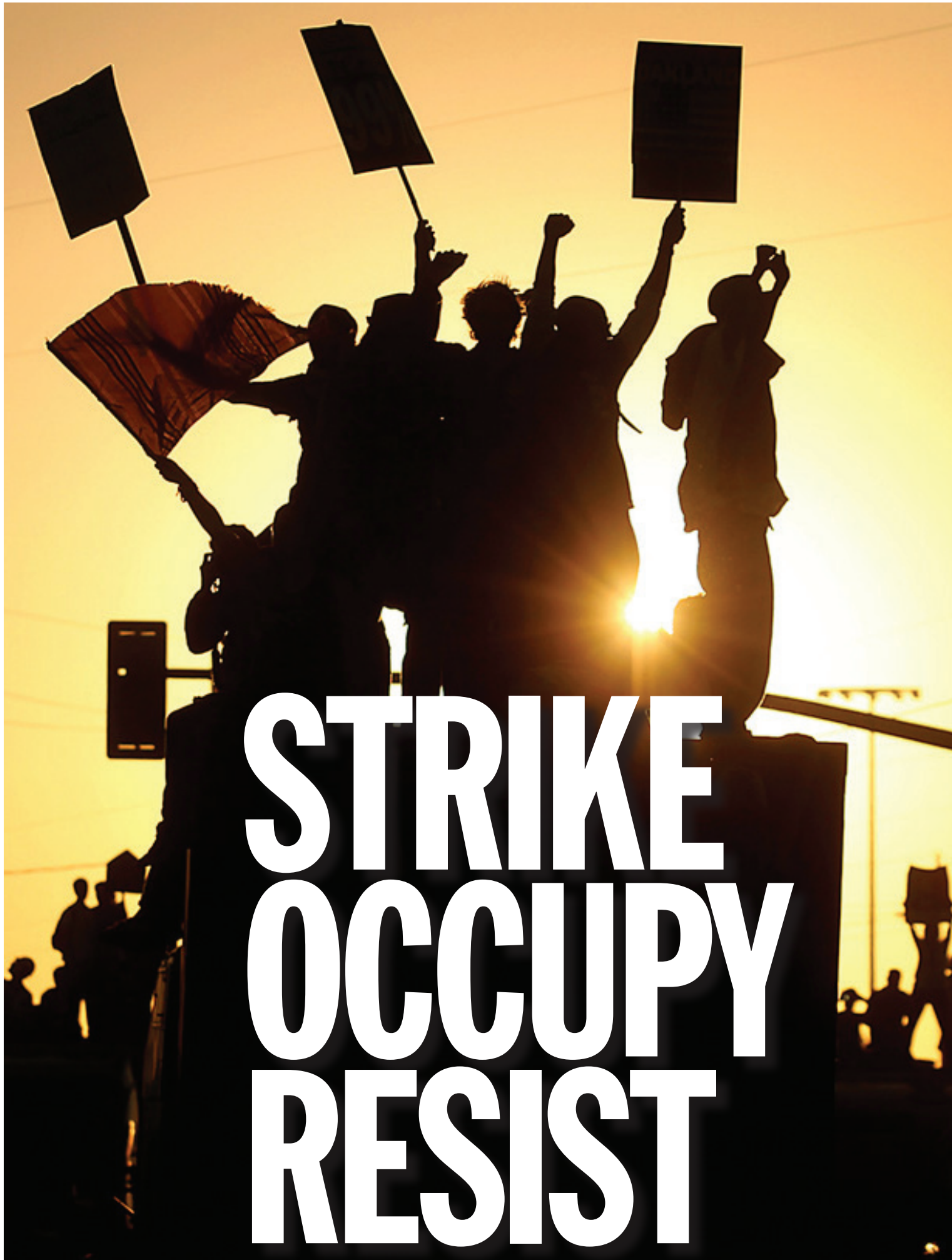


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by PETER HOGARTH

IN A year that began with revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and that has seen general strikes rock Chile and much of Europe; an occupation of the Capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin; hunger strikes by prisoners in California; and mass mobilizations that stopped the construction of the Kestone XL Tar Sands pipeline; 2011 is already a historic year of resistance. Building on the wave of revolt sweeping across the globe, the Occupy movement continues to grow.

What started out as a few young activists squatting in a park has become a focal point of resistance the world over. The unifying anger over inequality, unemployment, underemployment, debt, homeless-

ness, police brutality and attacks on jobs, pensions and living standards has been effectively summarized by the slogan “we are the 99%.”

The call, which has been taken up by over 1,000 cities worldwide, is a response to the mad drive for austerity coming from the ruling class, which claims we all have to tighten our belts while bombs continue to fall, the climate keeps changing and executive compensation goes up and up.

It is in this context that the Mayor and Oakland Police Department decided to clamp down on the Occupy Oakland encampment. For two weeks, Occupy Oakland protestors had been camped out at Oscar Grant Plaza (renamed in honour of police murder victim Oscar Grant). On October 25, police officers organ-

ized a pre-dawn raid on the site, complete with teargas, beanbag shotgun rounds and rubber bullets.

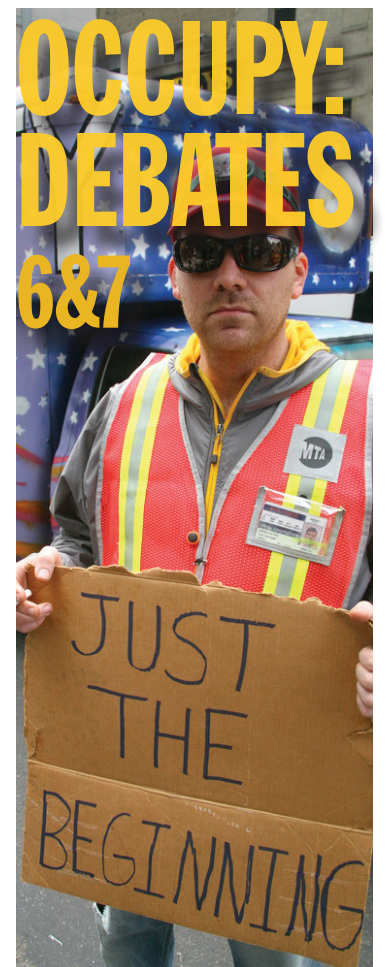
Protestors refused to cede the park and, in the ensuing police attack, more than 100 were arrested. Scott Olsen, an Iraq Veteran Against the War, was critically wounded after being struck in the head by a tear gas canister fired by police.

The response was incredible. More than 50,000 took part in a day of action that saw schools closed and solidarity by carpenters, hotel workers, nurses, dockworkers and families and groups of all kinds, all culminating in a shut-down of the city’s greatest economic asset, the Port of Oakland, the fifth largest port in America.

This is a sign of the times. Millions around the world are

radicalizing as they refuse to bail out the 1%. The general strike in Oakland was a success because thousands of workers connected the sentiment of resistance in Oscar Grant Plaza to the very sharp attacks on their living and working conditions.

Now the radicalism of the Occupy movement needs to go out of the camps and into the workplaces, schools and communities, to really fight back. Teachers in Los Angeles have occupied the school board to protest budget cuts. Parents, teachers and students used the “people’s mic” to take over a Department of Education meeting in New York to demand adequate funding. The mood for resistance is growing as people around the world continue a march that started in Tunisia last December.



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Wheat Board battle heats up

by REG MCQUAID

THE STRUGGLE for control of Prairie grain marketing escalated on October 18, when the Conservative government tabled Bill C-18, the Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act.

The legislation is designed to terminate the Canadian Wheat Board’s monopoly selling function by August 1, 2012. The 10 farmer directors are to be replaced by five government appointees, with a mandate to prepare the voluntary Board for privatization or dissolution within five years. For these changes to go into effect during the coming marketing year, all legislative steps have to be completed by the end of December.

Further flouting the democratic process, the government will not allow the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture to examine and comment on the bill, but will instead send it to the Legislative Committee where only technical issues can be raised.

Reaction from farmers has been swift and vigorous. Protest rallies have taken place near Saskatoon and Brandon, and a major rally was held in front of the Wheat Board’s Winnipeg office on October 28. This grass-roots movement is led by the National Farmers Union, the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, and the Friends of the CWB.

Dismantling the Wheat Board is the first step of the Harper government towards total deregulation of grain marketing and transportation, for the benefit of the big grain companies and the two railways.

The CWB’s board of directors has filed a lawsuit against the government over the introduction of Bill C-18. The suit alleges that the government broke the law by failing first to conduct a plebiscite of affected producers, as required by Section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act of 1998, which remains in force. For ongoing solidarity campaigns visit www.cwb.ca/timetolisten and www.nfu.ca

Veteran plans hunger strike at Minister’s office

Ex-soldier Pascal Lacoste, an ex-solider, says he was poisoned while serving in Bosnia, where he was exposed to depleted uranium.

His health has been in decline since the mission in the 1990s and he wants treatment for degenerative neurological condition, infertility and chronic pain from which he suffers.

The Ministry of Veteran Affairs has denied his requests for toxicology tests and decontamination treatments, and insists that the Canadian government should not be held responsible.

In response, Lacoste has planned a hunger strike outside the office of Veteran Affairs, saying if his country expects him to die, then he will do it publicly.



Quebec politics in turmoil

by JESSICA SQUIRES AND BENOIT RENAUD

SINCE 1970, two parties have shared power in Quebec City: the sovereigntist Parti Québécois (PQ), and the federalist Liberals. Now, everything is up for grabs.

The implosion of the Bloc Québécois federally led rapidly to a crisis of leadership in the PQ that shows no signs of slowing. The Liberals are faring no better, even after Jean Charest was forced to concede and call an inquiry—with very limited powers—into corruption in the construction industry.

A big part of the new landscape is François Legault’s new party, the Coalition pour l’avenir du Québec (CAQ). It has policies somewhere between the right wing populism of Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) and the business pragmatism of the Liberals, with a touch of PQ

style nationalism. Legault has been benefited from the complicity of the corporate media to build what could be the biggest political bubble in Quebec history... or the next government.

Meanwhile, Québec solidaire (QS) has continued to build a left alternative since its creation in 2006. Polls taken since the election of MNA Amir Khadir in 2008 have given QS between seven and 12 per cent of popular support.

Legault’s new party might cost QS votes, but would still leave it significantly above its last results (four per cent in 2008) and in a position to elect more than one MNA. The disgraced Liberals could be reduced to their strongholds of Western Montreal and the Outaouais, waiting to come back under a new leader.

But the party with the most to lose from this new political configuration would be the PQ. Instead of surfing to power on a wave

of disgust at the Liberals, it could be reduced to a handful of seats, in a horrifying repeat of the BQ debacle. This would demoralize generations of PQ supporters, many of whom are also involved in the union movement, community groups and other progressive organizations.

Alliance

What should QS do in that context? Amir Khadir is openly advocating an alliance between QS and the PQ against Legault and Charest, while admitting that it is not up to him to decide on such a course. In fact, this notion was debated last March, and categorically rejected by the 300 QS delegates.

Some argue for the debate to be reopened because of the results of the federal elections and the unexpected rise of Legault in the polls. This is a doomed tactic. Pragmatically, when the PQ is in a tailspin is the

worst possible moment to form a visible pact. Worse, it would be very confusing to the public, creating the impression that QS cares what happens to the PQ.

Finally, it would be deeply disillusioning to thousands who are looking to QS for a new kind of politics. Let the PQ fall under the weight of its own contradictions.

What QS should do is focus on the movements. There is the Occupy movement, but even more importantly, the growing student mobilization against tuition fee increases.

A massive student strike, like the one that won a major victory against the same Charest government in 2005, could spark massive resistance, not only against the Liberals or CAQ, but also the more moderate neoliberal policies of the PQ. Only QS can relate to these struggles in a meaningful way and give them an electoral expression.

Tory threat to abortion rights

by PAM JOHNSON

2012 MARKS the 40th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the US Supreme Court decision affirming a woman’s right to an abortion. It will also be 14 years since the abortion law in Canada was struck down in 1988. Abortion rights were won through hard fought struggles by women and men and marked a high point of the gains of the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s.

Today these gains are under attack by Harper’s Conservatives and Tea Party-fuelled politicians in the US. The economic crisis of 2008 followed by government austerity measures have led to scapegoating tactics to detract from the real cause of the crisis, including, once again, attacking a woman’s

right to choose.

On November 8, Mississippians voted in a referendum to reject a draconian law that would have redefined abortion and most forms of contraception as murder—with no exceptions for rape or incest or when a woman’s life is in danger—and banned any contraception that may prevent implantation of a fertilized egg.

Sadly, both Republican and Democratic politicians have supported the bill, although the Tea Party inspired initiative had been voted down twice in Colorado. With the Tea Party influence undercut by the rising Occupy movement, even the largest US anti-choice organization, National Right To Life Committee, refused to support this toxic bill.

In Canada, Harper has infamously said that he will not reopen the abortion debate. It

is clear in poll after poll that a majority of Canadians support choice, making any direct attempt to undermine it political suicide. Since 2006, Harper’s regime has kept the lid on his party’s social conservatives, while allowing backdoor attempts to whittle down women’s rights—something pro-choice activists have called “anti-choice by stealth.”

In 2008, Tory MP Ken Epp introduced a private member’s bill, the “Unborn Victims of crime” Act, attempting to set a precedent for “fetal” rights. In the lead-up to the G20 summit, Harper’s maternal health initiatives for poor countries included the stipulation that no funding go to abortion services.

And now that they hold a majority in parliament, the social conservatives are coming out of the wood-

work. Tory MP Brad Trost said recently that anti-choice activists must become more aggressive.

He is demanding that the Harper government go further and cut funding to the International Planned Parenthood Federation for contraception and sex education programs in developing countries.

Planned Parenthood has pushed back, stating the move will inevitably lead to more unsafe abortions. Pro-choice activists in Toronto, including young women and men new to the struggle, held a successful emergency counter protest to a recent anti-choice rally.

Rekindling the pro-choice movements of the 70s and 80s with new layers of activists is the kind of activity that will be required to meet new challenges to women’s rights.

Tamils rally for self-determination

by JAMES CLARK

THOUSANDS OF Tamils and their supporters filled the south lawn of Queen’s Park on October 29 to rally for Tamil freedom and self-determination.

Over two years have passed since the end of Sri Lanka’s brutal civil war. While Tamils continue to seek justice for war crimes committed by the government of Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa, they have not abandoned their struggle for a national homeland.

As a result of ongoing mobilizations since the war ended in May 2009, the Tamil community has dramatically raised public awareness about its experience in Sri Lanka. Governments around the world, including Canada’s, have begun to acknowledge the scale of Sri Lanka’s war crimes, with a growing number of MPs now calling for an international war crimes tribunal. What Tamils knew to be the case in 2009 is now more widely accepted in the media and the public.

But raising awareness about the oppression of Tamils in Sri Lanka is just one part of the bigger struggle for freedom and independence. The rally on October 29 heard from Tamil and non-Tamil speakers alike who emphasized the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination, and who condemned the Sri Lankan government’s ethnic cleansing of Tamil regions.

Allies from the labour, student, peace and social justice movements all expressed solidarity for the struggle, and committed to building support outside the Tamil community. The rally was organized by the National Council of Canadian Tamils, which was recently elected to the pan-Canadian leadership of the Canadian Peace Alliance at its convention in Toronto in mid-October.

\$33 billion for warships

IN THE middle of an economic crisis, the Tory government has shown where its priorities lie.

In what it is touting as part of a “job creating” strategy, the Harper government has awarded more than \$33 billion in contracts to two Canadian shipyards—one in Halifax and one in Vancouver, to build war ships.

Instead of tackling climate change and joblessness through investing in sustainable green jobs, the Tories are pouring public money into the Tar Sands and war.

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Chilean students and workers struggle together

by **CARTER VANCE**

MONTHS BEFORE the Occupy Wall Street movement began in New York, a protest movement with similar motivations and goals was already active and growing in the South American country of Chile.

Tens of thousands of students began protesting earlier this year the right-wing government of millionaire Sebastián Piñera, demanding publicly-funded, high-quality education, and have continued despite several conciliatory moves on the part of the government. At the end of October, protests involved 100,000 students.

Cabinet shuffles and vague promises of additional funding have been met with suspicion and calls for

greater detail by the protesters and opposition politicians, who have pledged to force a popular referendum on the question of education funding. Were such a referendum to be held, it is highly likely it would pass; an informal poll put support at 89 per cent of Chileans, while Piñera’s approval ratings have cratered to around 20 per cent.

Inspired by the students, workers have begun protesting Piñera’s government, demanding a greater redistribution of wealth from a recent boom in the price of copper, Chile’s largest natural resource export. The CUT, the largest trade union umbrella group in Chile, organized a two-day national strike at the end of August, the first since the end of the Augusto Pinochet

dictatorship.

Like the student protests, the workers’ strikes were largely peaceful, apart from brief clashes with police, with many clanging pots and pans together in a traditional form of Latin American protest. The demands arise both from the specific context of Chile and the wider move towards “market-based” educational and labour “reforms” the world over.

Neoliberalism

Since the Pinochet dictatorship, Chile has been among the most neoliberal countries in terms of its educational approach, with a voucher funding scheme, similar to that now pushed by right-wing politicians in the United States,

which favours the rich for primary education. At the same time, tuition rates for universities are out of the reach of most people. Although Chile is one of the more prosperous countries in the region, its wealth is heavily weighted towards the top, no more clearly represented than by Mr. Piñera.

This isn’t a problem specific to just Chile. Recent protests in Colombia protesting similar educational reforms/cuts have drawn tens of thousands into the streets, and in many ways the protests mirror those in the United Kingdom protesting tuition fee hikes last year. These few among many examples point out the similarity of the struggle for good-quality, affordable education the world over.

More blood for oil in Uganda

by **FARID OMAR**

WASHINGTON IS beginning to militarize Central Africa by sending a contingent of 100 Special Forces to Uganda.

The US troops will also be deployed in neighboring countries including mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and oil-rich South Sudan, setting the stage for an impending large-scale militarization in the heart of Africa.

AFRICOM is one of US Defense’s six regional commands, with another notable example being the Central Command (CENTCOM), responsible for resource wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

AFRICOM’s strategic goals are to militarize the African continent

to secure unfettered access to vital resources including oil reserves, gas and minerals as well as to counter China’s rapid ascendancy in the continent in a new scramble for Africa. AFRICOM’s response to China’s inroads into African oilfields is the waging of full-fledged military operations to strategically secure the continent’s vital resources.

Oil

The primary reason for American actions in Uganda is oil. Uganda is newly oil rich after what is believed to be one of Africa’s largest onshore oil reserves was discovered in 2006 in the Lake Albert Basin in western Uganda. According to the *East African*, exploitable reserves in Uganda are said to hold up to 2.5 billion barrels of oil. In a bid to secure

both Uganda’s and South Sudan’s oil, the US has embarked on an aggressive campaign to militarize the entire resource-rich Central African region.

In addition to the need to secure resources, the US is also trying to counter the new revolutionary wave that began in North Africa and is now spreading to other parts of the continent. This year has seen the collapse of pro-Western regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and the violent uprising in Libya that threatened America’s interests in that oil-rich nation. Protesters have also taken to the streets to demand change in Gabon, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Swaziland, Botswana and Uganda.

The official reason given for US incursion into Uganda is to help

the country “eliminate the threat” posed by the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), which has been fighting the pro-US regime of President Yoweri Museveni.

Regional experts note that the now depleted LRA is a spent force having been largely flushed out of northern Uganda by Museveni’s US-backed forces. Already on the run, it is believed that the severely weakened rebel force has fewer than 400 men under arms, dispersed in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan.

By resorting to force in Uganda, the US is scuttling regional attempts to broker a comprehensive peace deal between the Ugandan government and the LRA that have been ongoing since 2006.

Business as usual after historic prisoner swap

by **J.Y. HODGE**

LESS THAN two weeks after Israel freed over 1,000 Palestinian political prisoners in exchange for a single Israeli soldier captured five years ago, violence flared again with the Palestinians absorbing the brunt of the pain.

Israeli airstrikes killed seven Palestinians in southern Gaza—members of Islamic Jihad—while in return, Gazan militants fired sev-

eral rockets into Israel damaging buildings and setting fire to parked cars.

This incident follows an all-too-familiar pattern of Israel appeasing domestic hawkishness through the deployment of overzealous military force, in the wake of what is perceived at home as a diplomatic failure.

Israeli public opinion was sharply divided over the imbalanced prisoner exchange, with demonstrations

for and against it, as well as much verbal hand-wringing in the media and the blogosphere. Opinions ranged from “what took the government so long?” to “no negotiation with terrorists” to the depressingly common and racist view, “an Israeli life is worth much more than a Palestinian’s. Look what a single Israeli gets in return.”

Diplomatic coup or not, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu expected to accrue substantial political

capital from the exchange, given the high profile of Gilad Shalit, the IDF soldier held incommunicado by Hamas. That capital has not been forthcoming.

In contrast, Hamas—by securing the release of dozens or hundreds of Fatah members as well as its own—has shown itself to be an effective representative of Palestinians’ national interest, insofar as it has been able to wring concessions from the occupier.

Pressure builds on Yemeni president

by **YUSUR AL-BAHRANI**

THE UN Security Council has condemned violence in Yemen and supported a plan for the Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to step down in exchange for immunity.

The adopted resolution came in response to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative that required Saleh to hand authority to his deputy. The deal adopted by the United States, the GCC and Europe shields Saleh and key members in the Yemeni government from investigation or trial for human rights violations. The UN resolution calls for an end to violence against protesters and the implementation of the GCC deal.

Saleh welcomed the UN resolution, and said that he would be ready to transfer power to “safe hands” after his 33 years of autocratic rule. He expressed his readiness to have dialogue with the opposition Joint Meeting Parties over the future of Yemen after the implementation of the resolution. Just days before the resolution, more than a dozen died in several cities in Yemen, including a child.

On the other hand, UN officials warned that Yemen would be at a risk of falling into a humanitarian crisis if violence escalates. The situation is likely to worsen the shortage of food in several cities and villages. The Yemeni government signed a ceasefire with a dissident general on October 25. However, explosions and blasts could still be heard in the capital Sana’a and several other cities.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured since the beginning of pro-democracy protests in Yemen. The Yemeni government has long been responsible for human rights violations including executions, torture and enforced disappearances.

What next for Libya?

by **MELISSA GRAHAM**

WITH THE death of former leader Muammar Gaddafi, many Libyans who have engaged in a bitter fight with his brutal regime for many months are celebrating in the streets.

The Western leaders will be relieved that Gaddafi wasn’t taken alive. If he had been brought to trial, he would have been able to mention all the help he received from Western intelligence services.

The future for Libya’s long-suffering people is still far from certain. The leadership of the new government is closely tied with NATO. Western leaders will do everything in their power to block the radical change that the revolution in Libya first promised.

Many who have spent bitter months fighting Gaddafi’s regime are furious at the deals they see being made. Western companies that happily dealt with Gaddafi are rushing back to Tripoli to sign contracts with the new government.

Despite NATO’s bombs and its efforts to hijack the revolution, thousands of ordinary Libyans played a role in overthrowing Gaddafi, and this can still have the effect of inspiring others struggling in the region against repressive regimes.

Divide and rule: Aboriginal peoples and the Constitution

THE DEBATES surrounding the Constitution, the highest law of the land in a capitalist state, have largely been about the continued exclusion of Quebec. But Aboriginal peoples have also been a target, often played off against the Québécois in a chauvinistic game of divide and rule.

As Quebec and Aboriginal rights were counterposed, the far right advanced, ultimately taking the form of the Reform Party – the predecessor of Stephen Harper’s wing of the federal Tories. A brief chronology of the decade following the Meech Lake Accord indicates how this process unfolded.

April 1987: The Meech Lake Accord, recognizing Quebec as a distinct society, was drafted and adopted at a Constitutional conference of premiers and the federal Tories led by Brian Mulroney. The deadline was set for June 1990, by which date all provinces agreed to ratify the amendment.

December 1988: The Supreme Court of Canada struck down the French-only signs section of Bill 101, the Quebec language law. Following this decision, Quebec Liberal Premier Robert Bourassa invoked the “notwithstanding clause” of the Canadian Constitution. This clause allows provinces to suspend application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in certain circumstances.

The Supreme Court decision was so clearly a denial of basic democratic rights that even this federalist government was compelled to reject it to maintain political support in Quebec.

June 1990: The Meech Lake Accord failed. Clyde Wells, Premier of Newfoundland, withdrew that province’s support. Then Manitoba NDP MLA and Aboriginal spokesperson Elijah Harper challenged the accord 12 days before final deadline. Gary Filmon, Tory minority government Premier of Manitoba, and Liberal leader Sharon Carstairs, who held the balance of power, watched gleefully as the province withdrew support for Meech Lake.

Upon the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord, Lucien Bouchard quit Mulroney’s Tory government and announced plans to form a new federal party that will fight for Quebec rights (Bloc Québécois). Elijah Harper later would cross the floor and join the Liberal Party.

July 1990: The Oka uprising began. The Mohawk warriors defended ancestral land against plans to build a golf course. One Quebec police officer was killed. The federal army fully mobilized to support the Sécurité du Québec (SQ) police repression, adding 2,629 troops, 874 jeeps, 270 armoured personnel carriers and 12 helicopters. After 77 days, the stand off ended in mass arrests.

The English language media presented these events as if it was a conflict of Quebec people against Mohawk rights. There are no grounds for this analysis. In fact there was more active support for the Oka Mohawks in Montreal than in any other city in Canada. Also, the charges against 14 Mohawk leaders came to trial, where the majority were acquitted by a Québécois jury on grounds that Canadian law did not apply to Aboriginal peoples.

August 1992: Another constitutional amendment, the Charlottetown Accord, was agreed by all premiers and the federal government. It included recognition of Quebec as a distinct society, as well as recognition of inherent Aboriginal land rights. The date for a federal referendum was set to coincide with Quebec’s proposed date for a provincial referendum.

October 1992: The Charlottetown Accord was defeated in a federal referendum. The Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit Tapirisat had endorsed the Accord.

October 1993: A federal election saw a Liberal majority government with Jean Chrétien as Prime Minister. The Tories declined to two seats. The Reform Party ran in the federal election, led by Preston Manning. With 52 seats, Reform came just two seats shy of forming the Official Opposition, but gained only one seat in Ontario. The Official Opposition went to the Bloc Québécois, led by Lucien Bouchard, which gained 54 seats.

Summer 1995: Twenty-four Aboriginal activists and four supporters occupied sacred land in the name of the Shuswap Nation, at Gustafsen Lake in BC. BC’s NDP government called in the RCMP in the largest paramilitary mobilization in Canadian history. All communication was cut off, food supplies stopped, and people were prevented at gunpoint from leaving or entering the camp. After a negotiated retreat, the trial of the Gustafsen defenders was initiated.

September 1995: Twenty unarmed members of the Stoney Point band occupied ancestral land that was legally theirs at Ipperwash Provincial Park, near Sarnia, Ontario. Two hundred Ontario Provincial Police were sent in on the order of Ontario Tory Premier, Mike Harris, and opened fire. The OPP fatally wounded one activist, Dudley George.

October 1995: The Cree of northern Quebec held a separate referendum. Cree voters were asked: “Do you consent, as a people, that the Government of Quebec separate the James Bay Crees and Cree traditional territory from Canada in the event of a Yes vote in the Quebec referendum?” The Cree voted 96.3 per cent to stay with Canada.

October 1995: In the Quebec referendum, a 50.6 per cent majority voted against sovereignty association.

January 1996: In a federal government cabinet shuffle, Stéphane Dion is brought into the Liberal Cabinet as Intergovernmental Affairs minister. The Liberals advance a strategy for Quebec that mimics the Reform Party. It includes a plan that, in the event of a third referendum, Canada could be ruled by military partition. In this scenario, the Cree of Quebec are to be partitioned by the federal state in the name of “protection.”

The divide-and-rule tactics of the federal state clearly demand a response – a unified movement that supports the rights of all the oppressed to self-determination.

INTERNATIONAL

Syria: from protests to defection

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

AS THE regime of Bashar al-Assad continues its crackdown on demonstrators, there is a rift opening up in the armed forces that could bolster the fight against dictatorship. But as in Libya, Western imperialism is threatening to intervene and undermine the genuine movement for democracy.

Al-Assad’s regime continues its brutal crackdown on demonstrators in Syrian cities. The death toll has increased to over 3,000 since protests began in March. The Syrian government claims that around 1,100 security officers have been killed in conflicts.

Apart from attacking protestors, the government has turned hospitals into instruments of repression. Amnesty International reports show

that wounded patients in at least four government-run hospitals have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Hospital workers suspected of treating protestors face arrest and torture by the Syrian government.

Army

In response, Army defectors say that they have formed a “Free Syrian Army” that claims to defend civilians and promote further defection. With the available arms, this could mean a move from peaceful protests to an armed challenge to President Al-Assad’s rule. A UN official warned that Syria would be under the threat of civil war.

Shockingly, Al-Assad’s regime is also intimidating activists living outside Syria. According to Amnesty International reports, 30 Syrian

activists living in Canada, the US, Chile, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and UK have been threatened by Syrian embassy officials.

The United States has withdrawn its envoy, Robert Ford, from Syria. The American government claims that this measure has been taken to protect its diplomat, and Ford would return to Syria shortly. In response, Syria has also withdrawn its ambassador from the United States. Internationally, China and Russia have joined hands to veto UN sanctions on Syria.

While Britain and the US have hinted at possible attacks on Iran, the Western powers are positioning themselves for the possibility of military intervention in Syria. As in Libya, this would be a death knell for any genuine movement of change from below.

Palestine joins UNESCO, US withdraws funding

by DARREN EDGAR

ON OCTOBER 31, Palestinians were granted full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This comes after their application for membership in the United Nations General Assembly on September 23.

Considering how long, and ultimately unsuccessful, the process for membership in the General Assembly is likely to be, the Palestinians’ last-minute bid for membership in UNESCO, based upon an initial submission from 1989, has been interpreted by many as an attempt to increase the profile of the struggle for Palestinian statehood. But even painted merely as a symbolic gesture, this attempt by Palestinians for greater international recognition has been met with swift retaliation by the usual suspects. Canada and the United States both voted against the motion,

continuing to march in lock-step with Israel.

Under the pretext of a law passed by its Congress in 1990 which, according to Natasha Mozgovaya of the Associated Press, “[restricts] funding to UN bodies that recognize Palestine as a state before an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal is reached,” the US promised to immediately withdraw funding from UNESCO, some \$80 million, or more than 20 per cent of its annual budget. However the US claimed it would still remain a member of the UN cultural agency, while Israel threatened to end involvement with UNESCO entirely.

Canada

For its part Canada made it clear that, unlike in recent times past, it would not increase its financial commitment to make up for the budgetary shortfall caused by the US funding withdrawal. Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister, John Baird, said, “The bottom line

is there is going to be a large hole in UNESCO’s budget because of the American law which withdraws funding. And UNESCO should not look to Canada to fill that budget hole. They’ll have to go to the countries that supported the resolution that caused this budget hole.”

As Canada blames other nations for daring to acknowledge that a Palestinian state has a right to exist—even symbolically—both Israeli and US officials said the move could harm renewed efforts for Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. But with Israel’s flouting of international laws through its expansion of settlements in the West Bank and its ongoing siege of Gaza, and considering the US and Canada’s unwavering allegiance to Israel’s Zionist project, the real obstacles to lasting peace in the Middle East continue to be Israel’s refusal to negotiate fairly with the Palestinians and the intervening Western nations who support this farce.

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class into accepting austerity.

But the ruling classes are so fearful of Greek workers that even a referendum was too much to stomach. Calls for Papandreou’s resignation and for new elections grew. Within days, the referendum proposal had been scrapped and Papandreou’s survival in a confidence motion on November 4 proved pyrrhic.

Coalition

Over the next 48 hours, Papandreou was forced to announce his resignation to pave the way for a new government of “national unity” prepared to implement austerity on the scale demanded. The new coalition would be conducting elections in mid-February. The right-wing New Democracy party – rejected by voters just two years ago – has agreed to join the coalition government, along with the far-right LAOS party. So far, the leftist parties have vowed not to join the new government. Lucas Papademos, a former European Central Bank vice-president and former governor of the Bank of Greece, was named prime minister of the coalition government on November 10.

While European rulers hope that the new coalition will be able to implement austerity package, it is equally clear that Merkel’s hope of restoring Europe to a “union of stability” may be far more elusive than she, or other European rulers, imagine.

Capitalist crisis spreads to Italy

As the world’s attention turns from Greece to Italy, it is clear that the European debt crisis is far from solved. No sooner had the markets

absorbed the news that the Greek rescue package would not be subjected to a popular vote than the bond market cultures began circling over Italy.

Panic is palpable. British Prime Minister David Cameron warned that the eurozone would collapse unless the European Central Bank (ECB) takes more powers to buy the bonds of countries with high debt and who are vulnerable to interest rate increases.

By November 7, the interest demanded on Italian debt had soared to the highest levels since Italy joined the Euro—6.69 per cent. In response, the 17 finance ministers of the eurozone convened an emergency meeting in Brussels in an attempt to “to stop the rot” with Italian bond yields. European leaders are worried that if bond yields keep increasing as they did for Greece, Italy may be forced into default, creating a situation in which there simply isn’t enough money to save the system. Italy has the eighth largest economy in the world and the fourth largest in Europe.

Interest rates (bond yields) increase when speculators believe it is more “risky” to lend money. To put it in perspective, Germany is currently paying about 2 per cent on its debt (bonds) while Greece is paying over 18 per cent.

The annual interest currently being paid by workers in Greece has nearly doubled from about 10 billion Euros in 2007 to 18 billion Euros today. This interest is being paid to bankers primarily in Germany, France and Greece itself. The rescue packages are designed to rescue the bankers – not Greek workers.

In the meantime, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and even France are considered to be vulnerable. And as bond markets target one country after

another for higher bond yields, it makes it even more difficult for those countries to meet their debt obligation. In order to head off the market response to Italian “risk”, the calls are growing louder for all Eurozone countries to step up to the plate to buy bonds from countries that are vulnerable to interest rate hikes, in order to avoid a catastrophic situation. Even China—with its sovereign wealth funds—has been asked to help keep the eurozone afloat by pitching in.

It is growing increasingly clear that even with the most vicious and draconian austerity measures, these countries’ debts will never be paid off. But that isn’t necessarily the point. Bankers want stability so workers will continue to pay the interest that makes the financial sector so fantastically profitable. It is up to workers in Europe and around the world to say: “Enough!”



‘Be realistic, demand the impossible!’

Long before the Occupy Wall Street movement rattled the ruling class of America, students and workers in France occupied their schools and workplaces, demanding change. Jessica Squires looks at the events of Paris 1968 and the lessons for today’s protestors and occupiers.

As the occupy movement enters its second month, corporate media and much of the international left continue to observe from the sidelines that the movement lacks cohesion, and is not offering up any clear demands for mainstream consumption.

But what inspired all these people to come together in the first place is a shared, deepening and profoundly justified anger about how the world works. Perhaps this helps explain why fully a third of the public already supports the occupation movement, despite non-stop criticism by the mainstream media that protesters don’t know what they want.

There are striking similarities between this movement and one that took place in 1968. Arguably the high point of the latter was the weeks-long general strike that took place in France. At its height French president Charles de Gaulle fled the country, hiding out in Germany. During those weeks the people of France—students, workers, the unemployed (what we refer to today as the 99%)—experimented with democratic decision-making, debated about demands and took actions that nearly brought down the state.

Slogans

The title of this article was one of the most popular slogans of the movement in 1968: *Soyons réaliste, demandons l’impossible!*

Another popular slogan was *On ne revendiquera rien, on ne demandera rien. On prendra, on occupera!* In English: “We demand nothing, we ask for nothing. We will take, we will occupy!”

The major difference between today and 1968 is that the French movement occupied schools and factories. But they, too, began by taking over the public square.

It began with student protests at Nanterre University, over the student code of conduct, unemployment and the Vietnam War, among other issues. After the police brutally attacked the protests, French unions and students from other campuses marched in their hundreds of thousands. In the following weeks, students and their allies held general assemblies that lasted days. They talked and debated. Eventually, they did articulate demands, but it took a lot of discussion and debate to get there, and with a really mass movement, it is unlikely that they reached consensus.

General assembly

One account of the Sorbonne occupation describes it like this:

“The only power in the Sorbonne was the general assembly of its occupiers. At its first session, on May 14, amidst a certain confusion, it had elected an Occupation Committee of 15 members revocable by it each day. Only one of the delegates, a member of the Nanterre-Paris Enragé group, had set forth a program: defence of direct democracy in the Sorbonne and absolute power of workers’ councils as the ultimate goal.

“The next day’s general assembly reelected its entire Occupation



Committee, which had as yet been unable to accomplish anything. In fact, the various specialized groupings that had set themselves up in the Sorbonne all followed the directives of a hidden ‘Coordination Committee,’ composed of self-appointed organizers, responsible to no one, doing everything in their power to prevent any ‘irresponsible’ extremist actions.

“An hour after the reelection of the Occupation Committee one of these ‘coordinators’ privately tried to declare it dissolved. A direct appeal to the people in the courtyard of the Sorbonne aroused a movement of protests that forced the manipulator to retract himself. By the next day... 13 members of the Occupation Committee had disappeared, leaving two [people]... vested with the only delegation of power authorized by the general assembly—and this at a time when the urgency of the situation demanded immediate decisions: democracy was constantly being flouted in the Sorbonne, while factory occupations were spreading all over the country.”

Challenges

Doesn’t sound pretty, does it? Some participants in the various occupations across Canada and the US have had similar experiences, along with a host of others. But to expect otherwise would be a pipe dream.

Movements are messy, and they take a lot of work. And sometimes, they fall apart. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t keep trying.

Today’s occupation movement has begun, in various locations, to grapple with the challenges and tensions created by bringing together such a diverse group of people. Discussions and debates about how to make decisions, how to be accountable to one another, how to involve more people, whether to discuss politics and in what form, etc. are taking place across the continent.

The important thing is not to orphan.

Mass organizations

These debates are important. The movement in France ultimately failed—not because of how it was organized, but because the leaders of some of the mass organizations, seeking to preserve their own authority, moved to stifle the occupations.

In today’s movement, significantly, the unions are playing a positive role. Even the ultra-bureaucratized AFL-CIO (the main labour federation in the US) is encouraging its members to participate in occupations, owning that they are complex and unpredictable, but emphasizing their importance at the same time.

This is a positive development, and should be supported. The last thing the occupiers should do is break ties with organized labour and its networks of communication to hundreds of thousands of the 99%.

But the long-term survival of the occupy movement means even more effort is needed to remain organized and, finally, to talk politics. The occupiers don’t need to be clear about some kind of reformist demands, just to pacify the media or some sections of the left. But they will need more than consensus decision-making to keep them together, especially if the state or the leadership of mass organizations tries to end the protests.

Occupy everything

There is one other thing the occupy movement has in common with the experience of May 1968. That movement was, in large part, inspired by the Prague Spring, an uprising of students and workers. Similarly, the Arab Spring has helped inspire the thousands occupying parks and public squares in hundreds of cities.

The success (so far) of the Arab Spring—and of the movement of 1968—has been the spreading of occupations into schools and workplaces. Those sites of economic authority need to come under popular control, or the impact of the occupy movement will

be severely limited. From that same account of the Sorbonne occupation:

“At the very moment that the example of the occupation is beginning to be taken up in the factories it is collapsing at the Sorbonne.... But the students have in fact already given an excellent lesson to the workers precisely by occupying the Sorbonne and briefly initiating a really democratic debate.”

General strikes

In France in 1968, workers’ actions that began as mass marches and turned into unlimited general strikes were the lynch-pin that forced President DeGaulle to flee the country. Workplaces were under workers’ control, the university campuses were opened up to everybody, and free universities were set up. Debate was everywhere, not just about day-to-day needs, but about how to transform society once and for all.

Now, in some cities around the world—Cairo, in Greece, in the rest of Europe, and in the Global South—general strike movements are taking shape again. And in Oakland, California on November 2, thousands of workers and students walked off the job and out of classrooms in a one-day general strike against the system, called by Occupy Oakland in the aftermath of a police crackdown on October 25. Crucially, this has come about because of the efforts the Oakland occupation made to reach out from the start to those beyond the boundaries of the square: not just asking for their support, but offering it as well, out of a recognition that all the issues—housing, indigenous rights, the environment, labour, jobs—are connected.

Not just the park, but society itself, should be subject to democratic control—real democracy, where ordinary people make the decisions that affect their lives.

As they chanted in 1968: “Be realistic, demand the impossible!”

‘the survival of the occupy movement means even more effort is needed to remain organized and to talk politics’

‘OCCUPY EVERYTHING’

The Occupy protests sweeping North America have raised important questions about how to build a movement. Socialist Worker takes a look at some of the key debates.

One of the most exciting things about the Occupy protests is the widespread discussion they have sparked, both within the movement itself and among the wider public, about creating resistance to the capitalist system and building alternatives to it. Some of the questions are new. Many others have come up in previous movements. That means today’s movement will have both lessons to offer and lessons to learn.

Strategy and tactics

As the discussions become more sophisticated, activists have had to learn the difference between strategy and tactics, and how they are related. Strategy is the overall plan to achieve a goal. Tactics are the individual steps you take to achieve that goal. The overall strategy should inform the individual tactics.

Discussions about strategy and tactics have been important throughout all the Occupy protests, allowing activists to make short-term decisions based on their long-term goals. For example, in Occupy Toronto, there have been discussions about the link between what activists do on street demonstrations and how they attract more people to participate in the movement. The demonstrations only last a few hours, but they play an important role in generating support for the ongoing occupations, and connecting to broader struggles—as long as they remain open, democratic and inclusive.

Sometimes activists feel impatient with the pace of change and decide to take action on their own—a small group of people acting on behalf of many others. While actions like these might seem to be more radical or militant, they can end up having the opposite effect: excluding others from deciding what action to take, excluding others from participating in the action, and undermining support for the ongoing occupation.

One example of this is the recent attempt by a group of activists at Occupy Oakland to lead an occupation of an empty building once used to house homeless people. The strategy to expand the Occupation movement is a good one, but the tactic used in this case was not. Instead of organizing openly in the General Assembly and winning the whole group to participating in the action, the smaller group attempted to do it on its own, and ended up in a confrontation with the police—without the numbers or support to challenge them effectively. By contrast, the mass march to shut down Oakland’s port, which involved thousands of people who also participated in deciding on what kind of action to take, was a much more effective tactic: it built the confidence of all those who participated, it forced the police off the streets, and it actually shut down the port for a shift, attracting support from dock workers.

Whenever activists discuss what short-term actions to take (tactics), they should always ask whether they support their overall plan (strategy).

Organization

Another exciting discussion has been around the question of organization. Is the movement merely a spontaneous expression of anger against the system? Or does it require organization? If so, what kind of organization would help build the movement effectively?

Some activists have argued that the Occupy protests have no structure whatsoever, that there are no leaders, and that all decisions are made collectively. At some level, this is true of all movements: it takes some time for large groups of people coming together for the first time to figure out the best way to organize themselves.

But structures always emerge, as they are doing now in all of the local occupations.

The question is whether those structures will be visible and accountable or invisible and unaccountable.

For example, almost every occupation includes a General Assembly, during which everyone comes together to debate the next steps and update each other on any news or developments. Because of the numbers involved and the thirst for discussing politics, many General Assemblies turn into hours of open discussion without practical conclusions. It is important for people to feel they have a place to have their voice heard, but it is also important for the occupations to make collective decisions. Having committees discuss logistical details, and report back to assemblies for agreement, ensures decisions are made in a collective and accountable way—instead of a small number making decisions behind the scenes in an unaccountable manner. Some activists celebrate such “de-centralization,” but in reality it is an undemocratic process.

Accessibility

All these questions are related to another important issue: accessibility. In other words, who can participate in the occupations, to what extent can they participate, who makes the decisions and determines the agenda, how can we expand the process to involve more people, what barriers exist to more people getting involved, and so on?

The issue of access takes many forms. In its physical sense, it has to do with who can actually “occupy” the location of the occupation. Although public support for the aims of the protests is high (and continues to grow), the vast majority of ordinary people can’t afford to take time off their jobs or spend time away from their families in order to camp out in a park or plaza with a police presence. But



that doesn’t mean they don’t want to get involved or couldn’t participate in another way. In fact, the vast majority of the 99% have yet to join the movement, even if they support it.

Disability

Another important question related to access is disability rights, and one that has developed a profile within the broader Occupy protests. People with disabilities, for example, are “part of the 99%,” but are typically part of its lowest one per cent. In other words, they often experience the effects of austerity and life under capitalism more intensely than others because of countless barriers and discrimination.

In Canada, people with disabilities don’t have decent accessible housing because the government refuses to make it a priority, spending billions on tax cuts instead. In Ontario, 70 per cent of people with disabilities remain unemployed, while the Ontario Disability Support Program is the most steadily increasing item in the province’s budget. Despite some progress—women with a disability are represented for the first time ever in the Official Opposition—but people with disabilities still feel a sense of powerlessness against the capitalist system.

In Toronto, Rob Ford has put accessible transit and social housing on the chopping block, which will have a disproportionate effect on people with disabilities. Ford also cancelled festivities to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and refuses to address inappropriate police behaviour, including the use of violence, towards people with disabilities.

In order to address these issues, over a hundred people with disabilities and their allies joined a Disability Pride March on October 29. Starting at Nathan Phillips Square, they marched through the financial district to St. James Park, chanting “Equal access, equal rights,” “Build ramps, not bombs,” and “No cuts! No way! Tell Rob Ford: We’re here to stay!” Since then, a similar march has been organized at Occupy Wall Street.

The issue of access has led local occupations to make accommodation a central part of how they organize. At Occupy Toronto, people with disabilities already have the kind of accessible support that would normally take months to receive in their day-to-day lives: attendant care, ASL and accessible portable toilets.

History shows that movements, not just legislation, can more effectively challenge discrimination. Actions like these allow broader movements to connect with the occupy protests.

Anti-racism

Another central question related to accessibility is the issue of racism, and how it affects the participation of people of colour in the Occupy protests. Important debates have emerged about which groups are represented, and which groups are not, among those leading and participating in ongoing occupations. The racialization of entire communities affects the way they experience the effects of neoliberalism and life under capitalism—an experience that is not usually reflected in some of the demands and slogans raised by the occupy protests.

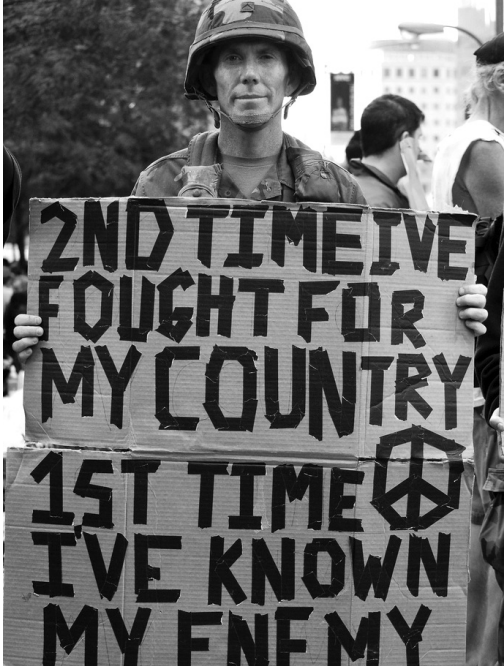
For example, at Occupy Wall Street, during a General Assembly debate about its founding declaration, a number of activists objected to language that glossed over the lived experience of racialized groups, and that claimed the occupiers were “[f]ormerly divided by the colour of our skin” and that “there is only one race, the human race...” The debate that

followed began to address the lack of diversity and representation at the occupation, and led to the creation of the People of Color Working Group, whose members call themselves “POCupiers” and which aims to challenge the way oppression affects the way we organize our resistance to capitalism. Its success has sparked the creation of similar working groups at Occupy Toronto and other occupation locations.

The debate has also helped explain the systemic nature of oppression that exists in all aspects of society. Not surprisingly, this oppression gets replicated in the protests. It’s not a question of just fighting for more representation but of injecting the movement with a critical anti-racist analysis. Likewise, the responsibility to challenge racism must be everyone’s, especially those who have a predominant voice in the process. All of us need to critically assess our privilege and our choices. This approach should apply to challenging all forms of oppression, including sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia and others.

Issues such as housing, education, healthcare and employment, for example, are not experienced in the same way from one group to the next; this recognition is a first step to building a more united movement, but one that doesn’t erase or ignore the experiences of racism, racial profiling and bigotry—and all the ways they intensify the effects of neoliberalism and life under capitalism. Exploitation is not the same as oppression: you can’t effectively challenge one without challenging the other.

Similarly, participants have had to address the question of indigenous sovereignty and how the slogan “occupy” might inadvertently reinforce the colonial practice of occupation. From the early days of the movement, indigenous activists have drawn attention to the fact that all the occupations on Turtle Island are, in fact, already on occupied land. Activists have since taken a more sensitive approach to the experience of indigenous people, following their lead on discussions about decolonization and anti-occupation resistance, and informing their strategy with an anti-imperialist critique.



Spreading ‘occupy’

Perhaps the biggest challenge of the occupy protests has been connecting the numbers participating in the ongoing occupations to the much bigger number of people who support the protests but who have not yet found a way to participate. A recent Nanos poll in Canada shows that a solid majority of the public is sympathetic to the occupy movement. Among people under 30, the level of support sits at 73 per cent. Among people over 60, more support the movement than oppose it, although levels of support are lower.

Nevertheless, an audience much bigger than the protests themselves represents the potential for the movement to expand and become more effective. While some activists have argued that the sole focus of the protests should be building the local occupations themselves (including preparing for winter in northern cities), others have argued for a more outward-looking focus—one that takes the spirit, energy and politics of the local occupations to other struggles, as a means to spread the occupy movement.

Where activists have organized actions that connect with other fights against austerity, privatization, lay-offs and cuts, they have had much success. In Toronto, for example, occupy activists have led marches to Ryerson Social Justice Week, and to City Hall to join anti-cuts campaigners—a tactic that ends up building all struggles and the confidence of all those participating in them.

The tactic of spreading occupy protests beyond the protest sites themselves has also had the effect of inspiring occupy protests in other locations, such as on university and college campuses, where students are now beginning to challenge the neoliberal agenda in education.

The movement is also inspiring workers. In Toronto, 1000 postal and steelworkers occupied the main intersection of the financial district under the banner “capitalism doesn’t work for workers” and “postal workers are part of the 99%”. If the protests can spread to workplaces themselves, the movement would be dramatically strengthened, allowing workers to take the lead in directly confronting capitalism: at the point of production.

You can’t evict the movement

The need to spread the occupy protests is more urgent than ever, especially as city officials make plans to evict the occupations, as they have done in London, Ontario and other cities. Activists must prepare both to defend the occupations, preserving the spaces where they have grown and developed over the last few weeks, and to spread them as widely as possible—to workplaces, campuses, neighbourhoods, and so on.

Even if the state does manage to evict the occupations, it can’t evict the movement itself—which is much broader and deeper than the small physical spaces being occupied. The occupy movement is a product of global economic crisis, the inability of social democracy to offer an alternative, and the inspiration from the Arab spring. Attacking people’s freedom of assembly does away with none of these issues, and only confirms people’s sense that—as a placard in Occupy Wall Street read—“the system’s not broken, it was built this way.”

The occupy movement marks the return of the anti-capitalist movement, which will not go away even if it continues in a different form. It has already succeeded in sparking the debate, and encouraging broader struggles, for a better world.

Fighting back

Join the socialists

WITH THE endless spread of economic crisis, war and climate chaos, it's clear that another world is necessary. This year of revolts—from revolutions across the Arab world, general strikes from Chile to Greece, and Occupy movements across Canada and the US—has raised people's hopes that a better world might be possible, but how do we get there? Socialists have many contributions to make.

First, we fight on every front. In a time of multiple crises, it's not enough just to build one campaign; we need to build them all—defending jobs and services, fighting oppression and war, demanding climate justice, and others. An individual socialist can't do this, but an organization of socialists can. Socialist organization can unite the movements in which individuals are rooted—like the work that linked up Occupy Toronto with Disability Pride and Tamil freedom.

Second, because socialists believe in self-emancipation, we try to build movements as big and broad as possible. A better world will not come through a minority making change on behalf of others, whether it's MPs in Parliament or "radical" activists in the streets. Socialists intervene in movements to ensure they are as big and inclusive as possible so that ordinary people gain the experience and confidence that they themselves can change the world.

Third, socialists link movements to the power of the working-class. From pro-choice to anti-war movements, working class activity has been key for reforms; and the Egyptian Revolution is demonstrating how central the working class is for revolution. But this does not happen automatically. Understanding that the working class is the Achilles' heel of capitalism, socialists help connect movements with the working class, and increase workers' self-confidence and organization.

Finally, socialist organization crystallizes this historical and current experience—fighting on every front, building and linking movements, and connecting them to working-class power—into theory and organization. The bigger the organization, the more it can contribute to movements. So if you agree with these ideas, join the International Socialists so we can help fight for the better world that is not only necessary, but possible.

NDP

Leadership race: can it magnify the movements?

THOUGH THE vote for the next leader of the NDP is not until March, the race to choose who will take over from Jack Layton after the historic "orange wave" is generating widespread interest. For socialists believing that change happens outside Parliament, the leadership race of the NDP is still an important matter, but the criteria are different. The question is not one of personality, but of ability to open up space for mass movements.

In 2003 Joe Comartin was not the most popular leadership candidate, nor did he promise the most radical platform. But he was the clearest of the leadership contenders to challenge Islamophobia and the looming war on Iraq—the key issues of the day. In that context, backing Comartin for leader opened up space for the anti-war movement and forced other leadership candidates to take the issue seriously. For Jack Layton to win the leadership race, he had to openly campaign against the Iraq War, with or without the UN, and this magnified the anti-war movement.

This year the "orange wave" catapulted the NDP into Official Opposition, as a result of events outside Parliament: the global economic crisis, anger at the Tories, disillusionment with the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois, and inspiration from the Arab spring. Millions voted NDP not because of the details of their platform—which included continuing military spending—but out of a desire for a real alternative. Some of the candidates—such as aboriginal leader Romeo Saganash and 29-year old Niki Ashton—reflect the hopes of those who want the party to better represent the 99%. The question is whether a leadership candidate can open up space for mass movements to fight for this alternative.

The NDP bureaucracy is pushing in the opposite direction to accommodate to a system in crisis. The front-runner is Brian Topp, who wants to model the NDP on the British Labour Party (whose support for war and privatization allowed the Tories to return to power) and the Greek PASOK government (which is imposing brutal austerity measures). Former Liberal Thomas Mulcair is trying to sever the NDP's connection to the labour movement, while Foreign Affairs Critic Paul Dewar has avoided calling for troops out of Afghanistan.

Much of the left is turning to Toronto MP Peggy Nash, who has a history in the labour movement and an early supporter of the anti-war movement. If she takes a strong stand on fighting austerity, ending the war and respecting Quebec's right to self-determination, she could provide a rallying point for progressive forces to magnify movements for a better world.

OPINION



Durban Climate Change summit: The time for talk is over

Amidst increasing extreme weather disasters and a rising tide of mass revolt worldwide, John Bell looks at the upcoming UN Conference on Climate Change.

"THE MORE we talk about the need to control emissions, the more they are growing": John Reilly, co-director of MIT's Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change.

As the world heads to yet another UN sponsored summit on climate change the news is grim. Figures for 2010 show that greenhouse gas emissions are increasing faster the worst-case scenario put out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just four years ago.

The leading culprits are the US, China and India.

In the US alone, 2010 saw 247 separate "natural disaster" events causing more than a billion dollars damage. These included temperature extremes, droughts, wildfires, blizzards, tropical storms, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Perhaps not every single event can be attributed to climate change, but the trend is undeniable: since 1980, when there were fewer than 70 such events, there has been a steady increase in the number and severity of weather related disasters.

'Natural disasters'

The same is happening around the world. Bangkok, one of the world's great cities, has been under flood water since July. In the Mekong delta, one of the world's crucial rice growing regions, a combination of flooding and rising sea levels have ravaged that crop and the people dependant on it. And so it goes around the world

Munich Re, one of the worlds biggest insurance companies, wrote in a 2010 press release: "the only plausible explanation for the rise of weather-related catastrophes is climate change."

There is one ray of hope. Most industrialized nations that signed on to the Kyoto Accord report they have reduced their emissions about eight per cent below 1990 levels, although that may be due as much to factories idled

by economic crisis as anti-pollution measures. Canada is not among those nations. Stephen Harper scrapped any pretence of abiding by the treaty, and emissions have soared, led by development of the Tar Sands.

Last year's summit, held in a luxury resort in Cancun, Mexico, was a shambles, driving the final nail in the Kyoto Accord's coffin. Whatever its shortcomings, Kyoto tried to force signatories to meet hard, verifiable targets for reducing emissions. In its place a new "consensus" has emerged, brokered by the US and China, replacing Kyoto's hard numbers and dates with "aspirations", deliberately vague promises for future action, and reliance on market mechanisms like carbon trading.

These market mechanisms have proved to be a sham. Big finance has found a new way to get richer, but emissions continue to grow out of control.

The only honourable exception at Cancun was the Bolivian delegation which walked out, exposing the charade going on inside. The government of Evo Morales organized the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, which produced a stirring document known as the Cochabamba Agreement.

It states: "The corporations and governments of the so-called 'developed' countries, in complicity with a segment of the scientific community, have led us to discuss climate change as a problem limited to the rise in temperature without questioning the cause, which is the capitalist system."

Every person concerned about the planet should read this document, with its Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth. You are welcome to download it from <http://readingfromthe-left.com/PDF/CochabambaDocuments.pdf> and distribute it.

The Cochabamba document will not be on the table at Durban, South Africa when the summit convenes at the end

of November. This will be the meeting where the Kyoto Accord expires. There will be a lot of dire warnings and vague promises.

We can expect nothing positive to come out of the behind-closed-doors talks at Durban. The US, Canada, China and the rest will see to that.

Tale of two Durbans

But there will be two Durbans: the official meeting of people more interested in propping up the capitalist system than healing the planet; and the outpouring of anger from ordinary people outside the gates, massing behind the slogan "System Change Not Climate Change".

Until now the environmental movement has been distracted by red herrings (blaming "overpopulation" or "greedy consumers") or by being too focused on the local symptoms to see the global cause.

But there is a new power growing in the world. From Cairo to Athens, from Wisconsin to Wall Street, even in a park near you, more and more people are standing up to say that a system where 99 per cent toil and suffer so that one per cent can wallow in luxury and power—capitalism—is the problem.

The incredible victory to halt construction on the Keystone XL pipeline is proof positive that grassroots mass mobilization is the key to halting climate change.

The last word goes to socialist and environmentalist John Bellamy Foster, speaking to a rally at Occupy Wall Street:

"What we need therefore is to change our economic culture. We need an ecological and social revolution... You may say that this is impossible, but the World Occupy Movement would have been declared impossible only a month ago. If we are going to struggle, let us make our goal one of ecological and social revolution—in defense of humanity and the planet."

Socialist Worker fighting fund

Thanks to the generous support of our readers, we have reached our goal of \$20,000 for the Socialist Worker Fighting Fund! Thank you to all of you who made this possible!



OBITUARY

We remember Alexandra Dodger

by ALEX KERNER

IN THE early morning of October 16, student activist and future human rights lawyer, Alexandra Dodger, lost her life in a tragic accident in Ottawa. Alex had just finished her legal studies at McGill and was articling at Amnesty International.

I met Alexandra in March 2002 when she first ran for the board of directors of the University of Toronto Students’ Union. Despite being only 18, she immediately impressed all those around her. She could carry a room with her articulate arguments, quick wit and glowing personality. She was an icon on the university campus and her strong socialist and feminist convictions provided a beacon of confidence for so many women in the activist community.

During her time at U of T, Alexandra was instrumental in the campaign for undergraduates to join the Canadian Federation of Students and was a

founding and leading member of Students Against Sanctions and War in Iraq. She was also involved in winning students a discount on their TTC pass and a two-year tuition fee freeze in Ontario.

She later served as Ontario Representative on the national executive of the Canadian Federation of Students. She was president of the New Democratic Party’s Trinity-Spadina riding association, went to the West Bank in Palestine in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, and helped in numerous capacities with the War Resisters Support Campaign.

While at law school, Alexandra involved herself in the Radical Law Club and the McGill Human Rights Working Group. She was also a contributor to the *McGill Law Journal*. She was part of the moot team that came in second in the prestigious Jessop Moot in international law. Most recently, she clerked at the International Court of Justice in The Hague and worked for a human rights

firm in Paris.

In light of all Alexandra’s ability and accolades, one might assume she would forget about all those she worked with over the years, but one of the most amazing things about Alexandra was how she always made that extra effort to keep in touch. She had always made time for a coffee or dinner, a chat online or a phone call. Whenever one needed advice about politics, education choices or just plain life, she always provided her insight and encouragement.

I have never been so sad to lose someone before. We have all lost a wonderful anti-war and social activist, whose bright future as a human rights lawyer has been taken away from the world. Most of all we have lost a friend, whose laugh and smile and funny stories made the struggle for a better world all the more enjoyable.

You will be sorely missed, Alexandra. We will continue the struggle with your spirit in our hearts and your convictions on our mind.

sumption,” especially in developed nations like Canada; that it is our individual choices that cause environmental degradation and climate change. As the authors point out, such descriptions make no attempt to separate individual consumption from corporate consumption.

They point out that 99 per cent of the solid waste that ends up in landfills comes from industrial processes, not individual consumption. And in Canada, only 34 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions come from individual cars and homes, with the rest coming from corporate sources.

Angus and Butler would be the first to agree that the 34 per cent figure should and could be lowered. But they clearly show that consumers have few real choices and options to reduce their “footprint.” In fact, they point out that record numbers of us are trying to change our consumption behaviour, and carbon emissions continue to soar. Both Angus and Butler are socialists, and their central argument—that it is not simply our numbers, but how our society is organized to benefit only a few—is one that needs to be heard in the environmental movement. Whether or not grouping around the label of “eco-socialism,” as Angus and Bulter advocate, is the best way to bring this message into the movement is debatable.

What is certain, and what *Too Many People?* argues most persuasively, is that those who argue for the need to reduce population are unwilling or unable to consider the possibility of a different social organization, one that places harmony among people and between people and the environment.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Our banks don’t stank?

OF ALL the feeble arguments used to undermine and ridicule the Occupy movement in Canada, the one that annoys me most is this: Canadian Occupy protesters are just mindless copycats because Canadian banks are not evil or corrupt like US banks.

To hear our media tell it, the Canadian banking system is a cross between Ward Cleaver and Mother Teresa: firm but fair and beloved by all.

We are told that the Canadian economy, and in particular Canada’s banks, were largely immune to the massive slump of 2008. I suspect it was this claim, loudly trumpeted by Harper and his crew, which won him his majority.

There is a tiny grain of truth to this myth. To appreciate it we have to set the stage by reminding ourselves of just how bad that slump was.

When the world economy went down the dumper in the fall of 2008, blame was laid on banks around the world dealing in speculative bubbles, like the US housing market. They were inventing new banking “products” to sell, and were leveraged far beyond their assets.

Almost overnight the economy went from exuberant optimism—suggesting that capitalism had ironed out all the kinks and we would have economic growth without crisis forever and ever amen—to absolute panic.

The Great Recession of 2008-9, after all, was the deepest and longest downturn experienced by global capitalism since the catastrophic slump of 1929-32. World industrial output fell 13 per cent; international trade dropped by 20 per cent; and global stock markets plunged 50 per cent and jobless rates jumped two-thirds higher on average. The largest wave of bank failures in 80 years shook the financial system.

One analyst declared it was “the end of capitalism as we knew it.”

Governments in Europe and the US funneled thousands of billions of dollars to prop their financial sectors (in the US alone the Troubled Asset Relief Program—TARP—totaled \$700 billion) or outright nationalized them (the take over of mortgage giant Fanny Mae alone cost US taxpayers an additional \$200 billion).

Relative to the world’s financial sector, Canada’s somewhat regulated banks looked good, a Dexter among serial killers.

Mortgages

Here is a description of what happened behind the scenes, from the newsletter of investment group Wellington Financial:

“Between September 2008 and March 2009, Canadian banks reduced their holdings of domestic residential mortgages from \$486.1 billion to \$434.9 billion according to Bank of Canada stats; on a net basis.

“Where did those mortgages go, you ask? Did 10 per cent of Canadian homeowners sell their homes and move into rental accommodation en masse during a six-month period?

“Of course not. The federal government created a unique program through CMHC specifically targeted at

allowing Canadian chartered banks to move tens of billions of dollars of assets off of their balance sheets.

The reason? Canadian banks couldn’t raise sufficient and/or cost-effective funding from their traditional sources—primarily other global financial institutions—and needed Crown intervention to keep the wolf from the door. By mid-November 2008, the federal government had agreed to take \$75 billion of mortgages from Canadian banks.”

It wasn’t a bailout, it was a “unique program.” A few months later a slightly less unique \$50 billion of taxpayers’ money was added to the pile.

Canadian banks do not just operate inside our borders, however. Denied the ability to belly up to the unregulated trough here, they massively increased their operations in the US just in time for the crash. Canadian banks have received \$111 billion in bailout money from the US government. That didn’t make headlines here, but I guess what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

If you are keeping score, that brings us up to \$236 billion (give or take depending on the exchange).

Bailouts

By the way, bailing out the banks is nothing new in Canada, but it is always done through “unique programs.” Throughout the Chretien/Martin years, the government reduced the “debt” by \$49 billion. In other words, they cut our public services to the bone to transfer billions to the big banks and other corporations. At the same time, they cut taxes on the banks from 41.9 per cent to 30.4 per cent.

Almost every year of the past two decades, Canadian banks have set new profit records. We are supposed to be proud of this. Bill Robson, head of the right-wing C.D. Howe think-tank, says we should be grateful: “Hands up if you want higher banking fees. Sign here if you want to pay more to manage your mutual fund.”

It is hard to imagine higher banking fees, especially for low-income Canadians who cannot keep the hefty minimum balance in their accounts. If you pay your bills at an ATM or use your card rather than cash—and Canadians lead the world in debit-card use—fees can easily run over \$50 per month.

Through it all, Canadian financial institutions have presented the world with a stable edifice, stability paid for—in one way or another—with hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars.

And through it all Canadian bankers congratulated themselves, in the form of massive bonuses, for a job well done. In 2009, in the midst of the worst global economic meltdown since the Great Depression, bonuses to bank executives totaled \$8.3 billion, an all time record. That year the CEOs of the six big Canadian banks got average raises of 10 per cent; both Gordon Nixon (RBC) and Ed Clark (TD) took home more than \$10 million. That trend continues.

I suppose our hearts are supposed to swell with pride. Personally, it makes my blood boil.

BOOK

Are too many people the problem?

Too Many People? Population, Immigration and the Environmental Crisis

Written by Ian Angus and Simon Butler

Reviewed by John Bell

ACCORDING TO the United Nations, the population odometer just clicked over. There are now seven billion people on Earth.

Marking the occasion was an avalanche of media attention. Interviews, articles and analysis were almost unanimous in assuming that the number constitutes “overpopulation” and is responsible one way or another for poverty, hunger and environmental degradation.

In the face of this seeming consensus on “overpopulation,” the arrival of *Too Many People? Population, Immigration and the Environmental Crisis* could not be more timely or welcome. Co-authors Ian Angus and Simon Butler demand we take a step back and question the common sense assumptions that underlie the “overpopulation” argument. The result: what they call “populationism” is based more on ideological assumption than fact.

They point out that accepting “overpopulation” as a fact leads directly to calls for immigration controls. It is argued that, since residents of industrialized nations like Canada have bigger “carbon footprints”, we are doing the world a favour by shutting our borders, especially to people from places which produce lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Anne and Paul Ehrlich, whose books *The Population Bomb* and *The*

Population Explosion are the founding documents of the populationist movement, put it plainly: “The flow of immigrants into the United States should be dampened, simply because the world cannot afford more Americans.”

However well meaning, such arguments provide “progressive” cover for racist policies that shift the blame for environmental crisis onto the shoulders of those least responsible for creating that crisis.

Angus and Butler do a superb job of breaking down the number to show that even with current methods, the world produces more than enough food to satisfy the needs of all seven billion of us. World hunger results not from too many mouths, but from wasteful practices, high prices and, worst of all, conversion of food into fuel for cars.

Instead of blaming people, the authors point to the profiteering of big corporate agriculture: “Blaming food shortages on overpopulation downplays the fact that the existing global food system is grossly inequitable, wasteful and inefficient. Plenty of food is grown, but it isn’t available to hungry people.”

The issue of women’s rights and reproductive choice is not ignored; the authors are staunch supporters of birth control and abortion rights. But they describe how good intentions lead in practice to coercive tactics. Improving the economic situation of women around the world, giving them more choice in all areas of their lives, will result in better reproductive choices as well.

They also take on the argument that “overpopulation” equals “over-con-

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 capital-ism 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 collect-ively 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 condi-tions. 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, po-lice 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 democ-racy, 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 world-wide 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-determin-ation 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 work-ers 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 discrimina-tion 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 democ-ratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass orga-nizations 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.



Greek workers look to a peoples' default

by PANOS GARGANAS

The Greek government is trying to present the decisions of the European Union (EU) summit as a "helping hand" that relieves the Greek people of half their debt burden.

Apparently the bankers had the kindness to write off 100 billion Euros of debt. Yet the stock markets celebrated this so-called "haircut" for the banks by raising bank share prices by up to 15 per cent the next day.

The explanation for this apparent contradiction is that the "haircut" deal is heavily biased. Pension funds in Greece that have invested heavily in government bonds will be penalized. But Greek debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB) will not be touched.

The Troika

On top of this, the IMF, EU and ECB (or the "troika" as they are col-lectively known) will gain powers to control how the Greek budget is run.

No wonder workers in Greece are furious.

Ex-prime minister George Papandreou, the Greek prime minis-ter, has announced a referendum on the bailout package in January—but the troika forced him to call it off. He has since been replaced by Lucas Papademos, a banker, to lead the coalition government. But anger hasn't subsided.

Traditionally, 28 October is a national holiday, a day of military parades to mark Greek opposition to Benito Mussolini's 1940 invasion. This year people took to the streets and turned the parades into anti-

government demonstrations.

In Salonica the Greek president was forced to leave the platform where he was meant to take a salute. Other lesser officials in many other cities have had to run away from angry crowds.

Alternatives

So the debate on the alternatives is now wide open. The prospect of a debt restructuring or a "default from above" means endless years of misery for workers. The official projection is that Greek debt will still be 120 per cent of GDP in ten years time, even if the current "haircut" is implemented. Is there a way to escape from this trap?

The anti-capitalist left in Greece argues for a "default from below" or a "people's default." The difference between these two prospects is like night and day. Cancelling the debt on the initiative of workers would mean pain for the banks and gains for working people. The cost of interest payments to banks has escalated from around 10 billion euros a year back in 2007, when the crisis started, to 18 billion euros now.

Interest

If we stopped paying these vast sums, there would be no need to close schools and hospitals or to cut wages and pensions. The entire wage bill for the civil service is 16 billion euros—smaller than the interest payments.

We pay more money to bankers sitting on the debt mountain than we pay for all teachers in our schools, nurses in our hospitals and cleaners in public buildings put together. Cancelling the debt and refusing

to pay would cause a huge crisis in the banking system. That is why a people's default goes hand in hand with workers' control of the banks.

Workers' control

Bank workers collectively have the power to stop the rich hiding their capital in tax havens abroad—a move that would ruin the economy. They also have the power to stop banks from repossessing the homes of those unable to pay mortgage costs.

This is no daydream. We glimpsed this when workers decided to occupy the central computer room responsible for sending out electri-city bills and declare that no poor or unemployed person would be cut off if unable to pay.

Civil service workers occupying the Greek equivalent of the British Home Office told striking local government workers that they would block any government orders to sack strikers. The left has to fight to defend and generalize such initia-tives. Then workers' control can begin to take shape from below.

Of course the ECB will fight tooth and nail if workers in Greece con-tinue down this road. Greece would be thrown out of the eurozone and speculators would attack whatever new currency was introduced.

This is why we would need all the solidarity we can get from workers across Europe.

But the fight will be worth it. Together we can open up the pros-pect of a world where human need takes priority over bankers' greed.

Panos Garganas is editor of *Workers Solidarity*, *Socialist Worker's* sister paper in Greece. For more details go to www.ergatiki.gr

international socialist events

TORONTO

How can we eliminate tuition fees? Should we?
Wed, Nov 16, 4pm
321 Student Centre,
York University
Info: yorkusocialists@gmail.com

Is socialism a real al-ternative for the 99%?

Wed, Nov 23, 5pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St
George St, U of T
Info: international.social-ists@utoronto.ca

What caused the eco-nomic crisis?

Wed, Nov 23, 4pm
321 Studet Centre,
York University
Info: yorkusocialists@gmail.com

Occupy, strike, resist: How do we beat the 1%?

Tuesday, Nov 29, 6pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St
George St, U of T
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

Intro to Noam Chomsky: Politics of Mass Media

Wed, Nov 30, 4pm
321 Student Centre,
York University
Info: yorkusocialists@gmail.com

Film screening: With Babies and Banners

Sat, Dec 10, 6pm
Woodbine and Danforth area
Dinner and flim fundraiser
Suggested donation \$7-15
Info: 647-393-3096
torontosocialists@gmail.com

OTTAWA

IS Organizing meetings
Mondays, 6:30pm
Turcott University Centre
Info: gosocialists@yahoo.ca

Book launch: Too Many People? By Ian Angus and Simon Butler

Tues, Nov 22, 6pm
Cafe Alt, Simard Hall,
University of Ottawa
Speaker: Ian Angus
Info: gosocialists@yahoo.ca

VANCOUVER

Langara College IS Organizing meetings
Wednesdays, 12:30pm
Room A218
Info: vancouver.social-ists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

TORONTO

Community forum: Pub-lic services, good jobs, healthy communities
Wed, Nov 23, 6pm
Ralph Thornton Centre
765 Queen St East
Organized by East Enders for Public Services

Ontario Health Coalition Annual Assembly and Conference

Sat, Nov 19, 10am
The Sheraton Centre
123 Queen St West
Info: ohc@sympatico.ca

Canada's war in Libya

Tues, Nov 22 7pm
Asteria Souvlaki Place
661 Danforth Ave
Speaker: Derrick O'Keefe
Info: gtwa.isc@gmail.com

You can find the I.S. in:

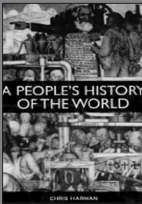
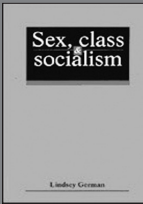
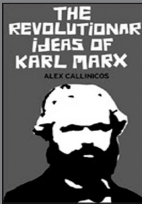
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Israeli Apartheid

by **DARREN EDGAR**

ON OCTOBER 29, the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) and Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) held an event titled, “Organizing effective campaigns in the global struggle against apartheid, colonization, austerity and war: A cross-movement discussion.”

Over 60 people gathered at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto to hear four panelists speak on the topic.

Michael Deas spoke about organizing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign in Europe and its successful boycotts of two multinational corporations—Veolia and Agrexco—complicit in Israel’s continuing occupation of Palestine.

Shiri Pasternak spoke about organizing the Barriere Lake Solidarity campaign and conducting indigenous solidarity work around issues of self-determination.

Ilian Burbano spoke about building labour union and community solidarity around resistance to austerity, specifically his work through CUPE in support of Ontario Coalition Against Poverty’s (OCAP) “Raise the Rates” campaign.

Yafa Jarrar spoke about SAIA’s launching the first Canadian campus divestment campaign at Carleton University in Ottawa, after which a short film was screened recounting the history of this campaign.

After the initial presentations by the four panelists a Q&A followed, allowing discussion to connect the lessons learned from these various solidarity campaigns with the struggle of Palestinians for their basic human rights and an end to Israeli occupation and colonization.

HASSAN DIAB

by **AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN**

Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French soldier, was charged with treason in 1894, mobilizing French writer Emile Zola to publish *J’Accuse*, an open letter to the French government.

The letter accused the government of anti-Semitism and unlawfully jailing Dreyfus. “J’Accuse” has since become a generic statement of outrage and accusation, so it titled a fundraiser last month in Toronto for Hassan Diab.

The event included music and readings from Diab, Zola and others who have spoken out about the injustices they face. Like Dreyfus’s, the case of Diab rests on fraudulent, discredited handwriting analysis. Dreyfus was convicted in a climate of anti-Semitism and Diab one of Islamophobia. Though there is nothing linking Diab to the bombing of a synagogue in Paris in 1980, France has asked Canada to extradite Diab for the crime, where he faces an unfair trial that could land him in jail for life.

For more information, visit www.JusticeForHassanDiab.org.



Pipeline protestors

CAMPAIGN TO STOP THE PIPELINE

by **SAKI SERIZAWA**

AN ARRAY of different non-profits, labour unions and regular citizens all came out to show their solidarity on October 15, when the Occupy Wall Street movement came to Vancouver.

One of these groups was ForestEthics with their campaign to stop the Enbridge Oil Pipeline Project.

On the day of Occupy Vancouver, amid thousands of people, volunteers from ForestEthics collected signed postcards from participants to send to the CEO

of Enbridge to show the public’s distaste for the pipeline.

Our big mobiles of colourful fish and costumes got a lot of attention, and we were able to get a record blowing 450 postcards signed in three and a half hours in which we completely ran out of postcards.

200,000 STUDENTS STRIKE IN QUEBEC

by **PETER HOGARTH**

MORE THAN 200,000 university and CEGEP students in Quebec boycotted classes on November 9 in protest of tuition fee hikes.

In a massive display of anger at the attacks on learning and living conditions, students stayed home from class and instead demonstrated in front of schools and universities.

Students at Dawson College in Montreal blocked entrances and joined up with a march downtown that saw participation from students from multiple university and college campuses.

The protests have received solidarity from community organizations and unions. The Concordia University Part-Time Faculty Association encouraged its 1,200 members to join the students and be tolerant of those who miss classes or assignments.

The strike is in opposition to a decision by Quebec’s government to raise tuition by \$325 a year for the next five years. That would mean, that by 2017, tuition fees would be at \$3,793 from the present \$2,168.

As reported in the *Montreal Gazette*, Eric Martin, a researcher for

FORD TRIES TO CUT TORONTO LIBRARIES THROUGH THE BACK DOOR

by **J.Y. HODGE**

AFTER A summer mobilizing campaign that saw Margaret Atwood and Giller-winner Vincent Lam, among other writers, come to the library’s defence, as well as nearly 50,000 Torontonians state their public support for the largest public library system in the world, it appeared that we had won against the Mayor’s planned attacks.

Alas, such appearances have turned out to be illusions.

What the mayor couldn’t achieve with a public broad-

side, he is now attempting to do through the back door, by slicing and dicing the budget the library uses to function day to day.

The first order of business was filling the citizen board that oversees the institution with lobbyists and Tory party apparatchiks, who then dutifully approved the winnowing of over 150 full-time equivalent positions, and the permanent reduction of the collections budget by 11 per cent.

Other “creative” solutions proposed to “save” money included closing 38 neighborhood branches, selling corporate naming rights to

collections and buildings, and boosting fines for children by 150 per cent.

Within 24 hours of such creativity being made public, over 5,000 e-mails flooded the new board chair’s office, decrying the cuts and denouncing the new administration.

The board’s budget committee immediately and unanimously backed off from closures and hours reductions for the time being. That decision could be overturned by the full board at their meeting on November 21.

For more information and to sign the petition, visit www.ourpubliclibrary.to.

same as the employer’s final offer, a deal recommended by the local’s bargaining committee but rejected by over 65 per cent of the membership.

“Awarding flight attendants an agreement they rejected a month ago does not in any way address serious workplace issues and flight attendants are rightfully disappointed and angry,” said CUPE National President Paul Moist.

“If Air Canada is truly interested in running a professional and efficient company they must invest in their work force. This agreement will leave flight attendants exhausted, frustrated and

underpaid.”

The arbitration comes after federal Labour Minister Lisa Raitt intervened directly in the bargaining process on the side of the employer by referring the dispute to the CIRB, thus effectively-suspending workers’ right to strike.

She also served notice to workers by musing about rewriting Canada’s labour relations laws to render the economy an “essential service,” thus outlawing strikes in any enterprise she chooses.

Workers everywhere should be worried if such a practice becomes the law of the land.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

The fight against the neoliberal agenda

AS GREECE teeters on the edge of economic collapse, the 99% occupiers have set up tent cities across North America and around the world.

There is a huge employers’ offensive on workers and, as Michael Moore said in Oakland, “this time they have gone too far.” Students, workers and the unemployed have come together and captured the hearts and minds of millions.

An Iraq War veteran has been seriously wounded by police as he took part in the protests in Oakland. This brought out the contradictions that are staring so many Americans in the face. Billions have been spent on unpopular wars and bank bailouts while working people and the poor are losing their homes, their jobs and any hope for the future. The state is coming down hard on protesters but letting the thieves at the top go unscathed.

The unemployment rate has now gone up in Canada with tens of thousands of job losses in the last month, particularly in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Many more have just stopped looking.

Young people are finishing high school, college and university without the possibility of decent employment. That is why the majority are embracing the sentiments of the occupy movement. “We are the 99%” says it all for so many.

In the city of Toronto, the right-wing, millionaire mayor is trying to push through an austerity agenda. Although he has lost support since his election, and a majority in every ward is opposed to the cuts, he and his allies are still moving forward. They are ideologically driven to change the role of the state and gut the social safety net, privatize everything possible, and break the unions.

They had to back off on library and child care closures and the selling of the Toronto Parking Authority because of a huge public outcry. The Executive Committee had requests from over 300 deputants who were almost

unanimously opposed to the changes to the city infrastructure. The committee had to meet through the night to ensure that all could be heard.

More recently because of bogus arguments about cost savings, City Council voted to contract out garbage collection west of Yonge Street. The Executive Committee is now looking at selling 10 per cent of Toronto Hydro as well as other public assets. This decision has been put off until the next meeting because even right-wing members are asking questions about the wisdom of selling off profit-making public services to the private sector for short-term gain.

Every city department has been told to cut its budget by 10 per cent, which will mean significant reductions in jobs and services. This will dramatically change the city that so many worked for years to build. The fightback is continuing in unions and neighbourhoods across Toronto.

Large demonstrations that took place on April 9 and September 26 brought thousands to City Hall. Door-to-door campaigns by union members and community meetings across the city mobilized people to fight back.

Municipal unions are telling their members to expect a lockout in the New Year because the city’s proposals on the table would gut their present collective agreements. Unions both public and private are meeting to plan a unified resistance to these attacks.

This spirit of resistance is meshing with the Occupy Toronto protesters who have twice brought their march to Nathan Phillips Square outside City Hall protesting the cuts. Unions have been providing many resources to them. The occupiers marched to the heart of the financial district with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Steelworkers.

This twining of the organized working class and the young Occupy Toronto protesters challenging capitalism has the potential of creating a movement from below, which can take on the neoliberal assault.

Join the International Socialists

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NO SANCTIONS, NO WAR DON'T ATTACK IRAN

by JESSE MCLAREN

ECONOMIC CRISIS, imperial rivalry and Islamophobia are fueling an attack on Iran that could have devastating consequences.

Imperial powers are using a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to increase the threat of war on Iran. The IAEA report states that it “has serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear program.”

In response, Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird declared Iran “a significant threat to regional and global peace” and stated that “it is not a question of if, but to what extent, we will act in response to this report.” Responses range from sanctions to US or Israeli “targeted strikes” to disable the supposed nuclear program. But like the “no-fly zone” in Libya, this would entail a full-scale military assault—on a country of 75 million people.

‘War on terror’

The threat of war or more sanctions has nothing to do with stopping nuclear weapons. The US is the most dangerous nuclear power, and has spread nuclear weapons to Israel, India and Pakistan. Proposals to attack Iran include using “tactical” nuclear weapons. Britain is spending \$150 billion on nuclear submarines, and Canada’s Harper regime has revealed it might buy nuclear submarines at a cost of \$3



billion each.

The war drive is about the US using its military supremacy to make up for a declining economy and rivals emerging in Europe and Asia. A decade ago the US launched the “war on terror,” using Islamophobia to justify military intervention

for economic resources in the Middle East.

In 2001 NATO invaded Afghanistan to secure a pipeline for Caspian oil, out of the reach of Iran, Russia and China. Then, in 2003, the US and Britain invaded Iraq, facing opposition from France, Germany, Russia

and China. Having invaded Iran’s two neighbours it was obvious which country would be the next target, but a global anti-war movement and resistance movements in Iraq and Afghanistan have stopped Western imperialism from advancing. As a result, the US resorted to proxy

Wars in 2006, in Lebanon and Somalia, but these two were resisted.

Economic crisis, Arab Spring

In 2008 the global economic crisis heightened the contradiction in US imperialism, while the proxy war in

Georgia (between the US and Russia) revealed increasing inter-imperial rivalry.

This year, resistance to imperialism and austerity produced the Arab Spring, toppling Western-backed dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, sweeping across the region, and inspiring occupations from Wisconsin to Wall Street.

US imperialism is desperate to regain control of the region, and prevent its imperial rivals from accessing oil reserves. The war on Libya has tried to hijack the Arab Spring, reduce it to minor reform and compete with China over Africa’s resources. Meanwhile, China and Russia are expanding the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, building alliances with India, Pakistan and Iran.

Israel

While the US military is overstretched, it is considering using its client state Israel to attack Iran—in a desperate attempt to discipline the region and scare off its imperial rivals. An attack on Iran would also whip up Islamophobia to divide populations in Western countries that are radicalizing against the austerity agenda.

But the anti-war and anti-austerity movements have the power to stop the war drive. In 2003 the peace movement across Canada and Quebec stopped our government from joining the war drive. We can do it again.

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Greece: workers vs austerity

by PAM FRACHE

FOR THE past month, all eyes have been fixed on Greece. At the beginning of the month, economic data confirmed what ordinary Greek workers already knew: that the austerity imposed on Greece was making the economy worse, even by capitalist standards.

Markets fell into a tailspin with the realization that Greece—a small country comprising less than two percent of the eurozone economy—would likely default on its debt, despite the 21 per cent “haircut” in profit that lenders agreed to accept back in July.

The eight billion Euro installment of last summer’s rescue package was immediately postponed, while

European leaders scrambled to find a solution. Knowing that Greece was expected to “run out of money” by mid-November, the markets reeled.

So, when the European leaders emerged in mid-October with a new rescue package—one in which private lenders would accept a 50 per cent cut in profit on Greek debt in exchange for deeper cuts to workers’ living standards—German Chancellor Angela Merkel proclaimed that the new deal would enable Europe to turn itself back into a “union of stability.”

Resistance

But Greek workers had other ideas. On October 19, public and private sector workers launched the largest two-

day general strike to date. On October 20, while the Greek parliament voted on new measures that would see 30,000 more public sector workers sacked and a suspension of collective bargaining agreements, hundreds of thousands demonstrated outside. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets against the workers. And although the bill won initial approval, the details of the measures would have to be debated and voted upon in the days and weeks to follow.

This is the backdrop to Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou’s sudden announcement that he would put the austerity package to a referendum. The announcement that the deals cooked up by the financial elite of Europe could be subjected

to a democratic vote threw the markets back into turmoil, knowing full well that the vast majority of Greek society opposed austerity. Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared that any thought of rejecting the austerity package was tantamount to exploding the whole of the eurozone and would not be tolerated. To reject austerity would mean Greece’s expulsion from the Euro and—knowing full well that public opinion polls showed mass opposition to austerity but support for staying within the monetary union—Papandreou agreed that this would be made clear in any referendum. This was a high stakes gamble to try to cudgel the Greek working

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