved after they were attacked by riot police. On March 22, the same day as the mass student strike, Air Canada workers in Montreal and Quebec joined the wildcat strike in solidarity with workers in Toronto.

On March 31, 800 workers in Alma, a town of 30,000 people three hours north of Quebec City, who have been locked out since New Years by mining giant Rio Tinto, welcomed a mass solidarity rally of 8,000—including the leadership of CLASSE, buses of workers from every corner of Quebec, and a contingent from Québec solidaire. From outside Quebec there were buses of Steelworkers from

Hamilton and Toronto, solidarity from the Canadian Labour Congress and financial support from CAW—including workers from Kitimat, BC, who are contributing \$60,000 a month to Alma workers. There were also workers from Los Angeles, Kentucky, South Africa, Mexico, the Netherlands, Turkey, New Zealand and Australia.

The day of action in Alma was the second time in a month that Toronto Steelworkers travelled 12 hours to give their solidarity, while workers in BC continue to provide financial support. This follows on other co-ordinated actions across Canada and Quebec—from the March 1 day of action by PSAC against the federal austerity budget, to the March 22 wildcat strike by Air Canada workers in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City. Canada's 1% rules by dividing, but resistance and solidarity of workers and students across Canada and Quebec is growing.

For information on the Quebec student strike visit bloquonslahausse.com or stopthehike.ca, and for information on the Rio Tinto lockout visit solidaritealma.org or justiceforriotintoworkers.ca.



**NO SANCTIONS  
NO WAR  
Pages 6 & 7**

### Heiltsuk First Nation resists pipeline

**Page 2**

Valerie Lannon on the growing resistance to Enbridge

### Palestine resists

**Page 3**

Amelia Murphy-Beaudoin on the hunger strikes and global march

### The people vs Putin

**Page 4**

Chantal Sundarum on the anti-government protests in Russia

### Hoodies and hijabs

**Page 9**

John Bell on Trayvon Martin, racism, austerity and the Harper agenda

### Rank-and-file resistance

**Page 10**

Pam Johnson on the 1965 postal walkout

### Air Canada wildcat

**Page 10**

Interview with AC activist



CPMA No. 58554253-99  
ISSN No. 0836-7094



Resistance to Enbridge grows

by VALERIE LANNON

THE HEILTSUK First Nation is known as one of the north and central BC coast Nations that are home to the Great Bear Rainforest—described as “a hub of teeming plant and animal life and a vast storehouse of biological carbon.” Now the Heiltsuk First Nation is taking very public steps to voice its opposition to Enbridge’s proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline.

In March, opposition took the form of a march and rally in Vancouver. In a call for mass action, the organizers’ media release stated that “we respectfully request the support of the Coast Salish communities, whose land we will be rallying on, all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people residing in Vancouver/Lower Mainland, the Power to Women and other Aboriginal groups, and our other allies such as Sierra Club, Dogwood Initiative, and Pacific Wild.”

Meanwhile, back in Heiltsuk territory, school children organized a 48-hour hunger strike, from April 1-3, to coincide with the Enbridge hearings being held in the community.

To see their video, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5oUWiwrhU4>

BC teachers fight to protect public eduction

THE MEDIATOR appointed by the BC Liberals to work out a deal between teachers and the government has a history of donating money to Christy Clark’s Liberal Party. He is also author of a report for the provincial government in 2006 titled “Working Together to Improve Performance: Preparing B.C.’s Public Education System for the Future.”

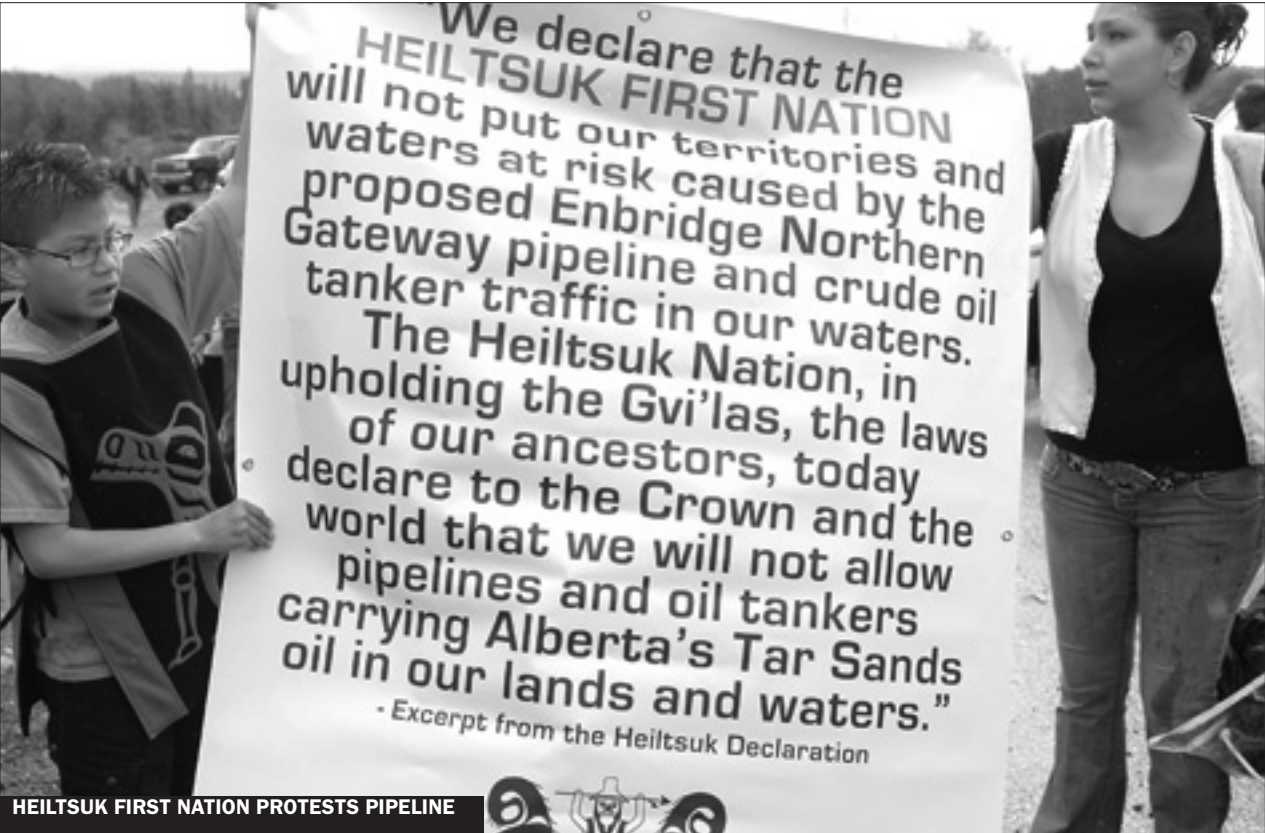
He is Charles Jago, and he is being paid \$2000 per day. He has no experience as a mediator. Choosing him is just the latest insult to struggling BC teachers.

Teachers had been without a contract since June 2011. This year they had conducted limited job action, refusing to do report cards, attend meetings with management or conduct extra-curricular activities.

In mid-March the Liberals imposed Bill 22, essentially taking away the legal right to strike, and mandating a “net zero” contract. The government has unilaterally increased class size, removed limitations on the number of “special needs” students per class, and taken away hard-won rights to seniority, job security and due process.

The BC Liberals are committed to moving more sharply to a two-tiered education system: a cash-strapped public tier for the 99% and a private school system for the elite. They have been strangling funding to public schools and funneling the money into tax breaks for corporations and public funding for private school students.

A three-day walkout by teachers in early March drew high levels of public support. Christy Clark’s BC Liberal government also faces job action from government and hospital workers. This is a government in free fall.



Defend choice: defeat Motion 312

by JESSE MCLAREN

DESPITE PRIME Minister Harper’s reassurances that “we are not opening the abortion debate,” his government constantly attacks the right to choice. The latest attack is motion M-312, to be debated in Parliament in late April.

Tory MP Stephen Woodworth’s motion calls for “a special committee of the House appointed and directed to review the declaration in Subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that a child becomes a human being only

at the moment of complete birth.” This Tory-dominated committee would try to give personhood to a fetus in order to criminalize abortion.

As soon as abortion was legal in 1988 the Tories tried to recriminalize it, with Brian Mulroney’s government introducing Bill C-43 in 1990.

The current Harper government is filled with anti-choice bigots (Immigration Minister Jason Kenney was an “anti-abortion activist” in his college years), who have relentlessly introduced anti-choice bills. In 2006 there was C-338 against abortions after 20 weeks, and C-291

the “Unborn Victims of Violence” act; in 2008 there was C-484 the “unborn victims of crime” act; in 2010 there was C-510 against “coerced abortion.”

Harper has defunded countless women’s groups, introduced a “maternal health plan” that excludes abortion, and Tory Senator Nancy Ruth has told women’s groups to “shut the fuck up” on abortion. Meanwhile, anti-choice groups are trying to use the austerity agenda to defund abortion.

But Tories are operating from a position of weakness. Harper’s false reassurances

come from a lack of confidence to take on the pro-choice movement, which has majority support across the country and a strong legacy.

Abortion rights were won with a grassroots campaign uniting women’s groups, trade unions, student groups and progressive faith groups—putting the demand for legal abortion into a broader context of reproductive choice and equality. We need a similar unity, amongst the 99%, to defend a woman’s right to choose against the Tory’s latest attack.

For more information visit [www.arcc-cdac.ca](http://www.arcc-cdac.ca).

‘Robogate’ reveals weakness of Tory majority

by ALLAN WOOD

VOTERS IN more than 90 ridings across Canada have reported irregularities, suspicious activity, and harassing and misleading phone calls in the run-up to the May 2011 federal election. In nearly every case, the calls and irregularities favoured the Conservatives.

What is already being called the largest election scandal in Canadian history has raised serious doubts about the legitimacy of the Conservatives’ major-

ity of seats in Parliament. Elections Canada has received over 31,000 complaints related to the 2011 election.

As the evidence piles up, it is looking extremely likely that the Conservatives—and/or operatives working on their behalf—did all they could to fix the election: illegally suppressing voter turnout in key ridings, directing voters to non-existent polling stations, and harassing voters while impersonating its opposition parties, to ensure that Stephen Harper and his

Conservative party received the majority government it had desired for years.

Far from being the work of one “rogue” staffer, honest “mistakes,” or a “smear campaign” cooked up by the opposition, what the media has dubbed Robogate or the Robocall scandal is actually an intricate, highly-organized effort across the entire country to fix the May 2011 election. “Robo-” is a misnomer, however, because live people made many of these suspicious calls.

Back in November 2011, the Conservatives admit-

ted they had made illegal, false, and misleading phone calls to voters before a byelection.

Section 281(g) of the *Canada Elections Act* is clear: “No person shall, inside or outside Canada, wilfully prevent or endeavour to prevent an elector from voting at an election.” There must be a full investigation of these allegations of fraud, with byelections held in any riding in which illegal calls were made. If necessary, the Governor General should dissolve Parliament and call for a new election.

Carleton grads vote to divest from Israeli occupation

by SAMANTHA PONTING

ON MARCH 21 and 22, the general membership of Carleton’s Graduate Students’ Association voted overwhelmingly in support of Carleton divesting, via its pension fund, from companies complicit in the illegal military occupation of Palestine.

The plebiscite question, which has provisionally passed by 72.6 per cent, marks the first time in Canada, and what is believed to be the second time globally, that a student union has taken a position via a direct vote in support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israeli violations of international law. In 2010,

students at Washington’s Evergreen State College passed divestment resolutions via referendum.

The question asked students if they support Carleton University “adopting a binding socially responsible investment policy that would require it to divest from companies complicit in illegal military occupations and other violations of international law.” The question listed four companies involved in the illegal military occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories: BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman, Motorola and Tesco Supermarkets.

BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman are weapons manufacturers. Motorola supplies the Israeli

military with surveillance and telecommunications products. Tesco Supermarkets sell produce from illegal Israeli settlements, facilitating their expansion and blatantly ignoring their illegality. This has been to the detriment of the Palestinian economy.

Because Carleton University is not a democratic organization, the campus community does not have a formal say in how the university is run beyond the few and marginalized student voices sitting on the Board of Governors (BOG), Carleton’s highest governing board. While all elected student representatives on the BOG support divestment, the board has refused to entertain a motion that would require it to divest from these compan-

ies. While the board has a socially responsible investment policy, the policy is non-binding and has yet to be applied meaningfully.

The plebiscite results represent a great milestone in the international BDS campaign. Both the undergraduate and graduate student unions at Carleton have already passed motions in support of divestment from illegal military occupation. The plebiscite marks the most democratic method available for collective decision-making. The results demonstrate that students across the campus are united in their outrage towards Israel’s illegal military occupation, and speak to their discontent of the administration’s inaction on such an important issue.

CSIS to share information despite risk of torture

by EVAN JOHNSTON

A NEWLY released document to The Canadian Press reveals that the federal government has given CSIS the go-ahead to provide information to foreign agencies in “exceptional cases,” even when there is a “substantial risk” that such information will lead to torture.

The July 2011 document, released on March 2 under the *Access to Information Act*, is a four-page directive to CSIS director Dick Fadden providing instructions on the conditions under which information should be shared. Included in these instructions are a series of factors to consider when deciding on whether or not to share with a given government agency, such as the importance of Canada’s security, Canada’s relationship with the country in question, and the particular views of the Department of Foreign Affairs, among others.

This new document is the latest in a series of exceptions to both domestic and international law that the Canadian government has been willing to make in recent years. Since the introduction of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* in December 2001, the RCMP and CSIS have launched a series of operations—such as Project O Canada and Project Thread—that have involved wrongful detentions, raids, and the deportation of many people suspected of “terrorism,” which have been largely targeted at Muslim men. In 2002, the Supreme Court of Canada arguably set the precedent for the latest CSIS directive when they ruled that deportations to countries suspected of torture may be justified only in “exceptional circumstances.”

Despite a tacit acknowledgement of the recommendations of the Arar Commission—a commission set up in the aftermath of the Canadian government’s decision to deport Maher Arar to Syria, where he was tortured by Syrian authorities for a year—the instructions detailed in the CSIS directive signal a balancing act between Canada’s reputation and its national interests rather than any recognizable commitment to international law.

The outcry against this document is perhaps another example of what former CSIS director Jim Judd called the Canadian public’s “Alice in Wonderland” view of the world, which has tied CSIS “in knots” over the years due to its emphasis on such distractions as legality. If so, there remains much more down the rabbit hole to discover.

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All correspondence to:  
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P.O. Box 339, Station E  
Toronto, ON M6H 4E3

Published every four weeks in Toronto by the International Socialists. Printed in Hamilton at a union shop; member of the Canadian Magazine Publisher’s Association / Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 58554253-99, Post Office Department, Ottawa / ISSN 0836-7094 / Return postage guaranteed





PICTURE FROM KONY 2012 VIDEO

WE WILL FIGHT WAR

# Kony 2012 campaign is war propaganda

by KEN OLENDE

**VIRAL WEB campaign Kony 2012 has shone a light on atrocities committed by Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in east Africa. But the campaign has an agenda beyond human rights. It is run by Invisible Children, a US charity that supports US military intervention in the region.**

Invisible Children is demanding that US military advisers “support the Ugandan army until Kony has been captured and the LRA has been disarmed.”

The LRA emerged 26 years ago from a guerrilla campaign demanding rights for the Acholi people in the north of Uganda. But it descended into banditry and mysticism. It terrorised parts of the country, often relying on kidnapped children to bolster its forces.

But the Ugandan government has long since defeated the LRA’s main organization. Even the Ugandan military, which Kony 2012 appears to help, acknowledges this. “It is the right message but it’s 15 years too late,” said Colonel Felix Kulayige about the campaign.

Only around 300 LRA fighters remain—and they are not in Uganda. For the past eight years they have been in the bush region on the borders of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan.

The US sent 100 special forces troops into the region last year to help hunt for the LRA. But why intervene so long after the organization ceased to be a threat?

The US is torn over its role in Africa. It launched a unified military command for the region in 2008, dubbed Africom. This was meant to be part of a reassertion of US power

in the continent. The US wants to maintain itself against competition from China.

But the US military is already overstretched around the world. Even Africom’s chief General Carter Ham talks about how the organization can only afford a “small footprint.”

Africom is scaling down its direct intervention but continue to push US imperial interests. It has recently helped Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti and Kenya build occupation forces capable of operating inside Somalia.

The situation in this region is very complicated. There are 1.3 million internally displaced refugees in Uganda alone. The government operates camps for them in the north of the country. Many of the local Acholi people accuse the Ugandan government of forcing northerners into these camps as an excuse to get control of their land.

The Ugandan military has itself

twice invaded neighbouring DRC. The DRC war it played a role in was the bloodiest since the Second World War and has been responsible for more than five million deaths. Yet it has led to remarkably few calls for intervention. That is because the war has not halted the extraction of valuable minerals.

This war-ravaged land is where the remnants of the LRA survive. They are just one of several militias exploiting the local population. Western military intervention can only make this situation worse—just look at the disastrous US invasions of Somalia, Afghanistan or Iraq.

Neither the war criminals in the Pentagon nor their British supporters have a right to travel enforcing their “values.” And neither do they or their proxies have the right to moralize about the murder of civilians.

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# Palestine resists, from Hanaa’ Shalabi to the Global March

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN

**ON MARCH 29 Hanaa’ Shalabi ended her 43-day hunger strike after winning her release from administrative detention on the eve of the Global March on Jerusalem—which saw tens of thousands demonstrate for a free Palestine.**

When Hanaa’ Shalabi found herself in an Israeli jail for the second time without charges or trial, under an administrative detention order, she fought back with her empty stomach and drew international attention to the plight of more than five thousand

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Like Khadr Adnan before her, Shalabi’s hunger strike both won her release and highlighted the injustice of administrative detention, exposing Israel’s human rights abuses to the world.

More than three hundred Palestinians are being held under administrative detention, including twenty Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

However, the release is contingent upon her expulsion for a period of three years to the Gaza Strip. Shalabi will continue to be isolated from her

home and family in the West Bank, and the Israeli soldiers who treated her violently are not being held accountable.

On March 30, the annual Palestinian Land Day (commemorating the day in 1967 when Palestinians went on strike against Israel for annexing more land and Israel responded with deadly force, killing six) was marked by a Global March on Jerusalem.

Tens of thousands of people marched towards Jerusalem from occupied Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank, in addition to neigh-

bouring countries Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. Solidarity activists joined from North America, Europe and Asia, in addition to organizing solidarity events in 84 countries, including Canada. Israel responded by shooting a 20-year old to death in Gaza, using rubber bullets and stun grenades on people in the West Bank, and mounted police to attack a crowd in East Jerusalem.

Plans are under way for more protests and solidarity demonstrations on May 15, Nakba Day, marking the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians on which Israel’s creation is based.

# Afghan civilians massacred by occupation

**PEOPLE AROUND the world reacted in horror and anger at the news that a US soldier massacred 16 civilians in Afghanistan—including nine children, three women and four men. This is an inevitable consequence of the occupation, which must end.**

The killing spree in the Zangabad village in Kandahar province happened in the middle of the night while the families were sleeping. It’s unclear whether there was more than one shooter but what is clear is that this cannot be dismissed as a “lone gunman” or “isolated incident.”

This is the inevitable result of the occupation of Afghanistan, which

has continued for more than a decade—against the will of the people. It is sustained by continual dehumanizing from the top of the chain of command, including Canadian General Hillier claiming in 2005 that the occupation is based on killing “murderers and scumbags.”

Like in Vietnam, soldiers are caught between growing local resistance and imperial overstretch that sends them back for tour after tour in a futile quest for “security.” The soldier identified in the massacre is a 38-year old army sergeant who served three tours of duty in Iraq, where he was injured. He was told he would not be redeployed but then was sent to Afghanistan, where

the day before the massacre he witnessed a fellow soldier have his leg blown off. During the massacre he relied on his high-degree of military training, killing five of the children with a single shot each to the head.

War crimes are increasingly common in Afghanistan. Just last year photos of US “kill teams” appeared, and the first few months of 2012 have already produced photos of soldiers urinating on Afghan corpses, news of soldiers burning copies of the Qu’ran, and now the Kandahar massacre.

Every year produces more Afghan casualties, as Western governments have repeatedly extended the occupation in the name of “security” and

defeating the Taliban. But as a local woman said, “they killed a child who was two years old. Was this child Taliban? There are no Taliban here.”

In response to the massacre, 2,000 Afghan students in Jalalabad protested, and another 1,000 protested outside the military base in Zangabad. Vigils and protests also spread across the US, UK and Canada. The rally in Toronto included a US veteran of the war in Afghanistan, who said: “The escalation of war will continue until we all stand up against this nonsense international venture. The Afghans should have their right to determine their destiny.”

# Only revolution can liberate Syrians

by BRADLEY HUGHES

**ONE YEAR after the start of the uprising in Syria, demonstrations are spreading to the capital city, Damascus, and defections from the regime continue. The West is not confident to hijack the revolution through military intervention like in Libya, so it is proposing a “peace plan” that saves the Assad regime.**

Syria’s dictator Bashar al-Assad has responded to the people’s demands for democracy with widespread terror. More than 8,000 people have been killed so far, and the regime has regularly shelled its own cities and towns where the opposition is strongest. Government troops have even forced civilians to march in front of them as human shields.

Despite this, the uprising continues to fight back and grow. In March, large demonstrations spread to the suburbs of the capital city of Damascus. Smaller demonstrations have occurred in the capital but so far they have been quickly shut down by mass arrests.

The defections from the army and high levels of the regime continue as well. The Free Syrian Army is made up of soldiers who have refused orders to attack protesters and have joined the opposition.

# Neither intervention, nor “peace plan”

The former Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, travelled to meet al-Assad twice in March. He proposed a “peace” plan that requires the Syrian regime withdraw troops from all cities and stop the crackdown on opponents by April 10. The plan has been accepted by al-Assad as it leaves his regime intact, just as the “transition” plan in Yemen left that regime in power.

The determination of the Syrian people has so far stayed the hand of western nations like Canada and the United States, which invaded Libya to limit the spread of revolution there. The same countries that invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, and regularly sell arms to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, held a meeting on April 1 of the “Friends of Syria,” to discuss how to limit the democratic gains of the people of Syria.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar promised to supply the Syrian opposition with money and arms. Saudi Arabia, which claims to support the Syrian opposition, supported the Bahraini government in its crackdown on peaceful protestors in Bahrain. The problem that these “friends” face is that the opposition is too strong to be defeated by the regime, and they don’t want an invasion. At the same time, any popular government of Syria will remain a foe of Israel and oppose intervention by the west to limit the Arab Spring. Our solidarity with the people of Syria can help prevent western intervention, and let the revolution continue beyond the confines of false “peace” plans.



# Anti-racist feminism

**THE WOMEN’S movement of the 1960s and 1970s, commonly referred to as the “second wave,” developed in the context of mass movements of protest, including the black civil rights movement and opposition to the war on Vietnam. These movements were young, diverse and often fragmented, but generated considerable influence in theory and practice.**

The development of a tradition of anti-racist feminism, in both social movement organizing and theoretical scholarship, is one of the most important, but also often neglected, contributions of this period.

Anti-racist feminists in the US were and continue to be among the most active. Angela Davis is one of the most influential to advance this approach, notably marked by the 1981 publication of *Women, Race and Class*.

Davis is Distinguished Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department, and former director of Feminist Studies, at the University of California, Santa Cruz. But even this position is a mark of her activism. In 1969, her involvement with the Communist Party and association with the Black Panthers led then California Governor Ronald Reagan to have her removed from teaching at any university in the state.

Davis was put on the FBI’s “Ten Most Wanted” list, arrested, and faced the death penalty at the time of her arrest. She was tried in 1972 after sixteen months in a California prison.

## Soledad

Her arrest was based on suspected involvement in the case of the Soledad Brothers.

Three African American prisoners, including George Jackson, were charged with the 1970 murder of a white prison guard at California’s Soledad Prison. Angela Davis — along with those such as Noam Chomsky, Pete Seeger, Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda — participated in the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee to advocate for a fair trial. Jackson’s brother, Jonathan, was involved in holding up a courtroom and taking hostages in an attempt to secure his brother’s freedom. Davis was charged with involvement in this event.

Following a mass campaign, Davis was acquitted on all charges. This was a significant victory for civil and women’s rights, freedom of speech, and prisoner solidarity.

Angela Davis has continued to be part of the US and global movements for prisoner rights and social justice. In 2011, she travelled to Palestine with a delegation of women of colour feminists, who wrote a public declaration in support of the BDS campaign (bdsmovement.net).

As a public intellectual, Davis has advanced studies that focus on the intersection of gender, race and class.

While taking the starting point of an emphasis on social reproduction, many contributions in anti-racist feminism explain how capitalism, in concrete historical conditions, shapes working class families in different ways.

Margaret Simons, for example, in a 1979 article in *Feminist Studies*, titled “Racism and Feminism: A Schism in the Sisterhood,” challenged a classic feminist analogy that compared sexism to slavery. A tendency to over-generalize from white, middle class women’s experience opened the door to liberal feminism. These perspectives:

“...often deemphasize the differences in women’s situations in an effort to point out the shared experiences of sexism.... Perhaps most importantly, in the context of a dialogue between minority and white feminists, the notion of an absolute patriarchy can obscure the reality, all too familiar to minority women, that some white women have historically had access to power which they have at times wielded against both minority men and women.”

Another important contribution is Leith Mullings’ *On Our Own Terms*, published in 1997. As an anthropologist grounding her work in Engels’ Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Mullings investigates the role of African American women, and men, in the production of US capitalism.

Plantation slavery, apartheid-like Jim Crow laws in the South, and racist employment practices, meant that racism, sexism and class exploitation shaped the nature of working class families in specific ways. As Mullings notes:

“In most U.S. cities, the constraints on the ability of African American men to earn a ‘family wage’ forced African American married women into the labor market in greater proportions than Euro-American wives. By 1880, 50 per cent of African American women were in the work force, compared to 15 per cent of Euro-American women. While the majority of working women of both races were unmarried, a significantly higher proportion of African American wives worked.”

Mullings traces her work to the debates in US politics dating back to the civil rights movement, noting the formative impact of Angela Davis. Mullings also identifies the successful battles to establish ethnic, women’s, labour and black studies programs in the universities, and considers the expansion of scholarship in these fields to be products of those efforts. The capacity of writing African women into history would not have been possible without the social movements of previous decades, and continues to be under threat from neoliberal attacks.

## Marginalization

The effort to silence Davis in the 1960s and ‘70s is reflective of a long history of marginalization of women of colour. An explicit aim of anti-racist feminism has been to challenge the threat of invisibility, to make the voices of black and Third World women central to movements for social change.

The socialist and anti-imperialist struggles have greatly benefited, and continue to grow in strength and influence, from these contributions.

# INTERNATIONAL



Asmaa Mahfouz

# Egyptian military cracks down on activists

by JOHN BELL

**FREE TRADE union activist and general coordinator of the Center for Trade Unions and Workers’ Services, Kamal Abbas, has been sentenced to six months in prison for the crime of “insulting a public officer.” Abbas is just one of many prominent leaders of the Egyptian revolution facing attack from the military leadership that has replaced the ousted government of Hosni Mubarak.**

“This is the attack of counter-revolutionary forces against activists, whether labor activists or political activists, and a continuation of the practices of the ousted regime,” Abbas told Daily News Egypt early in March.

The ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has tried to stop the organizing of independent unions, and decreed strikes illegal.

Abbas is not alone. Dozens of labour activists and organizers have been arrested or assaulted for demanding free trade union rights. Previously SCAF has wavered, imposing massive fines on activists and then revoking them in

the face of rising popular anger.

## Asmaa Mahfouz

The regime is testing the waters by cracking down on some of the revolution’s best-known leaders. Asmaa Mahfouz is the young woman whose stirring video blog, posted one week before the outbreak of street protests, made her a spark of the revolution.

One of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement, Mahfouz travelled to New York in October to address the Occupy Wall Street protesters, solidifying the connections between people struggling for economic and social justice worldwide.

She has now been sentenced by a military court to one year in jail for assaulting a man she insists she has never even met. The same man had previously brought the same charges against two other political activists, Alaa Abdel-Fattah and Ahmed Abou-Doma.

Mahfouz has refused to comply with the judgment and continues to speak out for human rights and against SCAF.

Mahfouz is one of a dozen prominent revolutionary leaders and spokespeople to be targeted by SCAF’s show trials.

Also facing charges are: Sameh Naguib, a leading activist in the Revolutionary Socialists; Wael Ghonim, founder of the “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook page; blogger Nawara Negm and journalists Yosri Fouda and Reem Magid.

Alaa al-Aswany, author of the novel *The Yacoubian Building*, is also on the list, as are prospective presidential candidate Bothaina Kamel and MPs Ziad el-Eleimy and Abul-Ezz al-Hariry.

Mamdouh Hamza and George Ishak, activists who played a key role in mobilizing protests against dictator Hosni Mubarak before the revolution, could face trial too.

Haitham Muhammadain, a leading activist in the Revolutionary Socialists, told *Socialist Worker* that these latest developments form part of a wider attack on the revolutionary movement.

“They have run a smear campaign against the April 6 Youth Movement and organized the massacre in Port Said.

“A large number of young activists have been sentenced by military courts.”

The Egyptian revolution is at a dangerous point. International solidarity with these prominent activists can play a crucial role in what happens next.

# The people vs Putin

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

**THE END of 2011 and the first quarter of 2012 in Russia saw the biggest anti-government demonstrations since Soviet times. The massive protests by ordinary Russians began in reaction to the parliamentary elections of December 4, and continued through to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s presidential election “victory” in March. Both events were marked by widespread electoral fraud.**

February in Moscow saw angry crowds of more than 100,000 demanding fair elections. Putin’s election at the beginning of March was again greeted by allegations of voter fraud and protests by tens of thousands.

The opposition argues that Putin received far less than the 64 per cent of the vote claimed, while the state and mass media largely back Putin. In early March hundreds of people picketed the offices of a state-backed TV channel after it aired a documentary accusing the opposition of paying

anti-government protesters.

While vote-rigging was the spark, the protests in Moscow and across the country have been as much about Putin’s draconian regime itself: its rampant corruption, economic inequality, and the privatization of university education.

To thwart students from participating in the rallies, university exams and compulsory school events were scheduled to clash with protests, and the government even pressured its employees into attending a pro-government rally on the same day as one of them. But these measures have been unsuccessful in stopping a new movement that could shift from street action into a more sustained opposition.

Like in Egypt, Russians are learning to overcome the legacy of fear and pessimism that stems from years of government repression. At the rally following Putin’s election, some advocated occupying Pushkin Square until their demands were met, bringing echoes of the Arab Spring to

the streets of central Moscow.

A thousand people remained in the square after the official protest had ended and attempted to occupy it, but it was cleared by huge numbers of riot police and hundreds were arrested.

But the desire to resist has not been so easy to clear away. Whether Putin will even last his whole term is now in question.

Like the Arab Spring, the pro-democracy movement has brought new people who have never protested before out into the street. Many are young, and for the moment there is no single, pre-determined leadership.

For many it is not the election exercise itself that is important, but rather the government’s hypocrisy at bothering to have an election at all, and then rigging it.

How this sentiment can be linked with broader political issues, and with resistance to austerity and the stagnating economy, will be decisive — just as it continues to be in the Arab world.



# A ‘plan nord de merde’: Jean Charest’s plan to wreck the North

*As opposition to the Tar Sands grows, Jessica Squires looks at opposition to Canada’s other mega-project that threatens indigenous rights and the environment.*

Following the historic 200,000-strong march of students and allies in Montreal on March 22, Quebec student leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois called Jean Charest’s “Plan nord” a “Plan Nord of shit,” and he’s right.

This is an old, familiar story: exploitation of natural resources and aboriginal lands by mining interests, under the pretense of consultation, economic development, and protection. But Jean Charest’s Plan Nord is stupendous for its scale, for the level of government involvement, and for its influence on other governments in Canada.

The project is laid out as a twenty-five year plan that will see government and corporate investment combined to the tune of \$80 billion. In its first five years, announced in last year’s budget, \$1.2 billion will be spent on infrastructure—extending highways and other transportation corridors as well as telecommunications and feasibility studies for a deep-water port in Whapmagoostui-Kuujuarapik. The plan will also put more than \$2 billion into a gigantic slush fund for the Plan’s future development. Even that is not enough for some corporate interests, which have started pressuring the government to absorb costs associated with connecting to the Hydro-Québec network.

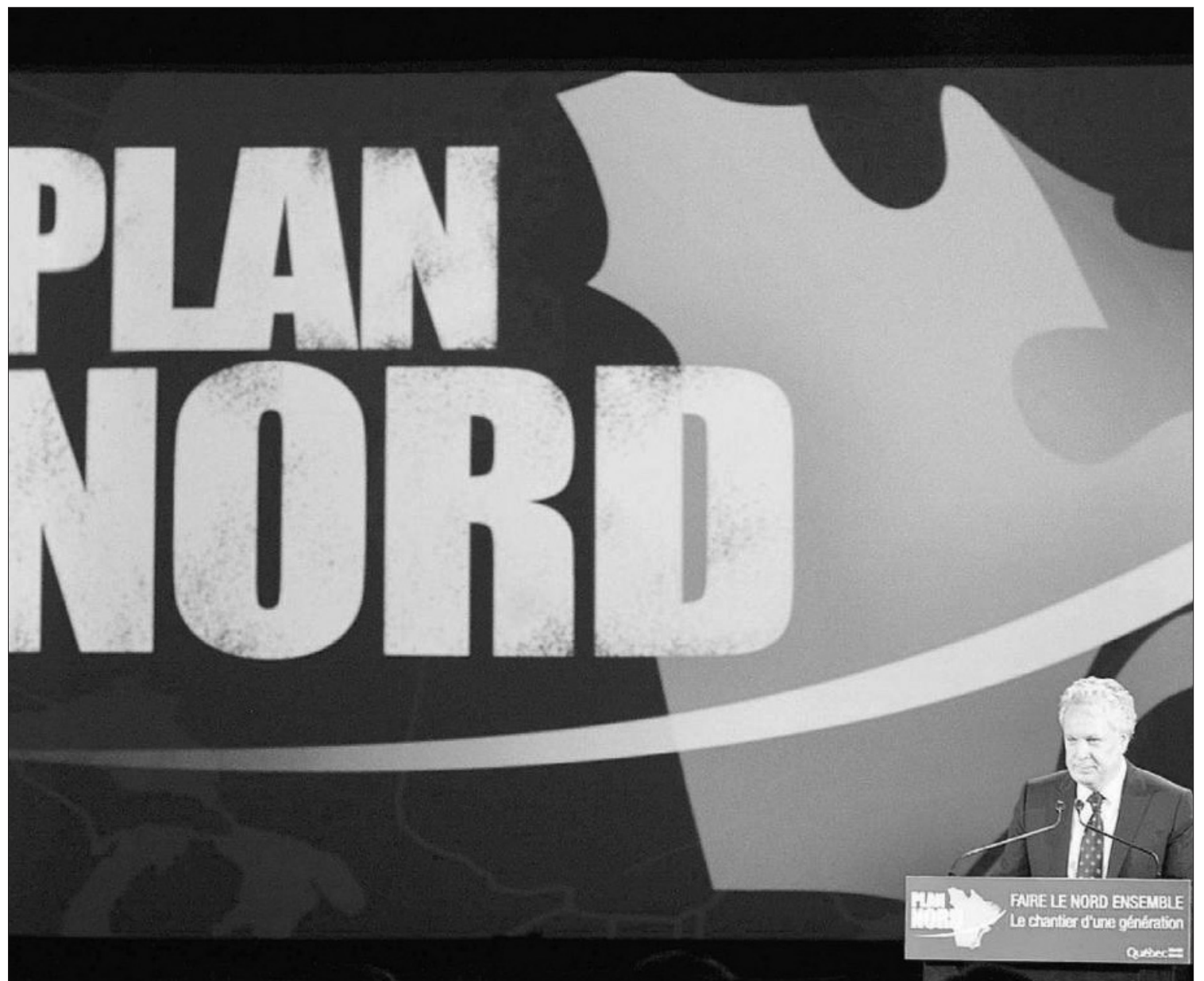
The plan covers 72 per cent of Quebec’s geographic area, 1.2 million square kilometers. This includes James Bay, Nunavik and the North Shore—an area twice the size of France. Charest is pinning his hopes for support for both Plan Nord and for his reelection on the claim that the plan will create 20,000 jobs. He also claims it will include designating 50 per cent of the territory as protected.

The backdrop of Charest’s plan is the collapse of Quebec’s natural resources industries. Charest is desperate to save Quebec’s economy, and he’ll do anything to keep the corporations happy. He has already taken several trips abroad to promote it, most recently to the European Union, where he presented to potential investors and met with government officials. Meanwhile, at hearings back home in Montreal, Charest’s Environment Minister, Pierre Arcand, suggested that mining would not be forbidden on the 50 per cent supposedly intended for protection.

Charest and his government have already embarked on a massive charm operation, at the taxpayers’ expense, with a tour of Quebec’s regional chambers of commerce and an expensive ad campaign.

## Opposition

Significant social forces are already arrayed against the plan. The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), Quebec’s second-largest union, has expressed its severe concerns about the plan’s ability to protect that 50 per cent when no controls



are in place to ensure exploitation of the other 50 per cent will not hurt the entire region.

Nature Québec, Greenpeace, and many other environmental groups are extremely skeptical of the timelines and the feasibility of the incremental increases in protected territory supposedly part of Plan Nord, when the government does not consider deforestation an industrial activity (only 10 per cent of forests are to be protected), and it plans to establish infrastructure and allow exploration and tourism in supposedly protected areas.

First Nations groups have also expressed concerns about the impact of industrial development. The Inuit, the Innu, the Cree, the Naskapis of Schefferville, the Algonquin, and the Atikamekw, all have grave misgivings.

Plan Nord is, more than anything else, a giant appeal for corporate investment. It has been on the drawing board since the last Quebec election.

There are no guarantees that it will work even for the interests of those for whom it was created: big mining, big energy, and big exploiters.

Resistance has been significant, though scattered. In one recent example, on March 5, Innu activists blockaded highway 138 in protest of the La

Romaine Hydroelectric Complex mega-project in their traditional territory. The Romaine river is one of the few major rivers in Quebec still free of hydroelectric dams. Mohawk and other allies protested in Montreal in solidarity. The project has been linked to Plan Nord.

The blockade was shut down after a week. “We had the Arab Spring, I think we’re now seeing an Innu Spring,” said a spokesperson from the Alliance Romaine (a coalition established to protect the Romaine river), supporting the Innu. The blockade followed a similar blockade of route 167 by Cree activists in January. Sections of the Cree have agreed to support the Plan—with some conditions—but many still oppose it.

So far, much of the rest of the opposition to Plan Nord has been in the form of lobbying and media communications.

## Earth Day

That will all change on Earth Day, April 22, 2012. On that day Charest will meet with business leaders interested in cashing in on Plan Nord. Marches will start at 2pm in cities across Quebec—timed to coincide with the start of Charest’s summit in Montreal.

The summit could be the launching pad for the Liberal’s

election campaign, attempting to win a fourth election in 10 years in spite of dissatisfaction rates having remained at a steady 70 per cent for several months.

On the same weekend, la Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) will hold its founding convention. The environment was absent in the initial policy statements of CAQ, and it supports both the exploitation of the North and the tuition fee increase that provoked the ongoing student strike.

Charest’s strategy seems to be an attempt at uniting the right and repolarizing the political scene between his Liberals and their old adversary, Pauline Marois’ Parti Québécois.

The organizers of Earth Day in Quebec, which include dozens of environmental groups, church leaders, artists and other social movement leaders, have made the North a key element. The news about Plan Nord is getting out to the mass of ordinary people in Quebec—in part, because the striking students have also been raising it. As the student strike continues to radicalize thousands, Earth Day could be an opportunity for a convergence of forces against the government.

2012 is shaping up to continue to be a Quebec Spring.

**‘an old familiar story: exploitation of resources and aboriginal lands by mining interests’**



# DON'T ATTACK IRAN

## How do we support resistance in Iran?

by NIAZ SALIMI

**While the drums of war against Iran are beating louder than ever, and the punitive measures passed due to its so-called “nuclear ambitions” are hurting and paralyzing ordinary Iranians, the image of imperialism as a savior grows fainter than ever.**

The old notion of the “enemy of my enemy is my friend” is a myth that almost no one in Iran believes in any more. The exhausted rhetoric used by arrogant and ignorant imperialists has almost no effect on a nation that is deeply suspicious of foreign interference.

Nearly six decades ago, the overthrow of Prime Minister Mossadeq shattered a nation’s dream of freeing itself from the chains of Anglo-Iranian oil companies and a US-backed Shah. It took Iranians thirty long years of persistent struggle to finally achieve the goal of overthrowing the Shah.

The pro-democracy movement in Iran has a long history and it is no secret that Iranians are still struggling at home to achieve what they have longed for over nearly a century. However, since 1979, before the victory was fully realized by the people, the Islamic clergy that stood by the people against the Shah imposed its control and demobilized the revolutionary movement.

Ever since, the struggle has continued against the brutal repression of this regime and the people’s resistance has become more forceful and targeted over time. The uprising of millions against the fraudulent election of 2009 was a milestone that was never fully contained, regardless of the violent measures imposed by the regime.

Considering the grim situation in Iran, one might conclude that Iranians, in their desperation, may welcome foreign intervention to free them from domestic despotism. But anyone with a basic knowledge of the Middle East and its nations will know that this is not the case.

Imperialism’s hostility towards Iran has nothing to do with the anti-democratic nature of Iran’s regime, as is evident by the West’s support for its close allies like Saudi Arabia. Also, its “cry wolf” propaganda against Iran’s nuclear ambition only

reminds us of the treacherous lies about non-existent “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq.

And even if there is still any doubt about the true intentions of those drum beaters, we have the examples of imperialist intervention in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq in front of us—just to name a few.

### No to sanctions, no to war

Supporting the Iranian people’s struggle against repression by their government requires an immediate end to all sanctions. The aims of these sanctions are exactly as they were in Iraq, from 1990 to the start of the US-led war in 2003: to weaken the nation for invasion.

A recent Gallup survey indicates that almost half of the nation had difficulty providing food for their families in the past year, after the new surge of sanctions. Yet these punitive measures are creating an unexpected result. While Iranian people are pressed between the brutality of their own regime and the hardship imposed on them by the Western leaders, they see the true objectives of the sanctions and intentions of the foreign forces behind them.

Iranians, like any other people, are entitled to their sovereignty and rights of self-determination. Their desire to remove a brutal dictatorship is understandable but they have to consent to the replacement as well.

For a nation that has long been deprived of the basic rights of freedom of expression and the opportunity of engagement in political and social matters, it takes time to connect, start the discussion, learn to include and compromise and make a decision about a future where all groups and individuals, regardless of their specifics, are counted and included. This is as much a cultural process as it is political but nevertheless inevitable. If we don’t want to go back inside the next regime’s prisons, labeled as anti-revolutionaries, we have no choice but to go through this process, and to do it fast.

In the best-case scenario, a surgical removal of regime only creates a void that invites greedy opportunists—if an Iranian Karzai has not already filled the vacancy.



## Anniversary of Iraq War shows what ‘humanitarian intervention’ would mean for Syria or Iran

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

**IT HAS been nine years since the American invasion of Iraq, but the Iraqi civilians still suffer from the aftermath of intervention. Although US marines left the country in December 2011, military “contractors” remain and terrorism continues to hurt the lives of innocent Iraqis—causing the death of at least 226 civilians in March alone.**

On April 8, 2003 Saddam Hussein was ousted. After three decades of brutal dictatorship Iraqis were “liberated” only to find themselves under occupation. Imperialist “humanitarian intervention” got rid of Saddam’s regime, but it has not made the

lives of ordinary Iraqis better.

The United States and its allies were successful in their pre-war propaganda regarding “weapons of mass destruction.” Those weapons have never been found. The US claimed victory in freeing Iraqis from the oppression of Saddam, who previously had been their man in the region. During the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s, the US and Britain backed Saddam by supplying him with arms, money and satellite intelligence.

### Sanctions

The American invasion in 2003 came after a decade of sanctions that destroyed Iraq’s economy, and made the lives of civilians

miserable. The price of sanctions was the death of almost half a million Iraqi children. Then came the war—the real “weapon of mass destruction”—which led to the death of another million Iraqis.

Bombs landed on the regime’s infrastructure but also demolished people’s homes and killed their children. The US managed to also attract insurgents from different neighbouring countries. Armed groups not only attacked American troops, but civilians as well. Unrest created by the invasion triggered sectarian violence, encouraged by the US arming death squads and imposing a Parliament based on ethnic divisions. Thousands have been killed in suicide attacks, while others have been

kidnapped and killed for their beliefs and views.

Iraqis would not have to suffer two decades of sanctions and war if their revolution in 1991 was successful in defeating Saddam and Ba’ath rule. Instead, Saddam used Western arms to attack protesters and killed thousands of civilians. Saddam would have never been able to use chemical weapons against his people if there were no global silence and Western support. Iraqis needed and still need solidarity and voices that say: “No to war, no to dictatorships and no to terrorism.” In the same way, we should be in solidarity with civilians in Syria and Iran, who will suffer more if imperialists intervene.



## How do we build a movement against war on Iran?

by PAUL STEVENSON

**AS THE prospect of a war with Iran increases, it is important to remember the lessons from the Iraq anti-war movement and to build the broadest possible opposition in Canada. Stephen Harper has clearly shown his intention to support the war and we in Canada have an important role to play in stopping the Conservatives from joining a “coalition of the willing” that may lead an attack.**

In Canada, the anti-war movement stopped the majority government of Liberal Jean Chretien from officially supporting the Iraq War by creating a huge groundswell of opposition. On February 15, 2003 a half a million people demonstrated in more than 85 cities and towns throughout Canada. The massive march of 250,000 people in Montreal on March 15 of that year sealed the deal and stopped Canada from participating.

To achieve those huge numbers there was a clear strategic orientation to build the broadest movement possible. The slogan “No war on Iraq” became the central demand of the movement and allowed for masses of people to be involved. A simple basis of unity meant that people with widely divergent opinions on many issues could march under one banner.

### Debates in the movement

As was the case with Iraq, there are many debates about the central demand of the anti-war in Iran movement.

The main faultline concerns the relationship between the anti-war movement and the Iranian state. Many on the Iranian left have called for opposition to the government of Iran to be a central demand of the movement. There are others who believe that we must stand in solidarity with the state against imperial aggression.

The reality is that accepting either of these positions will seriously weaken the movement. Any perceived support for the Iranian state will destroy the credibility of the movement in Canada. While calls to denounce the Iranian government will confuse the issue and help the Conservatives make their case for war.

The central question here is the role of imperialism and our central task is to stop imperial intervention in Iran. One of the key arguments that our government cynically uses to justify the war is the brutal nature of the Iranian state. They do so to appeal to the humanity of Canadians who rightly oppose oppressive governments.

But Harper, Obama and the rest have no intention of supporting a real democracy in Iran. We need only look at the recent history of imperial intervention in the region to find proof that the West is no friend of democracy.

In Afghanistan, the NATO-supported government of

drug warlords has an atrocious human rights record.

In Iraq, the government of Nouri Al-Maliki operates death squads that disappear political opponents on a regular basis. In Libya, western support was given to the Transitional National Council made up of former Qaddafi loyalists. And the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people is brushed aside by a Canadian government intent on supporting Israeli war crimes.

The reason why Harper wants to demonize the Iranian state is to try to revive the idea of “responsibility to protect” in order to justify an attack. It is not the job of the anti-war movement to help him make that argument but rather to point out the pitiful record of western interventions and to stand against attempts to use the struggle of the Iranian people to sugar-coat an imperial intervention.

NATO interventions since the end of the Cold War have had only one interest in mind and that is to secure resources and control for the benefit of the West. An attack on Iran would be no different.

### Support the Iranian struggle by stopping sanctions and war

Ultimately, the anti-war movement must stand for the self-determination of the Iranian people. We must stand in solidarity with the people fighting to create a democratic Iran, and we know that this will never be achieved while NATO bombs are falling on the country.

To quote Afghan MP Malalai Joya, who knows a thing or two about what it is like to try to liberate a people while under the thumb of foreign armies, “No nation can donate liberation to another nation. These values must be fought for and won by the people themselves. They can only grow and flourish when they are planted by the people in their own soil and watered by their own blood and tears.”

And for those who believe that the people of Iran cannot achieve liberation against such a strong central state, we need only look at Egypt—where the people have proven that there is no government that cannot be overthrown when the working class moves in their masses and demands change.





Mulcair: the NDP’s Blair

IN THE same week as 200,000 Quebec students marched against tuition hikes and hundreds of Air Canada workers went on a wildcat strike across the country, the NDP elected ex-Liberal Thomas Mulcair as the new party leader. This marks a further rightward shift in the party, in its quest for power that is increasingly detaching itself from the movements upon which change is based.

In 2001, in the context of the anti-globalization movement, activists in the NDP launched the New Politics Initiative in an attempt to better link the party with the social movements. The weight of the mass anti-war movement of 2003 raised these hopes, as Jack Layton spoke out against the war, and a million more people voted NDP in 2004. But in 2005 the NDP supported the Liberal’s budget, which increased military spending by over \$12 billion. In 2006 the party base and allied movements pushed the leadership to openly oppose the war in Afghanistan, but in 2008 the latter signed a coalition agreement with the Liberals—dropping opposition to tax cuts and the war in Afghanistan.

In 2011, anger at Harper’s austerity and Liberal complicity, coupled with inspiration from the Arab Spring, caused a surge left, with two million more voting for the NDP. Despite the NDP’s modest platform, this new Parliamentary configuration raised hopes of challenging austerity when the party filibustered the attack on postal workers—providing a megaphone for workers’ struggles.

But during the NDP leadership debate, the party further leaned to the centre: the main candidates were Thomas Mulcair (supporter of Israel), Brian Topp (supporter of Greece’s austerity government), Nathan Cullen (supporter of a coalition with the Liberals) and Peggy Nash (who despite her history with the labour and social movements did not campaign on these issues). With the debate narrowly defined as who could earn more votes than Harper, regardless of the content of their politics or their connection to movements outside Parliament—Mulcair easily won.

Mulcair could be the NDP’s Tony Blair, whose electoral success was based on purging the party’s principles; his support for war and privatization rivaled Margaret Thatcher, and the disillusionment this produced brought the Tories back to power. Mulcair could also undermine NDP support before the next election, resuscitating the Liberals.

As with the Labour Party under Blair, the activist base in the NDP has not gone away with the election of Mulcair. Some could turn left and see the need for more fundamental change than what the NDP is capable of providing, but some could become disillusioned or even more determined to “reclaim” the NDP. The task in the short-term—faced with Harper’s drive to war and austerity—will be working with activists inside the NDP to build the increasing extra-parliamentary struggles, and to push the party to support them despite its new leader.

Eulogy for Madeleine Parent

I met Madeleine Parent three times  
First time during the Oka Crisis

It was the night the troops moved in on the barricades at Kanewake with armed intent

When the news flashed hundreds of us sat down on the street in front of the Hydro-Quebec building, expecting the riot squad to arrest us at any minute

Madeleine was sitting quite close by me, a woman then in her seventies

People were scared, I was scared  
Madeleine’s face didn’t even change

Second time in 2005 at a lancement of Anna Kruzynski’s book on community organizing in the Pointe

As an invited speaker I later met with Madeleine and we spoke for the first time

Told her I was a maudit bloke de souche like Kent Rowley and she laughed

She was far from being some kind of uptight doctrinaire, humourless and puritanical

It was her love of life that made her such a good fighter

Third time in late winter of 2011 when Martin Duckworth took me to see her in her nursing home

Single room simple with bed table, computer and photos of comrades and union mates on the walls along with souvenir posters of past struggles

She had just about lost all long term memory but still clear in her mind in the moment

One good look into her eyes and you knew that this woman with her serene smile was still that woman that backed down Maurice Duplessis himself

Just a few years before at the age of 87 she had organized the patients in the home against an All Lights Out At 10:00 O’clock restriction

She won  
She went out fighting  
Salut Madeleine salut comarade

Solidarité,  
David Fennario

OPINION



On Earth Day, say no to war

APRIL 22 is Earth Day, which has become a global event raising awareness about the importance of environmental protection. Earth Day began in 1970 in the US, in the context of the Vietnam anti-war movement, and to protect the environment we need to end war and militarism.

War on the planet

War not only kills people, it also kills our planet. The US used the chemical defoliant Agent Orange (which Canada helped develop and test) in Vietnam to destroy the forest on which the resistance movement relied on for habitat, food and protection. Combined with carpet-bombing, this destroyed much of Vietnam’s forest, animal habitat and agriculture.

NATO bombing in Afghanistan has disrupted a major migratory thoroughfare for birds in the region, and contributed to deforestation. According to a 2003 United Nations Environmental Program report, war has contributed to “serious and widespread land and resource degradation, including lowered water tables, desiccation of wetlands, deforestation and widespread loss of vegetative cover, erosion, and loss of wildlife populations.”

Sanctions, no-fly zones and war on Iraq have undermined its water supply, soil fertility and animal habitat—reducing the country from the fertile crescent to one that must now import the vast majority of its food. In addition, the widespread use of depleted uranium (which Canada mines and exports) has left radioactive waste for billions of years to come, contaminating earth and water. And in its 2006

war on Lebanon, Israel intentionally caused an oil spill that contaminated the sea, killing countless fish and threatening the endangered green sea turtle.

War for oil, with oil

Oil is the lifeblood of the capitalist system, and wars are driven by, and often for, this unsustainable and polluting fuel.

To control the oil-rich Middle East, the West has armed Israeli Apartheid and Arab dictatorships, and in 1951 overthrew democracy in Iran when it nationalized oil production.

The emergence of Europe and Asia as imperial rivals to the US has produced wars for oil pipelines—from the Balkans war in the mid 1990s (for pipelines taking Caspian oil west, away from Russia), to the war on Afghanistan (for pipelines taking Caspian oil south-east, away from China), to the war on Iraq and threats against Iran and Syria (last year Canada’s SNC-Lavalin signed a contract to build a pipeline exporting Iraqi oil through Syria to the Mediterranean).

As part of the new scramble for Africa, NATO attacked Libya (home to the largest oil reserves in Africa, and where Canada’s Suncor has oil operations), and the Kony 2012 campaign is building support for US troops in Uganda, where oil has recently been discovered.

All this death and destruction requires massive amounts of oil—to fuel fighter jets, battle ships, tanks, rockets and vehicles to carry the oil that fuels all these. The largest oil consumer in the world is the US military—which consumes almost

400,000 barrels per day, more than 80 per cent of the US government’s use—yet it is excluded from all climate treaties.

Message to Harper: No war, no warming

Capitalism is addicted to war and the oil it depends on, and Canada’s 1% are keen participants—from contributing to Agent Orange and depleted uranium, participating in wars (from the Gulf and Balkans, to Afghanistan and Libya), and extracting tar sands oil that feeds the war machine.

Canada is a major exporter of oil to the US—including tar sands oil that goes to the Cherry Point refinery, the major westcoast supplier of fuel to the US military—and even more oil will be consumed by Harper’s new fighter jets and battleships, and war on Iran or Syria.

While Harper pours billions into militarism he is slashing environmental protection programs, and these go hand-in-hand: global warming will melt more glaciers and open up more of the Canadian north to mining and militarism.

Individual actions are not enough to protect the environment. On Earth Day, let’s commit to ending war and its assault on the planet. In Canada this means preventing war on Iran and Syria, ending the occupation of Afghanistan, diverting military spending to social programs, and shutting down the tar sands while investing in green jobs.

Building these movements can also raise our horizons about a world without war and global warming, where we can live sustainably, and in peace, with the planet.

May 25-27, Ryerson University  
GLOBAL CRISIS. GLOBAL RESISTANCE.  
www.marxism2012.com



# REVIEWS



## MUSIC

# Anti-Flag’s new album inspired by a year of revolt

**The General Strike**  
By Anti-Flag  
Reviewed by D’Arcy Briggs

**ANTI-FLAG’S latest album, *The General Strike*, is their shortest and most direct to date. The album was released by SideOneDummy Records, something that readers may want to know as they had previously been signed to Sony-owned RCA records.**

The group’s fame, record deals, and performances on corporate sponsored tours like the Vans Warped Tour have garnered them criticism from the punk community. Still, they have always maintained a political ethic and have been integral in bringing global polit-

ical issues into the mainstream. Musically the album is much more aggressive than previous releases. While they have generally stayed in the area of pop-punk and street-punk, this album seems to have more of the emotive hardcore style popular during the 1990s—think AFI with the *Communist Manifesto* in onehand and At The Drive-In in the other. Lyrically it is full of venom geared at policymakers and the 1% as a whole. From anthemic calls to power like “Get up! Get up!// Your voices are needed/Become, become the pulse of the revolution in the ranks of the masses rising” to attacks directly at the 1% with “No justice in a legal system run by criminals/ If you don’t like the court ruling then you shouldn’t be

poor,” the album is unrelenting in its attack on the neoliberal agenda. The albums lyrical content and title were inspired by events taking place all over the world – from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movements all over North America. “Everything that was going on last year was so inspiring,” Pat Thetic, Anti-Flag’s drummer, said in an interview with Billboard.com. “That environment of revolution all over the world was something we wanted to talk about and was impacting us as we were writing. It hasn’t happened in our lifetime where people all over the world are standing up for their rights and willing to throw off the shackles of dictatorship and decide it’s time to be in control of their own destiny.”

## MUSIC

# Wrecking Ball: anthem for the 99%

**Wrecking Ball**  
By Bruce Springsteen  
Reviewed by Faline Bobier

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN’S new album *Wrecking Ball* is, as he says in *Rolling Stone* “as direct a record as I ever made...That’s with the possible exception of *Nebraska*, which this record has a lot in common with.” Springsteen has also said that he was inspired by the Occupy movement when writing the songs on *Wrecking Ball*.**

These two touchstones—Springsteen’s 1982 album *Nebraska* and the Occupy movement 30 years later – make for an album that is full of contradictions, hope and despair, anger and solidarity. *Nebraska* is a somber album where Springsteen tells the story of the American underclass, of losers and the lost, with barely any hope of redemption or change. It is a beautiful, haunting work that speaks for those who have no voice.

**Working class poet**  
Since the beginning of his career, Springsteen has always been the poet of working class America, in the same vein as his predecessor Woody Guthrie. As in *Nebraska*, each song on *Wrecking Ball* tells a piece of a larger story. But whereas *Nebraska* is the story of loners who have no way to escape their alienation other than the highway, hard living and violence that is inevitably turned inward, *Wrecking*

*Ball* is about turning that anger outward towards the people who are responsible for the current state of America. “Death to My Hometown” is an obvious allusion to the bittersweet nostalgia of “My Hometown” on 1984’s *Born in the U.S.A.*, where the protagonist laments the death of his hometown through economic crisis and unemployment : “Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain’t coming back to your hometown.” But the tone of “Death to My Hometown” on the new CD is completely different. It’s one of righteous anger against those who are killing ordinary people’s hopes and dreams, along with the towns and the cities they live in. And they are clearly identified – these bankers and robber barons. As the song says, “No shells ripped the evening sky/No cities burning down/No army stormed the shores for which we’d die/No dictators were crowned...the marauders raided in the dark/And brought death to my home town.” The rousing music in this track is like a call to battle—at once joyous and angry. Springsteen exhorts: “Now get yourself a song to sing/Sing it hard and sing it well/Send the robber barons straight to hell/The greedy thieves who came around and ate the flesh of everything they found/Whose crimes have gone unpunished now/Who walk the streets as free men now.” *Wrecking Ball* melds together many musical traditions: country (there is a borrowing from the signature Johnny

Cash/June Carter tune “Ring of Fire” on one track), folk, traditional ballad, gospel music and even a little rap. It has something of the feel of his 2006 release *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* in which Springsteen, with a large cast of musicians and singers, revives classic Seeger songs. These are hard songs that speak of the economic despair of working class America. Whatever faith Springsteen may once have had in Obama is long gone. “The road of good intentions has gone dry as a bone,” he says in the first track on the album, “We Take Care of our Own.” But there is a spirit of revolt and solidarity and pure joy that runs through the CD and makes it an anthem for the 99%. **‘We are alive’**  
The last track on the album, “We are Alive” makes it clear that the only way to win, or at least to put up a good fight, is for the disenfranchised to come together. Springsteen brings together struggles past and present to show the continuity of resistance: “A voice cried I was killed in Maryland in 1877/When the railroad workers made their stand/I was killed in 1963/One Sunday morning in Birmingham/I died last year crossing the southern desert/My children left behind in San Pablo/Well they’ve left our bodies here to rot/Oh please let them know/We are alive/And though we lie alone/Here in the dark/Our souls will rise/To carry the fire and light the spark/To fight shoulder to shoulder and/Heart to heart.”

## LEFT JAB

John Bell

# Hoodies and hijabs

**TRAYVON MARTIN was shot and killed because he was black. His killer, a gun-toting vigilante, still has not been arrested or charged.**  
Contrary to recorded evidence, the man claims he acted in self-defence and hides behind reactionary Florida laws that allow the use of deadly force against anyone deemed threatening. Right-wing commentators like Geraldo Rivera maintain that the boy was at fault because he was wearing a hoodie.  
Shaima Alawadi was beaten to death in her own home because she was a Muslim-American who wore a hijab. The 32-year-old mother of five and her family had recently moved to a new home in suburban San Diego. Her assailant(s) left a note next to her broken body: “Go back to your country. You Terrorist.” Police say they have yet to determine a motive and have not ruled out a hate crime.  
Racism is alive and well in the USA. “Castle” and “Stand Your Ground” laws are being passed and contemplated in many US states; coupled with laws that permit carrying concealed weapons, that seem tailor made for legalized violence against “suspicious” people.  
Government policies like the “war on drugs” and post-911 security hysteria have defined who is “suspicious”. Black youth are gangsters. Muslims are potential terrorists. Sensational round-the-clock media amplify the racist stereotypes. As America, the epitome of capitalism and empire, continues its economic decline the search is on for scapegoats on which to pin the blame. As hate, rancour, division and partisanship seem to reach unprecedented levels, The “other” is singled out.  
That means hoodie-wearing black teenagers walking where they “don’t belong,” in still highly segregated urban America. It means suburban moms who dare to wear the hijab.  
From outside it is easy to see the extent to which racism pervades and warps American society, and to smugly tsk tsk and pretend it is unique to there. A recent poll found that 55 per cent of Canadians believed that racism is a problem that had been overcome.  
**Canadian exceptionalism?**  
Non-white Canadians might say otherwise.  
We in Canada are no strangers to secret trials designed to demonize Muslims. Mohamed Harkat is one of five men held in jail for years on the basis of Security Certificates, summarily depriving them of their right to a fair trial in the name of national security. From December 2002 to May 2006 he was held, mostly in solitary confinement; when he was released to house arrest he faced the most strict bail conditions ever imposed. Today he still faces the threat of deportation.  
Moe Harkat has never been charged with a crime. He has never been allowed to see the evidence against him. He has never been able to confront his accusers. This contradicts every assumption of Canadian democracy and human rights.  
Meanwhile, we don’t need armed vigilantes (although Tory backbenchers have begun speaking in favour of the right to use firearms to defend one’s

“castle”) because we can rely on our police to use racial profiling and to harass young black men.  
In Toronto in 2005, Ronald Phipps was stopped for questioning by police in the ritzy Bridle Path neighbourhood. They were looking for a vandal. Phipps is black. He is also a Canada Post letter carrier, and was on his regular route, in his uniform, carrying a satchel of mail.  
Phipps filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. In 2009 the Tribunal decided that police actions were racially motivated and discriminatory. The police appealed the ruling. Early in March the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld the Tribunal’s ruling.  
“I hope the judgment will give room for pause when it comes to racial profiling,” Phipps told the *Toronto Star*. “Not every person from the Middle East is a terrorist. Not every African-Canadian male is a thief.”  
Phipps’ treatment is far from unique. A recent *Star* investigation into Toronto Police racial profiling concluded that while blacks make up 8.3 per cent of Toronto’s population, they accounted for 25 per cent of the police stop reports filled out between 2008 and mid-2011. In each of the city’s 72 patrol zones, blacks are more likely than whites to be stopped and carded.  
It isn’t just a matter of extra scrutiny in communities that suffer low average income and high crime rates. The likelihood of young people of colour being stopped and harassed increases in areas that are predominantly white. This supports anecdotal evidence from young people in highly racialized neighbourhoods that they are regularly subjected to harassment and abuse.  
Arnold Jayabalan is a youth counselor in the Weston-Mt. Dennis neighbourhood in Toronto. Asked if he thought every young black man in the area had been subjected to stop and questioning, he replied: “I’m sure of it. At least once.”  
Jayabalan’s federally supported program is designed to help kids avoid gang activity and violence. It has lost its funding and will shut down this spring. The Harper Tories would rather spend billions on new prisons and push for mandatory long sentences for “crimes” like possession of marijuana.  
No matter where they live, or what their level of education, non-white Canadians face “economic apartheid.”  
Racialized Canadians earn an average of \$30,385 per year compared to \$37,332 for other Canadians, or 81 cents to the dollar. For immigrants, especially racialized women immigrants, the situation is far worse. Racialized Canadians are three times more likely to live in poverty than other Canadians (19.8 per cent compared to 6.4 per cent).  
These are telling statistics, but the Harper government has a solution: abolish the census that provides such information.  
Stop and search reports go into a growing police database. The demand for documentation means that young blacks are being told to get out of neighbourhoods where they don’t “belong.”  
Just as in the US, wearing a hijab or a hoodie puts you at risk.



## 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 kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of natural resources. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

### 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.

### Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploited and exploiter, 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 NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

### 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 developed under capitalism and are designed to 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.

### Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which 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.

### Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal 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 the Aboriginal peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Aboriginal peoples up to and including the right to independence. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work towards giving the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

### 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 discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

### 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.



# 1965: rank-and-file resistance and the birth of public sector unions

by PAM JOHNSON

**AFTER AIR Canada workers were suspended on March 22 for slow-clapping Labour Minister, Lisa Raitt for intervening in bargaining—following 10 years of concessions—these workers said “enough is enough.”**

They wildcatted at Pearson airport in Toronto and got support from workers in Vancouver and Montreal airports who went out in solidarity—against the wishes of their union leadership. This militant action, with solidarity across Canada and Quebec, is rare but not new. It has a precedent: the 1965 postal workers strike that led the way for all public sector collective bargaining.

Given the austerity budget brought down by the Liberal McGuinty government attacking services and workers—and threatening workers' rights to collective bargaining, with a plan to legislate wage freezes if workers don't "agree" to them—this is a good moment to remember the history of 1965.

### Rank-and-file organizing across Canada and Quebec

Mail volume doubled between 1955 and 1965, but instead of hiring new full-time workers there were line speed-ups to a grueling 25 letters

per minute. People were working up to twelve hours a day with no overtime. Women were hired part-time at a lower wage than full-timers and faced constant harassment from supervisors.

The Canadian Postal Employees Association (CPEA) that represented postal workers was refusing to raise demands for better working conditions. It was in effect a toothless organization because postal workers had no collective bargaining rights.

A small number of workers in Montreal and Vancouver, seeing the situation as untenable, started to organize on their own to push for strike action for better wages. With the CPEA saying that “you can't strike the government,” this group continued to plan for action and raised the demand of a significant wage increase. After failed attempts to have their demands heard by the government and no support from the CPEA, these workers formed a rank-and-file group and began planning and building support for strike action. One organizer speaking about coordinating with Quebec and English workers on opposite sides of the country said “We speak different languages but, we have the same ideas and goals.”

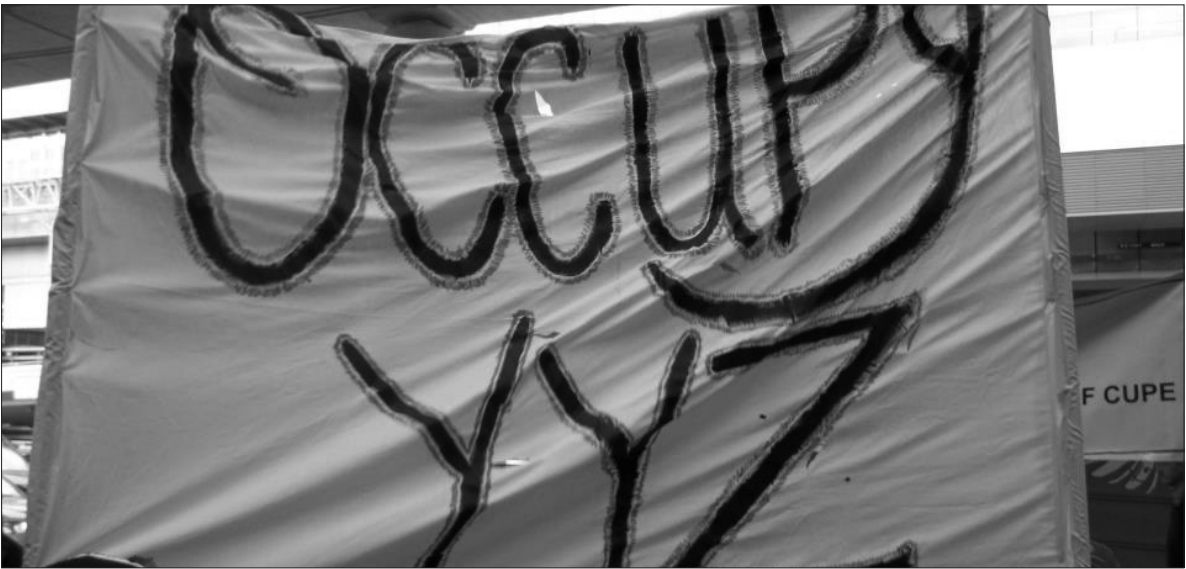
In July 1965, at the exact same moment in Montreal and Vancouver, postal workers walked off the job to

cheers and celebration. Pickets went up in 30 cities across Canada as workers followed the lead of Montreal and Vancouver strikers. With no union, the strikers had no strike pay or emergency fund to draw from. As one worker said, “We have to stand up—even if we lose. I feel proud of myself for doing this.”

The public sympathy was on postal workers' side after stories came out about workers' conditions and poverty wages, although the CPEA continued to undermine the strike. Prime Minister Diefenbaker was eventually forced to bargain with workers who refused to leave the picket lines and the workers won a considerable wage increase.

The CPEA fell apart and two new unions were formed, representing clerks and letter carriers. Soon after this victory all federal public sector workers were unionized and for the first time part-time workers were also accepted as union members.

Rank-and-file organizing across Canada and Quebec, which could respond to the anger of workers and contempt for the government, was the key to the victory of the 1965 strike. With the labour leadership slow to respond to the scale of attacks that are eroding jobs and working conditions today, it is time to build these networks again.



## Interview with Air Canada activist

**Socialist Worker interviewed an activist in the Machinists Union and employee of Air Canada who was part of the walk out. Due to possible retribution by the company for the walk out his name is not used.**

**What's the mood here at Air Canada during this wildcat strike?**

The mood is a combination of anger, fed-upness, and confidence of finally standing up, people have their backs up against the wall, and have had enough of putting up with this for ten years.

**How do people feel about Lisa Raitt and the Tory party?**

People here are disgusted, even those workers who have supported the Tories in the past aren't going to any longer. When your basic rights are being trampled on and people feel there's no respect, no chance to even negotiate a fair deal after ten years of concessions.

**How did this start?**

The way this started was that the minister was walking through the airport when some employees who had been directly affected by her legislation applauded her in a sarcastic manner, thanking her for her contribution to our situation. Corporate security accompanying the minister pulled the workers aside after she complained about this and suspended them. When others heard about this on the shift we began to walk out in solidarity.

**What about the walkouts in Montreal and Quebec City? Do people feel stronger because that solidarity was shown?**

Absolutely! It reflects the widespread sense that enough is enough. It also shows the company that at a rank-and-file level, we are organizing. The solidarity shown is going to help strengthen us in the fights ahead.

**Are there plans to continue to link up with workers at other airports and unions? Is there a growing network of activists and militants through the different airports who**

**want to stand up to the corporate greed of Air Canada?**

Absolutely! We're seeing day by day deepening roots and connections and networks growing up organically through each experience. The CUPE fight, the CAW fight, now our fight, each is contributing to a growing strength at the grassroots at Pearson and I'm sure other airports.

**What do you think about the banner that was here that read “OCCUPY YYZ?” Will that have any currency in the workplace?**

The banner has been here before, but I think it has more resonance now given the current situation and the growing anger. I think that more and more of us are seeing that this is going to be a fight that has to go beyond just ourselves but links up with others not just at the airlines but other workers fighting back, in order to win.

We've made our first stand and I hope this builds our strength at Pearson and elsewhere.

## international socialist events

### TORONTO

**Marxism 2012: Global Crisis. Global Resistance**  
May 25-27  
Ryerson University  
www.marxism2012.com

**Revolutionary Reading Circle - upcoming topics: Spain 1936, Iran 1979, What is Zionism?**

Fridays at 6:30  
For location and readings: occupystrikeresist@gmail.com

## peace & justice events

### TORONTO

**Ontario day of action against cuts**  
Sat, April 21, 3-5pm  
Queen's Park  
www.ofl.ca

### Clean train festival

Sat, April 28, 1-4pm  
West Toronto Railpath at Wallace Ave.

### May 1 day of action

Tues, May 1, 4-7pm  
Nathan Phillips Square

### CALEDONIA

**Walk for peace, respect and friendship**  
Sat, April 28, 2pm  
Edinburgh Square  
april28coalition.wordpress.com

### MONTREAL

**Grand rassemblement populaire: Vers un Printemps québécois!**  
Mon, April 9, 12pm  
Carré Émilie-Gamelin, Montréal

## Marxism2012

# Global Crisis Global Resistance

**A 3-day political conference of more than 30 talks and panels.**

**Featuring:**  
Petros Constantinou, Greek anticapitalist councilor and antifascist organizer

**Judith Orr, editor of Socialist Worker UK, author of Sexism and the System**

**Ben Powless, indigenous and environmental activist**

**Ian Angus, editor of Climate and Capitalism and author of Too Many People? Population, immigration and the climate crisis**

## May 25-27 Ryerson U

marxism2012.com

## You can find the I.S. in:

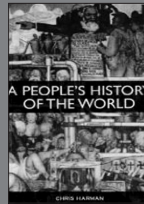
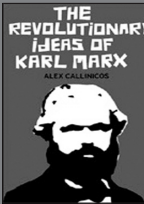
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## FOOD SERVICE WORKERS RISING

by **DARREN EDGAR**

**UNITE HERE local 75, representing hotel and hospitality workers in the Greater Toronto Area, currently has more than 500 campus food service workers at York University and the University of Toronto negotiating for new union contracts with global food service corporations, Aramark and Compass.**

Some of the issues of concern for the workers include poor wages and benefits, and working conditions such as scheduling. Many of the workers, most of whom are women, barely make more than minimum wage. Many of them work part-time—meaning they receive little to no benefits—even though they’d rather be working full-time, and they often have to work split shifts just to get even these few hours.

Food service corporations like Aramark, Compass and Sodexo increase their profits by exploiting large pools of poorly compensated workers, and it is this lack of respect for the workers and their contributions—to the communities in which they work as well as to corporate profits—which inspired a public awareness campaign.

On March 29, students at the University of Toronto, in solidarity with food service workers’ struggle for fairer contracts, headed to various cafeterias on campus to hand out informational leaflets and stickers and to collect signatures for a solidarity petition created by Unite Here 75. Students, alumni, staff and faculty of both York and UofT are encouraged to sign the petition, and may do so online by visiting: [www.unitehere-canada.org/students](http://www.unitehere-canada.org/students)

## FASCISTS GET SCHOOLED

by **DARREN EDGAR**

**On March 24, Blood and Honour—an international white supremacist group—tried to hold a “White Pride” rally and march in Edmonton.**

But these fascists— with their racist, sexist and homophobic ideas—were prevented from rallying and marching down a popular thoroughfare on a sunny Saturday afternoon by a much larger mobilization of anti-racists.

## United against racism

The diverse contingent of anti-fascists included young and old, women and men, gay and straight, and people of all races coming together to show just how little support there is for these kind of backward ideas in Edmonton.

After being prevented from rallying and marching as originally planned, the two dozen fascists attempted to rally at the provincial legislature and then city hall, but they were pursued by the 300-strong counter-demonstrators ever step of the way, effectively preventing the fascists from having any opportunity to spread their hateful views.

This is how you stop fascists, organize against them in the streets.



Students occupy the office of Glen Murray, Ontario minister of colleges and universities

## VANCOUVER RALLIES AGAINST ENBRIDGE

by **TANIA EHRET**

**IT’S TIME for Harper and his empire of oil executives to reconsider the challenge they have ahead of them in their fight to make the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline project see the light of day.**

On March 26, 2,000 people showed up at the Vancouver Art Gallery at noon on a rainy Monday to let those of power and prestige know that BC will not let more oil tankers threaten their communities, eco-systems, in-

digenous self-determination and right to personal health.

Speakers such as Bill McKibbin (350.org) and Art Sterritt (Coastal First Nations) grasped the momentum and adrenaline felt by community members all over BC, concerned by the ostensible democratic process of oil infrastructure in BC.

With claims of economic benefits transparent in only benefitting the owners of industry and the eagerness to invest in renewable energies stronger than ever, one can feel the beginning of a

web that weaves community, labour, environmental and indigenous activists together in one movement.

Once the speakers had finished, the peaceful demonstrators marched to the Enbridge headquarters, where activists led chants and reclaimed their right to use public space as a platform for coalition building. As the joint review panel continues on, it can be surmised that whatever the outcome, people will not be stepping down anytime soon. Get ready to pack up for the blockade!

## OTTAWA-GATINEAU MOBILIZE FOR MAY DAY

by **SHANE SADORSKI**

**OVER THE past three weeks, a fast-growing group of approximately 50 residents and local activists in the Ottawa-Gatineau area have set the wheels in motion for a community-wide day of action against the sweeping austerity programs launched by both the federal and provincial governments this spring.**

Appropriately, the as-of-yet unnamed group has chosen May 1—International Workers’ Day, also known as May Day—to be the date of their first major large-scale community action to defend the interests of workers, the unemployed, seniors, children, students, low-income families, and pretty much everyone else in the 99% under attack by the greed of the 1% and their government enablers.

The growing group draws its membership from a wide and diverse range of pro-

gressive community groups, labour unions, national and local NGOs, student unions, various issue-based activist organizations, political parties and Occupy movements. All of the individuals and groups have one key commonality: the desire and the need to stand up and shout “NO!” to the politics of ‘austerity’—a buzzword that is code for brutal cutbacks in essential community services like health, education, public works, income support, and action on climate change.

The people of the Ottawa-Gatineau area will be hit particularly hard by government austerity, with expected heavy reductions in the federal public service causing significant economic disruption and hardship in a community where the public sector is the biggest employer. With an expected 10 per cent budget cut across the board, the layoffs and job losses from the federal government will likely number in the

thousands. And that’s before factoring in the local fallout from the province’s austerity budget.

Although the details of the May 1 day of action are still being worked out, there is a clear consensus that the objective will be to make it a real “day of action” that goes beyond a single mass rally. In addition to a planned mass demonstration near Parliament Hill against the federal Conservative government, organizers are hoping to see a number of smaller, yet powerful workplace actions, neighbourhood actions, and direct actions throughout the day from sunrise to sunset. Educational workshops around austerity are being considered, a central “open house” hub is planned for participants to gather around, and a large evening cultural event is in the works.

Watch this space for updates as the working class of Ottawa-Gatineau continues to self-organize.

## LIBRARY WORKERS SHOW SOMETIMES IT IS BETTER TO FIGHT THAN RUN AWAY

by **J Y HODGE**

**TORONTO PUBLIC Library workers ended a ten-day strike recently, scoring a significantly better contract than their brothers and sisters in other municipal workers’ unions; a contract however, that was unable to stave off all major concessions.**

Faced with an employer in lockstep with mayor Rob Ford’s “Workers are gravy” mantra, the library workers in CUPE 4948 chose to strike rather than cede a concession on job security that would have left 65 per cent of the workforce susceptible to arbitrary layoff in the event of contracting out or privatization (one of the

mayor’s fixations).

Additionally, the library staff was able to push back dozens of management take-away demands, and actually win some gains for part-time workers and on benefits.

## Strike action

The mayor had his way thus far with Toronto workers, first bargaining a major concession contract with outside staff, then finagling a similarly anti-worker deal from the much larger inside worker unit. Only the library workers—through strike action—were able to substantially reduce or eliminate the concessions tabled.

However, one should not sugarcoat the result. Members gave up an

enormous concession on job security: while it does not match either of the other city units in years of seniority, it does leave a larger percentage of the workforce unprotected.

The union is responding by promising renewed public campaigns ([ourpubliclibrary.to](http://ourpubliclibrary.to)) as well as a political action campaign to oust Library Board chair Paul Ainslie from his city council seat!

## Better to stand and fight

Our fight has shown that, when dealing with an anti-worker employer and a sympathetic public, it is better to stand and fight than to meekly submit. The mayor would be best advised to take note.

## STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

# Losing the right to strike

**WE ARE seeing more and more examples of workers losing the right to strike in this country. Recently the city of Toronto asked the province of Ontario to declare workers at the Toronto Transit Commission essential. Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union lost the right to withdraw their labour.**

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, after holding rotating strikes, was legislated back to work. The same has happened to pilots and flight attendants at Air Canada. Most recently the Machinists lost their right to strike. In that instance, workers took matters into their own hands. When the Minister of Labour was spotted walking through the terminal, baggage handlers started to slow-clap, sarcastically thanking her for what she had done.

## Wildcat

Three workers were suspended for this which sparked a wildcat strike in Toronto and similar walkouts in Quebec and British Columbia in solidarity. The airline was essentially shut down which shows the power that workers have when we withdraw our labour.

These attacks are all part and parcel of the austerity agenda. Privatization, contracting out, cuts in services and attacks on unions are happening in every jurisdiction. The neoliberal agenda is proceeding and knocking back the unions is an essential component.

It is not lost on governments and corporations that organized labour has the potential, when it uses its collective strength, to fight back and win. It has the power to undermine the economy as we saw when the national airline was shut down for a day.

The walkout showed the simmering anger beneath the surface that broke out for a moment at Pearson Airport when an unjust suspension was imposed. The workers didn’t care if it was illegal or unsanctioned by their union. They struck to stand up for their fellow workers and against

the injustice of what had happened to all of them when their right to strike was taken away.

## Solidarity

That is why it is so important to build solidarity for the strikes that are happening—whether it be teachers in British Columbia, library workers in Toronto, or locked-out Steelworkers in Alma, Quebec. Any strike that makes gains will give confidence to other workers who are being buffeted by the attacks on their jobs, wages and working conditions.

## Library workers

Toronto library workers, most of them women, built support for months within the communities they serve. Meetings were held in every workplace. Strike coordinators talked with fellow workers about the issues involved and why they had to stand strong against the employer. Public support grew and notable figures such as world-renowned author Margaret Atwood took up the cause. Writers were doing “read-ins” at the strike line.

I met with a number of the striking library workers during the strike at a strike support meeting and they were strong and undaunted. The broad public support they are receiving has been very gratifying and has built their confidence.

The same happened at the Rio Tinto line when a bus of Toronto Steelworkers traveled the 12 hours to stand with their locked out brothers and sisters in Alma. They didn’t share the same language or the same history but the solidarity brought tears to the eyes of the Quebec and Ontario workers. The embraces and shared chants and songs built a tremendous bond that is continuing.

A day of action is taking place on March 31 and workers from throughout Quebec will be taking part. There will also be buses from Ontario showing the growing solidarity between Anglophone and Francophone workers against the austerity agenda.

# Join the International Socialists

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## BUDGET 2012: SCRAP HARPER

by CHRIS BURKE

**“WE WILL eliminate the penny.” In a tactical move that was beautiful in its simplicity and admirable in its brilliance, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty set the tone of conversation amongst the corporate media in Canada. What better distraction from the assault on the environment, workers, youth, elderly, and anyone not part of the ruling class than to announce a plan to scrap the penny?**

“Well it wasn’t as bad as we thought it would be” will be the other story Canadians can expect to hear from the mainstream voices. The predicted \$8 billion in spending cuts never materialized; instead the country will see \$5.2 billion in spending cuts. Another tactical ploy: Ratchet up fear over what this budget—sorry, that’s “Economic Action Plan 2012” according to the Tories—will contain and then give the public something that is not the worst-case scenario. It’s not as bad as the cuts in the 1990s, Flaherty gleefully pointed out. That is until we start examining exactly what this budget means for us. Austerity: when the ruling class forces the rest of us to pay for their mistakes.

### Austerity

Make no mistake, that’s what this budget is—austerity: the 99% being punished for the failures of the capitalist system. An estimated 19,000 job cuts are coming for the public sector over the next three years. This is an odd way for a government claiming



to support job creation to show its commitment. The eligibility age for Old Age Security will gradually be moved from 65 to 67, likely forcing many more seniors into poverty.

Katimavik—a volunteer service organization—was axed by the government, a decision that stunned the organization. They never saw it coming. Need proof this government despises youth? Here it is. An organization that provides an opportunity to build a sense of community has been wiped out. Apparently there’s no place for the fostering of independence, community service, civic

engagement, and leadership skills in Harper’s world.

### War on the planet

A continued commitment to support the oil and gas and mining industries guarantees the continued fast-tracking of utter environmental destruction. This government is cementing Canada’s place in history as one of the nations that will lead the charge to do away with the last remnants of a sustainable climate. The streamlining of the environmental assessment process turns a legislation that was already without teeth into something less softer than a child’s plush toy.

An industry that is in dire need of more regulation has been handed an early Christmas gift, as promises to “reduce red tape” have been made.

Aside from some token gestures such as investments into the development of clean energy technology, or what capitalists tend to believe is the key to environmental salvation, there was scant mention of the environment or climate change in this budget.

### Priorities

What this government has done is made it clear that environmentalists, or anyone opposed to environ-

mental destruction for that matter, are the new, radical enemy.

A plan to silence critics of the industrial assault on our planet has been laid out. \$8 million dollars that could perhaps be used to invest in renewable energy will instead be allocated to crack down on conservation groups. The Canada Revenue Agency will receive resources to take action such as restricting environmental groups from sending out emails considered to be political in nature. There was also mention of the supposedly evil “foreign sources” that may be funding these organ-

izations. To the capitalists, climate change is something that apparently follows the law of borders.

Environment Canada, like every federal department, will also be facing cuts with the most severe being imposed on the climate change sector. We’ve only scratched the surface but, if all of this is not indicative of an all-out attack on the environment, then nothing is.

### Build resistance

Harper is planning on attacking the environment and the public sector to protect the riches of the one per cent. It’s up to the 99 per cent to stop him. Across Canada there have been rallies demanding by-elections in response to the robocalls scandal. The billions planned for unneeded fighter jets, and the corruption surrounding the procurement process are stirring up anger everywhere. These are just the most recent scandals in a long list and more scandals are sure to come. Teachers in BC are holding a vote on defying legislation limiting their right to strike.

Hundreds of thousands of students in Quebec have taken strike action against plans to increase tuition fees. The occupy movement is regrouping as spring approaches.

Every week the Tories look worse and all kinds of resistance is springing up. This government and its priorities of war and austerity can be defeated. Let’s all build the movements that will do that.

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## April 21: Resist McGuinty’s austerity budget

by PAM FRACHE

**THE ONTARIO Liberal government has just tabled Ontario’s first serious austerity budget in the post-crisis era, completing the job of cutting government down to size started by the Mike Harris Conservatives in the 1990s.**

Profitable corporations and banks will be able to keep the \$2 billion annual giveaways implemented in the 2009 budget, while the 2004 decision to eliminate the corporate capital tax leaves banks enjoying an additional \$830 million annually, on top of their recent windfalls from the reduction of the corporate tax rate from 14 per cent to 11.5 per cent.

The cost of bailing out the 1% is that social assistance

recipients are getting a three per cent cut. Rising food prices mean those relying on Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support programs will be eating even less in the year ahead. The McGuinty government has implemented devastating blows to health care and education, turned its back on the child care crisis for parents with children under four years of age, and even abandoned its rhetoric about reducing child poverty by 25 per cent by 2013-14. And it has put public sector workers in the crosshairs, attacking their pay, pensions, sick leave, and their right to collective bargaining. Over the next three years, the government proposes to cut \$6 billion in public sector pay and pensions.

With the Conservatives already vowing to oppose the

budget, the McGuinty government is betting that labour leaders and the NDP will be more fearful of a provincial election than they are of the impact of austerity on the people of Ontario. McGuinty believes the paltry measures of freezing the corporate tax rate at 11.5 per cent and a few other token gestures will be enough to allow the NDP to spin “victory” and support the budget.

But doing so would be a disaster for the NDP. Instead of “buying time” to build its electoral fortunes, the NDP’s support for the budget will strengthen arguments for austerity, improve the credibility of the Liberals as having “no alternative,” bolster electoral arguments for strategic voting against the Tories, and undermine electoral support for the NDP the next time.

By contrast, an election fought on a more radical “green jobs-for-all” strategy paid for by increasing taxes on profitable corporations and creating new tax brackets for high-income earners could galvanize public sentiment and, and the student occupation of education minister Glen Murray’s office shows the mood to fight.

### All out April 21

The Ontario Federation of Labour is calling for mass action on April 21 to oppose the Liberals’ austerity budget. The bigger the turnout on this day the greater the confidence of workers, students, seniors and those relying on Ontario’s ever-thinning social safety net to build resistance in every community and workplace. For more information visit [www.ofl.ca](http://www.ofl.ca).