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MISSION CREEP



Mali: Harper's Tories hungry for war

by PAUL STEVENSON

CANADA IS now a major player in the “new scramble for Africa.”

Canadian Special Forces are on the ground in Mali and a CF-17 transport plane is ferrying French troops to fight in the north of the country. Canada also has plans to build three new military bases in Senegal, Kenya and Tanzania—all to protect “Canadian interests” in the area. These developments are part of the much larger NATO presence in Africa, which has coincided with the development of AFRICOM, the US African military command.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and NATO leaders are using the threat of “Islamists” to justify another military intervention. As we have seen over the last decade, the threat of terrorism, whether real or imagined, has become the convenient bogeyman for any and all NATO military adventures.

Resources

But as soon as we scratch the surface, it becomes apparent that the real issue with Mali and much of Africa is a scramble for its vast resources. Canadian gold mining corporations have extensive operations in Mali and other areas of the Sahara region. For the French, the main issue is uranium. France gets 70 per

cent of the uranium needed for its nuclear reactors from northern Mali.

Mali is also significant because it is in the middle of a proposed pipeline designed to deliver oil from Nigeria to the Mediterranean coast. What has become a problem for the NATO countries is that the extraction of natural resources has created a backlash by local people who are opposed to the destruction of their traditional lands. Sending Western troops to the region does nothing more than compound that backlash and continue the cycle of perpetual war in the region.

Despite Harper's insistence that this is a fight against terrorism, the reality is that there are dozens of different groups operating in the Sahara that are opposed to the imperial pillage on their land and are standing up to Western interests and demands. These groups are the targets of the current war and NATO countries are not going to let them stop the plunder.

Intervention

The history of Canadian interventions in Africa is brutal and bloody. The last major Canadian deployment ended when members of the Airborne Regiment tortured and murdered a Somali teenager, Shidane Arone. The federal inquiry into that murder, called the

Somalia Inquiry, discovered that the Regiment was filled with white supremacists who openly displayed Nazi propaganda on their base. The Regiment was disbanded and many of the soldiers were reassigned to the Joint Task Force II or the Canadian Special forces—the same group that has been sent to Mali.

The people of Canada are already weary after a decade of war in Afghanistan, which is why Harper remains secretive about the ongoing role that Canada will play in Mali. We need to translate that war weariness into a movement to end Canada's participation in this brutal war.

From Mali to Attawapiskat

The Mali intervention is even more absurd when juxtaposed to another major issue in federal politics: the Idle No More movement. The Harper government has offered nothing to alleviate the massive poverty of First Nations people, who have mobilized tens of thousands in recent weeks, yet Harper moved without hesitation to deploy Canadian forces to Mali.

Although we don't yet know the full cost of the Mali mission, it is safe to say that the money being used for the intervention could provide the basic necessities of life

denied from Indigenous people in Canada—from clean drinking water and properly heated homes to the same access to health care and education as everybody else across the country.

Furthermore, one of the foundations of Idle No More is the principled opposition to the destruction of the natural environment, whether by Canadian mining and drilling corporations or their Conservative Party backers. Harper is now spending millions to ensure that the voices of Indigenous peoples are silenced—both at home and abroad—to ensure the uninterrupted extraction of natural resources and the profit for resource multinationals.

Harper infamously claims that Canada has no history of colonialism. That statement becomes even more offensive as we witness the process of colonisation happening right before our eyes, in Canada and elsewhere. The task for all those opposed to Canada's intervention in Mali is to deepen the connection between the anti-war movement and struggles like Idle No More, which are leading the movement against Harper's dangerous and destructive policies, and emerging campaigns in the labour movement, which are demanding that resources be allocated to “peace and prosperity, not war and austerity.”

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Idle No More earns its name

by JOHN BELL

IDLE NO More was always about more than Chief Theresa Spence's fast. It has become the rallying banner for actions and discussions bringing together indigenous people and allies from across Turtle Island.

Six Cree youth and a guide from the James Bay community of Whapmagoostui have been walking to Ottawa under the INM banner, to raise awareness of the threat to their culture from environmental degradation. After 250 kilometres on snowshoe their numbers have grown to 26 and they are drawing international attention. Who knows how many walkers will storm Ottawa when they arrive some time in March.

In Attawapiskat, the Northern Ontario community that is home to Chief Spence, activists have blockaded a road leading to a nearby diamond mine owned by De Beers. The South African diamond giant will make billions from the mine, while the First Nation will be paid \$30 million over 12 years. "There has been a lot of disgruntlement against employee terminations or discrimination issues, racism issues, even the fact that there are certain families that have traditional territories within the boundries or close to the site," said community spokesperson Danny Metatawabin.

In Toronto, anti-nuclear activists joined with First Nations people to protest the presence of a General Electric-Hitachi nuclear processing plant in the heart of the city. They temporarily blockaded the CP rail line near the factory to publicize its long hidden presence. "Uranium is stolen from indigenous lands and it leaks radiation all along the fuel chain," said organizer Zach Ruiter. Speakers from the Serpent River First Nation near Elliot Lake told how the uranium that GE says is not dangerous had contaminated local rivers and lakes.

In Lethbridge, Alberta, a couple hundred people, including some representing public service unions, gathered at Galt Gardens on January 11. There were home-made placards and speeches from Blackfoot and Blood tribal members, interspersed with dancing. Despite the cold, spirits were high.

In Victoria, a February 2 rally reminded everyone what sparked INM—the Tory omnibus budget bill that effectively dismantled environmental protection for waterways, the land and air.

January 28 was a Day of Action for Idle No More in over 30 Canadian communities. Round dances, drumming, rallies and meetings declared that INM would continue.

Activists in Toronto got the jump, joining the huge demonstration for democracy outside the Ontario Liberal convention on January 26. A strong indigenous presence began with a drumming circle, and joined an environmental contingent in the march.

The INM movement has struck a chord around the world, inspiring indigenous solidarity from Cochabamba to Cairo. The more the effects of the cuts to environmental protection are seen, the more support for INM will grow.

Budget cuts threaten social assistance

by PAUL DENISON

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE rates are so low that they barely cover basic needs; as a result people on assistance live in constant precariousness and insecurity.

Any unexpected expense no matter how small can become a major disruption that causes a person to lose their housing or keep them from obtaining housing.

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB), was set up to meet this need, until it was cut by the Ontario Liberal Government on January 1, 2013. The CSUMB was a special fund available from the provincial government to help people on social assistance deal with unexpected or emergency housing costs.

The CSUMB was also used for transitional expenses for women fleeing domestic violence, homeless people moving off the street or out of emergency shelters, and people living with mental health problems moving from hospital into the community. CSUMB was a very useful flexible program, and its loss will result in increased homelessness and precariousness.

In place of CSUMB the province has created the "Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)" which will be administered by



municipal governments. The rationale is that municipal governments can best tailor housing programs to fit local needs, and the new program will now be available to all low income people whether they are on assistance or not.

On the surface this is a laudable move, however there are a number of problems. This new program disguises a funding cut: only 50 per cent of the budget that was available for CSUMB will be transferred to municipalities for CHPI, while at the same time expanding the number of people who are eligible. There is also no guarantee that municipal

governments will create the program for the same purposes as CSUMB, or they will fund it adequately. CSUMB was a program that all people in Ontario receiving social assistance benefits were entitled to, and now depending on where they live they may not be able to access it. Municipalities are not required to have a plan in place until next year. On December 27 the province announced that full funding would be temporarily restored for one year to bridge the gap until municipalities have new programs in place.

Since the announcement of the cut in the March

2012 budget, community groups have been organizing, and many events took place throughout last fall. Activists continue to pressure the province, asking to have the CSUMB permanently restored.

There will be a public meeting in Toronto to discuss what happened to the CSUMB and how to access the new Housing Stabilization Fund at the Parkdale Library, 1303 Queen St W, Wednesday, Feb 13, 6pm. Parkdale Community Legal Services will also be holding clinics to help people access the Housing Stabilization Fund.

People with disabilities are not pawns

by MELISSA GRAHAM

ANOTHER ELECTION is on the horizon, and once again social assistance recipients find themselves the test subjects in an experiment for votes.

Anyone who has experienced life on social assistance can tell you reforms are needed, but when the call for change comes in the form of campaign promises, the lives of people on social assistance become little more than pawns for provincial power.

Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak, a member of the former Tory government that separated the disability and welfare programs, now wants to bring them back together again.

Hudak has proposed merging the Ontario Works program (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) into a single income support program; apparently to save about \$140 million a year. He claims this change would make it easier for disability payment recipients to get access to OW programs helping them find jobs, along with tax

credits for employers who need financial help in making accommodations for them.

To many people who are on ODSP but would like to find work this sounds like welcome news. Social assistance advocates have been fighting the barriers to employment that ODSP creates for a long time. But this proposal is more like a Trojan horse that will likely divide the disability community if it comes into effect, and it does nothing to address the attitudinal barriers and discrimination that often prevent people from finding meaningful employment.

For example, hidden within the list of recommendations admired by the Tories is to make employment searching a condition of income, requiring social assistance recipients be required to participate in activities related to preparing for and finding work through individual "Pathway to Employment Plans." If you're thinking that people with disabilities would be exempt from these types of policies, think again. The Accessibility for Ontarians

with Disabilities Act (AODA) will come into full effect in 2025. While this legislation presents great opportunities for some people, it really only addresses the physical barriers of employment, and has very little enforcement behind it. One thing it will do very effectively is put pressure on the Ontario government to prove their new Act works, regardless of the quality of work it provides.

There are people with disabilities who have gone to disability-specific job support programs who can tell you what this feels like—you go in with a business degree and walk out with a job as a Walmart greeter on the other side of town. People with disabilities in the UK know this kind of legislation all too well, it's already happened to them.

On January 28, 2013 the UK government is due to make a set of changes to the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is the flawed "fitness to work" test which assesses whether people with disabilities can get Employment and Support Allowance—a benefit

designed to help and support people with disabilities into work. This test actually forces people off of the social assistance system in the UK if they are determined to be eligible for this "benefit." The WCA is currently the subject of political protests that have been happening for several years.

The Ontario Tories seem to be taking a page out of the UK playbook. Another one of Hudak's bright ideas is to claw back benefits for people who have been on welfare for "too long," suggesting that able-bodied people who have been on welfare for a "long time" should see their benefits "steadily decline". He has not explained how long people would have to be on benefits before they are reduced and how large of a reduction they would face, or who would be defined as able-bodied.

As much as we would like to see people with disabilities included in the workforce, there needs to be a plan in place that provides meaningful work for those who could benefit from it without putting others at risk.

Legal victory for war resister

by JESSE MCLAREN

IMMIGRATION MINISTER Jason Kenney entered 2013 with momentum.

Last fall he forced war resister Kim Rivera and her family out of the country despite mass opposition—from petitions to neighbourhood marches, to Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking out. And this year he imposed his arbitrary list of "safe countries" to increase the deportation of refugees from the US and other countries.

But the start of 2013 has seen the campaign to support war resisters push back. On January 26, on the eve of Parliament resuming, dozens of prominent supporters wrote an open letter that took up half a page in the *Globe & Mail*, highlighting the vast support for war resisters across the country.

This mass support for war resisters has also translated into 10 Federal Court or Federal Court of Appeal decisions in favour of US war resisters—which have stopped many deportations. On February 1 came yet another positive decision, this one advancing key legal arguments for all war resisters.

Jules Tindungan left the US military and came to Canada after witnessing war crimes in Afghanistan during his 15 month tour. While the Immigration and Refugee Board turned down his application, the Federal Court found significant errors in the judgment. First, the court found that Tindungan "submitted voluminous documentary evidence from credible, third-party sources ... that suggest that the US has not complied with its international obligations." Like other cases, the court found that war resisters who speak out publicly get harsher sentences when returned to the US. Furthermore, the court found that the US court-martial system "fails to comply with basic fairness requirements found in Canadian and International Law."

These legal findings, the product of a broad political campaign, help the cases of all war resisters. We need to increase the pressure on the Tories and we need to demand that war resisters and their families be allowed to stay in Canada.

To get involved with the War Resisters Support campaign, please visit: <http://resisters.ca/>

Correction

In our previous issue, *Socialist Worker* published an article titled "Shut down the tar sands, no matter who owns them". This article was attributed to Bradley Hughes but should have been attributed to Paul Kellogg and Bradley Hughes. *Socialist Worker* regrets the error.

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Syrian revolution faces external and internal threats

by **YUSUR AL BAHRANI**

THE VIOLENCE in Syria is escalating as the uprising marks the end of its second year with more than 60,000 killed.

As the West continues its indirect intervention—initially through Saudi Arabia and Qatar and now through Israel—some opposition forces continue attempts to contain the revolution against Assad.

Indirect intervention

The Syrian uprising began by peaceful protests in several cities and villages. The lack of mass strikes like in Tunisia and Egypt, combined with the regime's brutal military assaults, caused the Syrian revolution to rely more on arms—and it provoked defections in the military with the creation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Unlike Libya, the West has not had the confidence to intervene directly in the Syrian conflict. Though it has raised the threat of “no-fly zones” (an excuse for war), and failed in its proposed “peace plan” that would preserve the Assad regime, the main tactic of Western intervention has been indirect through its allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have been supplying sections of the FSA rebels with arms. Western indirect intervention turned the conflicts between the rebels and the regime's forces into a

civil war that hijacked the revolution.

Now, as the conflicts between the regime's forces and militant rebels continue, another Western-armed state entered the scene, raising risks of direct military intervention. In an official statement, the Syrian government said that Israeli warplanes carried out an airstrike inside its territories on Wednesday, January 30. Israel kept silent over the attack, but the Syrian government statement said: “Israeli warplanes violated our airspace at dawn, bombing directly one of the research scientific centers in Jimraya district in rural Damascus.” This might increase the risk of escalating violence with the current civil war that has claimed thousands of lives.

National dialogue?

On the other hand, some opposition forces have been trying to contain the revolution. Moaz Al Khatib, the president of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces said on Wednesday, January 30 that he is open to talks with officials of Assad's regime on two conditions: that they release thousands of detainees, and issue new passports for Syrians whose documents had expired. This provoked an outcry that compelled him to say that he was just expressing his opinion. His call for dialogue

has revealed divisions in the Syrian opposition. According to Reuters, an opposition source said that “the knives were out for Al Khatib” from other opposition figures and members of the National Council. The Syrian government officials said that certain opposition figures could return to Damascus for dialogue without facing charges.

Revolution

While urgent humanitarian assist-

ance is needed by Syrians who are either trapped in conflict zones, displaced or taking refuge, neither foreign military intervention nor compromise with the regime will end the crisis. The only solution is to continue the social and economic demands and methods of the revolution, through mass strikes and protests, while people outside Syria stop their own governments from hijacking the revolution.

Libyan oil refinery strike

by **MELISSA GRAHAM**

WORKERS AT Libya's Ras Lanuf oil refinery, which produces 220,000 barrels per day (bpd), have ended their strike at the end of January.

Protests targeted the Zueitina terminal, which ships about 60,000-70,000 bpd, and have prevented any crude oil leaving the port since late December. Exports are expected to resume in mid-February. The workers' demands included overtime pay and equal salaries for locals and foreign workers. It is not clear how well their demands were met at this time.

The refinery is Libya's main oil refinery, and the strike is one of a

series of strikes at oil installations in the country. Last fall, oil workers at Waha Oil went on strike for two months and successfully removed a corrupt manager with ties to Gaddafi, despite attempts by Jibril's regime to keep him in power.

If strikes and protests continue across the region they could expose the Western-backed neoliberal policies of the region, and continue pushing the Arab Spring forward. Though the strike was brief, we must remember the tremendous pressure these workers are under to produce oil for Western countries like ours. We can show solidarity by opposing our own government's military and corporate intervention.

Yemen: US drones vs democracy

by **CANDACE GHENT**

“A DECADE of war is now ending,” proclaimed President Obama in his second inaugural address.

Those words seem awkward with the escalating drone attacks and other Western interventions. A decade ago the anti-war movement mobilized people against the Bush agenda and catapulted Obama into presidency on the promise to undo the pro-war agenda. Obama promised to end the war in Iraq, and one of his first acts was to sign papers and make plans to shut down Guantanamo Bay. But today Guantanamo is still open, there are still US bases in Iraq, and Obama has expanded America's imperial position—sending more troops to Afghanistan, supporting Israel, bombing Libya, sending troops to Uganda, and spreading drone attacks from Pakistan to Yemen.

Counter-revolution

As part of the Arab Spring, the people of Yemen drove out the US-backed dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011; after fleeing to US-backed Saudi Arabia, Saleh received royal treatment in the US at the Ritz Carlton. Meanwhile, Saudi and Western “Friends of Yemen” imposed a “transition plan” maintaining Saleh's regime, installing his vice president Abd al-Rab Mansour al-Hadi as president and pledging \$4 billion in support.

This political and economic counter-revolution has accompanied military intervention in the form of drone strikes. Drones are justified as “counter-terrorism” against the Al-Qaeda insurgency, which has had a presence for more than 20 years, and drone strikes are portrayed as a more accurate use of force—supposedly directed only against militant groups. But in reality drone strikes have led to the deaths of countless civilians, many of them children.

Despite the CIA's denial of the drone programs existence, it is hard to reject its presence when the man referred to as “Mr. Drone,” John Brennan, has just been appointed as the head of the CIA. With Brennan at the helm and being a strong supporter of the use of drones, the attacks on Yemen and other countries will increase exponentially—resulting in the deaths of unarmed civilians from direct strikes as well as widespread fear and anxiety just from the sound of drones flying over Yemeni airspace.

According to Amnesty International a new “manual” of sorts to create policy on the “legitimacy” and use of drone strikes is being created by the Obama administration. But international law clearly states that what the US has been doing is violation after violation of said law. The reforms on paper will not likely lead to reforms in the air.

The struggle for freedom and democracy in Yemen continues despite the change in the regime. The demands of pro-democracy protestors who ousted Saleh have not been met as instability, poverty, and Western intervention continue. Putting an end to US drone strikes in Yemen will help revolutionaries achieve their goals in establishing a true democracy.

Jordan elections can't contain the Arab Spring

by **JOSH LALOR**

King Abdullah II, Jordan's ruling monarch, has heralded the January 23 parliamentary elections as a turning point in the so-called democratization of Jordan.

Jordan has seen protests and strikes as part of the Arab Spring revolt against austerity, repression and imperialism. The regime responded with promises for reform while imposing further austerity and welcoming US troops—but this sparked civil disobedience and calls for mass strikes.

The King is hoping the latest elections will quell the outrage.

Parliamentary elections are not new to the people of Jordan, who have been pressuring the ruling family for democratic reforms since 1989. However, according to Khalid Kamhawi, a Jordanian political activist, past elections have been “an effective tool in the ruling regime's arsenal for decades, creating a façade of civic participation, behind which the apparatuses of the palace employ various methods to control its timid representatives.”

There is a great deal of skepticism as to whether or not the latest election, Jordan's first since the Arab Spring uprisings, will prove to be any different.

Opposition groups boycotted the election in protest, because they see little promise in King Abdullah's most recent democratic reforms.

While the Western backed King Abdullah has agreed to hand over much of the day-to-day running of the country to the newly elected legislature and to consult parliament on choosing the country's prime minister, he retains control over foreign policy and security measures, as well as the power to dissolve and recall parliament at will. Furthermore, the electoral ridings have been gerrymandered to over-represent under-populated areas where

voting is influenced by family ties to tribal leaders that are loyal to the king and to under-represent the more populated urban areas where voting favors ideologically-based political parties. Subsequently, preliminary election results show the majority of seats going to tribal leaders, pro-regime loyalists, and independent businessmen.

The elections have clearly not changed the regime's Western-backed repressive apparatus, as security forces quelled demonstrations against the election results in cities throughout Jordan. Like the rest of the Arab Spring, the struggle continues.



Greek anti-fascist resistance

“ATHENS WILL be Nazi free.” Those were the words of school student Christine Palioudakis, one of 25,000 people who marched in Athens against the fascist Golden Dawn party last Saturday. This was the biggest mobilisation against fascism in living memory.

There were delegations from many Athens neighbourhoods and from cities as far away as Saloniki in the north and Tripoli in the south. Teachers, health workers, local government workers, lecturers and students marched. Most were veterans of the battles against austerity.

Migrant workers and their families from countries such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Pakistan and Sudan joined them. They fled the poverty and destruction caused by Western imperialism to try and make new lives in Greece. These are Greece’s hidden people who are cheap labour and victims of police harassment and racist violence. So often silenced and isolated, they marched proudly and carried banners made of rice sacks.

With the exception of the influential Communist Party, all the left parties supported the demonstration.

It assembled in Omonia Square, where boarded up shops, street hawkers and people begging gave a constant reminder of Greece’s economic catastrophe.

The small delegation from Britain’s Unite Against Fascism (UAF) then led off the march to Syntagma Square, in front of the Greek parliament. A rally and music festival there lasted well into the evening.

It was a joyous display of anti-racism. Armed police skulked in the side streets with tear gas, plastic bullets and riot shields. As Lauretta Macauley from the United African Women’s Organisation made clear, “Today the streets are ours”.

The most moving sight of the day was when the march passed the family and coffin of Shehzad Luqman. Shehzad was a 27-year-old Pakistani migrant worker. He was attacked and stabbed to death as he rode his bicycle to work in the early hours last Thursday morning. Two of his alleged murderers have since been arrested—they are supporters of Golden Dawn. Police found weapons, a pile of Golden Dawn leaflets and on the wall a picture of Golden Dawn’s leader in one of the assailant’s homes.

Rafaqat Ali was Shehzad’s friend. “Shehzad was a hard working and peaceful man,” he told Socialist Worker. “I want these attacks to stop and I want justice—not only for my friend but for every migrant.” With tears in his eyes, Javied Aslam of the Pakistani Community of Greece said, “Golden Dawn has blood on its hands. It has to be stopped.”

Golden Dawn swept into the Greek parliament with 7 percent of the vote and 18 MPs in June. It has been involved in a number of violent attacks ever since. One of its candidates infamously assaulted left wing MPs Rena Dourou and Liana Kanelli live on TV. And last month Golden Dawn supporters beat up Dimitris Stratoulis, an MP for the radical left coalition Syriza. But the vast majority of their attacks are on immigrants and go unreported and unrecorded. The Athens police force does not even keep a record of attacks on migrant

workers. But one refugee group reports a 700 percent increase in racial attacks since Golden Dawn’s electoral breakthrough last year.

Nikolaos Michaloliakos founded Golden Dawn in the early 1980s. He modelled his party along the lines of Hitler’s stormtroopers. It is a fascist party in the classic sense, prepared to use both elections and street actions to build support and break opposition. Much of Golden Dawn’s electoral support comes from people enraged by the economic crisis. Mass unemployment, unimaginable cuts in social and welfare services and low pay are creating deep wells of bitterness. A recent survey revealed that 15 percent of the population cannot even afford “basic commodities”.

Haris and Nikos Markopoulos, who marched on the demonstration with their three-year-old son, gave an example of what this has meant. “This crisis is crushing our family,” said Haris. “We have both been unemployed for over a year now. We are desperately short of money. We have been forced to move into Nikos’ parents’ tiny flat. Two of his sisters sleep in the dining room so that we can have our own room. What kind of life is that? We don’t blame migrant workers, but sadly many people do.”

Golden Dawn is trying to exploit this situation, to pit Greek worker against migrant worker. Its members have opened up soup kitchens and blood banks for the poor. But there is one condition—you have to be Greek to use them. They have tried to force businesses to sack migrant workers and replace them with Greek workers. There have even been a few examples of Golden Dawn members leading campaigns to drive migrants out of some neighbourhoods. If left unchallenged, this kind of community work enables the fascists to grow.

The Greek state carries much of the blame for fuelling racism. In the last year over 60,000 migrants have been arrested and 4,000 locked up without trial in detention centres. Conditions were so bad at one detention centre that migrants attempted a mass breakout. They were all arrested, but later found not guilty. The judge said “It was their human right to try and escape from a place that threatened their lives.”

The Athens protest marks a major step forward for the struggle against fascism. At the same time, Greek workers have shown they are prepared to challenge austerity. Only this can offer an alternative to the fascists’ politics of despair.

Voices from the protest

Dimitris Agogratidis, student: “One year ago 15 members of Golden Dawn attacked my school, leaving two students injured. That’s why I’m marching today. The government and police are using the fascists to smash our democratic rights. We are building a broad coalition to stop them.”

Javied Aslam, Pakistani Community of Greece: “No one would leave their country in search of a new life and hope if there were no NATO wars and no capitalist greed. We are marching to stop Golden Dawn’s racist attacks and murders, and to demand justice. Our only hope is the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement.”

Lauretta Macauley, United African Women’s

Organisation: “I have family and friends who have been physically attacked by these thugs. The government and the fascists are trying to blame immigrant workers and their families for the crisis. We are not the problem, we work hard and we pay our taxes. But every day is a struggle. The government abuses us, the police harass us and Golden Dawn members attack us.”

Thanos Andonis, council worker: “This economic catastrophe is creating a desperate situation. Golden Dawn is trying to exploit the situation. But behind them are the ugly capitalists who are using them to weaken us and make even more profit. Golden Dawn’s vote makes me very sad—Greece is a country that in the past has suffered greatly under fascism.”

Maria Constantinou, school student: “We have a boy at my school who is a supporter of Golden Dawn. He bullies me because I am bisexual and I believe in myself. I’ve come here today to show Golden Dawn I will not be bullied. All fascists can fuck off.”

Anthi Athanasoula, teacher: “It’s shocking and sad that the government can refuse to give Greek citizenship to the children of migrants. And this gives confidence to Golden Dawn. I hope today’s demonstration marks the turning point in the fight against fascism in Greece.”

Solidarity on the streets

The main organisation behind the Athens protest was the Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat (KEERFA). Similar to Britain’s UAF, it involves most of the major trade unions, academics, left wing organisations and representatives from many migrant groups. They may disagree on some issues but they stand united when it comes to opposing racism and fascism.

KEERFA’s national organiser is Petros Constantinou, a member of the Socialist Workers Party’s sister organisation SEK. He argued that the movement will only be successful if it gives Greek migrants a voice and unites them with the wider Greek society. And what’s next for the anti-fascist movement? “First and foremost we have to break Golden Dawn’s electoral base,” explained Petros. “That will require painstaking and methodical work in the neighbourhoods. That’s why we are building local groups—so far there are over 50. We also have to continue to build a movement on the streets that can stop Golden Dawn.”

Petros said there is potential to build an international movement against fascism. There were over 25 solidarity protests across the globe on Saturday, from Moscow to Chicago.

Over 500 anti-fascists rallied outside London’s Greek embassy. UAF called the rally. Speakers included Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and David Lammy, London Assembly member Andrew Dismore, and veteran campaigner Tony Benn. There were speakers from a number of unions. Weyman Bennett, joint chair of UAF, ended the rally. “Never again will we allow the gas chambers of Treblinka, the pink triangle or racist murders on our streets,” he said. “We struggle together and we will win together.”

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Striking workers occupy Shanghai company

by ALLAN WOOD

CHINESE LABOUR movement militancy continues.

More than 1,000 migrant workers of Shanghai Shinmei Electric, a Japanese electronic appliance maker, went on strike and held 18 company executives against their will for nearly 48 hours.

The workers were protesting 49 regulations instituted by the new owner of the company, calling for heavy fines or immediate termination for various infractions. One employee said, “We earn less than 2,000 yuan a month, but we could be subjected to fines of 50 to 100 yuan for arriving late or spending more than two minutes in the toilet.”

On Friday morning, January 18, the workers struck. Among those held captive was the company’s president, Hideaki Tamura. It was not until Saturday night that hundreds of Shanghai police officers charged into the company to free the managers, injuring workers in the process.

According to a report in the South China Morning Post, the company has apologized to its workers for the regulations, and has promised to increase their salaries.

Nigerian troops out of Mali

776 NIGERIAN troops are expected to arrive in Mali today to support the attacks by French forces in the north of Mali. They are expected to be joined by 124 more, and another 2,000 troops from other West African countries. This action confirms Nigeria’s imperialist role across West Africa and gives backing to the French attacks which have already killed hundreds with bombing raids on the three main towns of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.

Aid agencies expect the number of refugees from the fighting to increase to 70,000 and the level of malnutrition, which doubled last year, will also increase. As the people of Iraq and Afghanistan have found out, Western imperialism never comes to bring democracy but to defend its own crude interests.

The north of Mali has suffered great poverty and little investment by the central government for decades. Early last year Tuareg separatists took over most of the region and declared an independent state of Azawad.

The action by the Nigerian government just supports the right of French and other imperialist powers to intervene at will across the world. French troops are being supported by both the US and UK.

The French government claims that the attacks are needed to prevent the spread of Islamic terrorism as part of the US war on terror. However, the real terror in the world today is poverty which kills an estimated 3,000 people every day. This is the equivalent of an al-Qaeda attack on the scale of the 2001 World Trade Centre every single day.

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‘F15’: the day we almost stopped a war

As the tenth anniversary nears, James Clark remembers the largest coordinated mobilizations for social justice in human history—the anti-war demonstrations of February 15, 2003.

Ten years ago this month, millions of people around the world were part of an unprecedented mobilization against war. On February 15, 2003, record numbers protested US plans to attack Iraq: up to 30 million people in over 800 cities spanning every continent—including Antarctica, where dozens of research scientists at McMurdo Station formed a peace symbol in the snow. Days after the protests, the *New York Times* observed that “the huge anti-war demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.”

At least 80 anti-war events took place in Canada on February 15, ranging from city-wide marches of tens of thousands, to more modest actions such as candlelight vigils, banner drops and local pickets of MPs’ offices. The biggest demonstration by far was in Montreal, where over 250,000 people completely shut down the downtown streets. Next was Toronto with 80,000 and then Vancouver with 40,000. Over 18,000 marched in Edmonton, 8,000 in Victoria, 6,000 in Ottawa and 4,000 in Halifax. Almost every urban centre—Calgary, Winnipeg, Quebec City and St. John’s, among others—hosted some kind of protest.

Even more impressive were the demonstrations organized in much smaller locations across the country; many had little or no tradition of anti-war activity before February 15. In some communities, these protests were the first-ever public demonstrations about any issue that anyone could remember. Participants numbered from a few dozen to hundreds, but often represented a much higher proportion of the local population than turnout in larger centres.

Together, the February 15 protests across Canada and Quebec were the high point of this country’s anti-war movement, just as the protests in other countries represented the peak of the global movement. In their wake, it became clear that “world public opinion” had shifted dramatically—and that millions were now willing to show their opposition by marching in the streets.

Coordination

“F15,” as it came to be known among organizers, was one in a series of increasingly coordinated global actions against the war, and demonstrated the speed by which relatively new anti-war groups at the local level developed into well-connected national and international networks. Those groups first appeared in the days and weeks after 9/11, but had roots in the anti-globalization movement. Many of the networks that emerged then still exist today and have played a role in facilitating the emergence of subsequent movements and struggles.

In Canada, the process of coordinating a cross-country anti-war opposition took longer than elsewhere, and developed largely independently of more established groups, such as the Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA), whose focus after the Cold War had been nuclear dis-



armament. For example, the most active and organized campaigners on Iraq were either anti-sanctions activists, who had been organizing for almost a decade, or newly radicalized anti-war activists, who had been schooled in anti-globalization struggles.

Kananaskis

Both groups of activists came together at a meeting in Calgary during the mobilization against the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta in late June 2002. About 70 people met outside the local convergence centre to discuss building a pan-Canadian response to the looming threat of war on Iraq. Their first coordinated action took place in a dozen cities in August on Hiroshima Day, and led to the creation of new local anti-war coalitions—the foundation on which the movement would grow. Over the following weeks, the local coalitions continued to coordinate actions, attracting bigger numbers as global opposition to the war began to build. In the process, the CPA was re-invigorated by the new radicalization, and by 2004 had become the umbrella organization for subsequent pan-Canadian anti-war mobilizations. At the end of 2002, the more immediate success of coordination on a national level raised its possibility internationally.

By early January 2003, there was already a buzz among activists about February 15. The first public discussions about a coordinated anti-war action came up in November 2002, during the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence, Italy. An intense debate

ensued between those who argued that the war was a distraction for the anti-globalization movement, and those who argued that war was “the military face of globalization.” Numerous contributions to the discussion by organized socialists and anti-capitalists from across Europe helped win the demand for a Europe-wide day of action against war. The date was set for February 15, 2003.

But what started as a Europe-wide day of action soon reached other parts of the world. Many ESF participants attended other global conferences weeks later, where they made the case for February 15. Two events were crucial in expanding the coordination: the first-ever Cairo Conference, which took place in Cairo, Egypt from December 17 to 19, 2002, and the World Social Forum, which took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil from January 31 to February 5, 2003. Within days of these events, anti-war activists in the Arab world and Latin America had endorsed the call for February 15. As these mobilizations gained their own momentum, they spread the call elsewhere.

Impact

When the day of action finally happened, the results were monumental. The mainstream media could no longer ignore the anti-war movement, and the topic of war was on everyone’s lips. Internationally, the biggest turnouts were in Rome, London and Madrid, where each demonstration numbered in the millions. At least half a million marched in New York City, with hundreds of thousands more joining protests in dozens of towns and cities across the United States. The level of participation in the US and Britain was significant, given the role those countries’ governments played in leading the drive to war. In the Arab world, there was mass opposition to an attack, but its expression was in many cases stifled by state-led violence and repression. Where demonstrations did take place, they drew tens of thousands.

Despite the obvious scale of the protests globally, their impact locally on foreign policy was not immediately apparent. In Canada, for example, the protests accelerated a crisis that was brewing inside the federal Liberal caucus, as party members and the wider public flooded Liberal MPs’ offices with phone calls, letters and petitions against the war. The crisis only became public when backbench Liberal MP Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga-Erindale, 1993-2006) announced at an anti-war rally that “50 MPs will cross the floor” if the government decided to back the war.

Quebec

Still, the anti-war movement had no idea whether the crisis would tip the balance in its favour. Two subsequent events, both of them in Quebec, proved decisive. The first came exactly one month later: on March 15, 2003, another 250,000 people marched in Montreal, a repeat of its magnificent February demonstration. The second event took place over several weeks: the general election in Quebec. Anti-war sentiment was so widespread in Quebec that during the campaign all party leaders wore white ribbons for peace and repeatedly declared their opposition to the war. The Quebec Liberals were poised to defeat the Parti Québécois, but their victory would have been threatened had the federal Liberals supported the war. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was more worried about the wrath of Quebec voters for backing the war than fallout from Washington for sitting it out. On March 17—just days before the first bombs fell on Baghdad—Chrétien announced to the House of Commons that Canada would not join the war. The movement had won its demand.

Legacy

Despite the unprecedented success of the February 15 protests, which helped keep Canada and other states outside Bush’s “coalition of the willing,” they ultimately failed to stop the war. The consequences

for Iraq have been horrific: 1.2 million Iraqi deaths from war and occupation, on top of 1.5 million Iraqi deaths after 12 years of sanctions. The country remains deeply divided on sectarian grounds and its landscape and infrastructure have been completely devastated. As we mark the anniversary of the protests, we must remember these facts and remain sober about the movement’s limits, both then and now.

But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t also recognize and celebrate the successes we did achieve. February 15 gave us a glimpse of the immense potential of mass movements, and trained a generation of activists who, in many cases, continue to be active on other fronts. The long-term effects of the protests, especially in the social movements, helped change the political terrain we operate on today by raising our expectations about international solidarity and collective action and by giving confidence to resistance movements throughout the region—from Iraq to Palestine to Lebanon to Egypt, the frontlines of resistance to imperialist war and occupation.

If anything, this is probably the most important effect of February 15: the developing bonds of solidarity between ordinary people in the Arab world and those outside it, particularly in countries whose governments backed the war. According to some activists in the region, those bonds contributed to emerging struggles that have subsequently developed into far-reaching revolutionary movements. Our role in this is no doubt small, perhaps even imperceptible, but it nevertheless shows that, although we didn’t stop the war, we still helped change the world.

Check out the video footage of anti-war protests in Toronto from 2003 to 2008, including coverage of the historic February 15 demonstration. <http://bit.ly/F15video>

In Toronto, on Friday, February 15, 2013, you can mark the ten-year anniversary of the protests by attending this event organized by the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War: Celebrating a decade of resistance: Ten years since the emergence of the “other global superpower”. <http://bit.ly/F15panel>

It became clear that “world public opinion” had shifted dramatically—and that millions were now willing to show their opposition by marching in the streets.

Socialism and indigenous sovereignty

Idle No More is inspiring a new wave of determination in the fight against Harper. Socialists support self-determination for indigenous peoples, but that support goes far beyond an abstract concept.

Evan Johnston examines that support, and what socialists have learned from indigenous movements.



by EVAN JOHNSTON

HOW SHOULD socialists approach the question of indigenous sovereignty? At first glance, the answer seems pretty straightforward, and on a certain level it certainly is: as Marxists, we believe in the right to self-determination for oppressed nations. In order to build a truly international working class movement against the capitalist system, we need unity, but the unity we seek can never be achieved while some nations are oppressed.

As Karl Marx once wrote regarding the US South, “Labour in the white skin can never free itself as long as labour in the black skin is branded.” This insight can be equally applied to the relationship between settlers and indigenous peoples in Canada. To suppose that the working class movement in Canada can be free while the system of settler-colonialism remains in place is a serious error, but one that has unfortunately been all too common.

Political scientist Todd Gordon characterizes the status of indigenous nations as “Canada’s very own Third World colonies, created and managed as part of an intensive, ongoing colonial project, and they bear the scars of that history.”

Therefore, socialists living on the occupied land known as “Canada” must give unequivocal support to First Nations in their struggle against the settler-colonial state, and against the interests of Canadian capital, which continue to displace indigenous peoples from their land in its drive

for greater profits.

‘The same old song’?

Having said that, it is crucial not to brush over the rocky history that has existed between, on the one hand, those who have called themselves “socialists,” and on the other, indigenous people from all across Turtle Island (what some indigenous people call North America), who have long been fighting against this racist system and for self-determination on their land.

In an essay entitled “Same Old Song,” Russell Means, a leader of the American Indian Movement during the 1960s and 70s, sums up this rocky history when he characterizes Marxism as a form of “European imperialism” that, due to Marx being a self-described “materialist,” thereby entails a thorough-going dedication to mechanization and industrialization. For Means, Marxism, as a theory that grows out of the European Enlightenment, is inherently alien to indigenous culture and must therefore be rejected.

In Means’ view, Marxism is the “same old song” because, while the capitalists want to steal indigenous lands for profit, Marxists want to steal indigenous lands in order to institute rational “efficiency.” In the end, Means suggests, Marxism is just another ideology of European colonialism.

While many of us who identify as Marxists would view Means’ depiction of Marxism as a highly distorted one, it is not at all surprising, given the highly distorted way that many Marxists have approached the question of indigenous sovereignty. In order to recover

Marxism from this caricature, it is critical to understand the historical context in which this view of Marxism took shape.

Following from the official Soviet state version of “DiaMat” (dialectical materialism) that became one of the trademarks of Stalinism, many Communist parties viewed the destruction of indigenous land, culture and language as an inevitable result of historical “progress.” These so-called Marxists, who followed what is referred to as a “stagist” approach to history (i.e. that all countries must go through certain pre-determined stages before they can reach socialism), believed that indigenous people could only become revolutionary once capitalism destroyed all of their old practices and social structures, and that it was only on the basis of being part of the industrial working class that they could fight for their freedom. This distorted view of historical change served the class interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy, but bore little resemblance to the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Is it no wonder, then, that indigenous activists came to distrust socialists as allies in the struggle against settler-colonialism? While much work needs to be done in order to restore an understanding of Marxism as a theory of self-emancipation, what speaks louder at present is our actions and our orientation toward movements like Idle No More.

Howard Adams and Indigenous Liberation

This brings us back to the opening question: how, then, should socialists approach the question of indigenous sovereignty? And what will

be the basis of solidarity between indigenous and non-indigenous people?

At the outset, it is crucial that we build a relationship on the basis of respect, which means that the role of settler allies (be they socialists or not) is emphatically not to tell indigenous people what form their struggle should take. This follows from a recognition that settler-colonialism is the system mediating the basis of our relationship, and settlers need to recognize the position that they occupy in that system.

Critically, that involves learning from the contributions made by indigenous writers to these very questions. For my purposes here, it has been instructive to revisit the classic book, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (1975), by Métis revolutionary activist Howard Adams (1921-2001).

According to Adams, in order for indigenous people to challenge the system of settler-colonialism, what is required is a movement of national liberation. But Adams is concerned with what kind of liberation movement it would be; in addition, he is concerned with how to connect that movement with the wider struggle against capitalism.

Inspired by revolutionary anti-colonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X, Adams cautions that the anti-colonial movement could be easily co-opted by a conservative Native leadership that would seek to redirect the struggle in a depoliticized and reformist direction (he often referred to these leaders rather cheekily as “Uncle Tomahawks”).

Adams points out that the type of nationalism that fuelled anti-colonial struggles in Cuba

and Vietnam is not applicable to the indigenous struggles in Canada. As he argues: “[Indigenous people] are simply not numerous enough to be able to overthrow the government of the country and recapture the entire land according to their justified aboriginal claims, nor are they powerful enough to form a separate state within the dominion.”

But if the struggle by indigenous people is still to take the form of a nationalist struggle, what will that nationalism look like?

Adams makes a distinction between radical and cultural nationalism, both of which are possible forms that the national liberation movement can take depending on the level of mobilization from below.

Since red nationalism is essential to Indian/Métis liberation, it must be a spearhead force for the native movement, and must provide the machinery for educating the masses politically. Since the cultural awakening is only one part of liberation, steps must be taken to ensure that the national consciousness will develop its political aspects as well.

In the process of developing a “red” or radical national consciousness, there is a danger of it veering too far toward the de-politicized cultural nationalism, which he argues is “more than behaving as traditional Indians; it is a return to extreme separatism in the hope that colonial oppression will automatically go away ... It perpetuates the racist idea of ‘Indians in their place,’ and does not allow them to develop a radical consciousness or a reorganized culture that will help to spur such a change in consciousness.

However, sufficient pressure from below will

be able to break through the layer of reformist leadership, and allow for a radical nationalism to emerge, which has as its goal “economic, social, and cultural autonomy, and control over all political affairs concerning the natives as a nation, beginning with complete local control of Indian reserves, Métis communities, and native urban ghettos.”

Dignity, self-determination and the capitalist system

For Adams, the fight for indigenous sovereignty is a process, not an event, and will involve “native separatism for a temporary transitional period” due to the fact that “[d]ignity to a colonized nation under capitalism cannot be restored as long as a white-supremacist society dominates or influences it.”

That is, the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Canadian state is defined by the racist power relations set in place by settler-colonialism, and must be the primary target of resistance. Economic, social and cultural autonomy is a crucial first step toward liberation, but as long as capitalism continues to exist in Canada, indigenous nations will be continually under threat. “A single community of all people in Canada with true equality and justice,” writes Adams, “may not be possible until a new order emerges, most likely under socialism.”

Adams, as I said, was concerned with how to link the struggle against settler-colonialism to the wider struggle against capitalism. For Adams, it is precisely the process of struggle that will help to spur such a change in consciousness.

This segregation under radical nationalism

will mean greater class consciousness. It develops the understanding that a native liberation struggle is essentially the same struggle as that of the working class and all oppressed people against a capitalist ruling class. In this way, Indians and Métis can build alliances with workers and other oppressed and colonized groups of white society.

While Adams is but one individual in a long tradition of indigenous revolutionaries that we need to learn from, his ability to bring together a Marxist analysis of capitalism with a revolutionary strategy for fighting settler-colonialism is of huge significance for socialists. While we are guided by the rich history of anti-colonial Marxists, including Lenin’s key work on national self-determination, we must continue to learn from the voices that have too often been suppressed as a result of colonial domination. As Adams reminds us, “It is from locally based struggles that true revolutionary theory evolves, a revolutionary theory functional for those people who must liberate themselves.”

Following Adams’ words, this is why activists who identify as socialists should support and defend the demands of the Idle No More movement, and actively build solidarity in their workplaces, in their neighbourhoods, on the campuses, and so on. In addition, socialists must find ways to connect other struggles—like the fight against austerity, for example—to the struggle for indigenous sovereignty. In this way, we can help deepen the bonds of solidarity between settlers and indigenous people, and demonstrate that the fight for indigenous sovereignty is a struggle that concerns all of us.



Reform Party racism and the rise of Stephen Harper

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

THE IDLE No More movement has shone a spotlight on the real history of Canadian colonialism. Stephen Harper’s denial of that history is all the more damning, since his party’s political prominence was initiated and solidified through asserting white Canadian colonial identity.

Harper’s origins lie in consolidating conservative forces further to the right, by expanding economic conservatism to a backlash against all of Canada’s oppressed communities. The Reform Party, where Harper cut his teeth, aimed its ire at First Nations, the Québécois and immigrants—and all at once. First, they took aim at “hyphenated Canadianism,” meaning that immigrants should not expect to retain any dual identity. Then there was a concerted attempt to pit Quebec and First Nations against each other to allow Reform Party and Tory bigots to come up the middle.

But pitting indigenous peoples against Quebecers was employed long before the Reform Party began spreading its vitriol. Here is a list of significant events:

‘Distinct society’

During the Meech Lake constitutional debate in 1987, the proposal for the most minimal recognition of Quebec as a distinct society in the Canadian constitution was defeated. The right-wing argument used the pretext of defending indigenous rights.

During the debate around the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, the fact that the Meech Lake debate was not really about First Nations was revealed when the right wing argument explicitly argued against recognizing Quebec as a distinct society, even though the accord afforded minimal recognition for indigenous rights.

Oka

During the events of Oka in 1990, the conflict was depicted by right-wingers as a conflict between “racist” Québécois and Mohawk, when in fact it was the Canadian army that was called against the blockade. Although there was some racist response (as there was in Caledonia in Ontario in a similar standoff years later), there were also daily Montreal protests and weekly support buses from Montreal to Oka, and the majority of Mohawk leaders charged were acquitted by a Québécois jury on grounds that Canadian law did not apply to indigenous peoples.

During the Gustafsen Lake events in British Columbia in 1995, the largest paramilitary mobilization in Canadian history nearly resulted in a bloodbath against the Gitksan. At Stoney Point, Ippervash Provincial Park in 1995, Dudley George was murdered by Ontario Provincial Police.

These events illustrate that the problem is not Quebecers and their national liberation struggle, but the state.

Divide-and-conquer

It was in this crucible of divide-and-conquer that Harper and his entourage became a political force, and we’re still paying for it. The depiction of the Québécois as more racist against First Nations than the rest of the population of English Canada bolstered those who only want to want to divide and conquer, and who only care about the 1%.

In fact, the national liberation aspirations of Quebecers and indigenous peoples are complementary. This is important for Idle No More because, despite attempts to isolate the First Nations cause, there is a huge amount of sympathy in both English Canada and Quebec. Resisting any future attempts to counterpose demands for self-determination for the Québécois and for First Nations will prevent those who are really guilty of Canadian colonialism from scapegoating those who are not to blame.

The fight against Harper

STEPHEN HARPER comes from the Reform party, one based on anti-Quebec and anti-Native bigotry, but to the Tories’ dismay, the biggest movements of the past two years have been the Quebec student strike and the Idle No More movement.

Each have fought for their own demands, have inspired solidarity —people in English Canada joined the casserole demonstrations last year, and non-indigenous people support the Idle No More movement this year—and have demonstrated that resistance that is both militant and broad is the most effective way of challenging austerity. But NDP leader Thomas Mulcair has done nothing to support either movement.

Last year, in the midst of the historic Quebec student strike—when hundreds of thousands of Quebec students and their allies were in the streets, when the growing left electoral alternative Québec Solidaire (QS) was supporting the strike, and when thousands of people across the country were joining casserole demonstrations—Mulcair instructed his MPs to say nothing. In addition, Mulcair declared the NDP would campaign provincially in Quebec—meaning it would challenge QS, a party based in the movements, and divide progressives.

This year, in the midst of the historic Idle No More movement—when Chief Theresa Spence was on hunger strike, when indigenous people from coast to coast were leading demonstrations and inspiring widespread solidarity for indigenous sovereignty and social justice—Mulcair called on Chief Spence to end her hunger strike. This is not why people voted NDP.

Missing the Orange Wave

The Orange Wave swept the NDP into Official Opposition in 2011 in the context of opposition to Harper, disillusionment with the Liberals, inspiration from the Arab Spring and hope the NDP would provide a real alternative. But the sentiment that produced the Orange Wave has been at odds with the actual policies and strategy of the NDP leadership, both before 2011 and since then.

Back in 2008 the NDP backed down on their opposition to Afghanistan and corporate tax cuts in order to form a proposed coalition government—effectively removing the pillars of their support in order to grab a few cabinet seats in a Liberal cabinet. After the election in 2011 the NDP, under Jack Layton, initially unanimously supported the bombing of Libya. Leadership hopeful Brian Topp supported the Greek PASOK government, which later imploded over its role in imposing austerity. In 2012 Mulcair supported increased sanctions on Iran, and this year he is supporting the imperialist intervention in Mali.

The Orange Wave led to a surge for the NDP despite their policies, not because of them. But the leadership of the Ontario NDP misinterpreted the federal election results, leading them to also lean further to the right. Andrea Horwath reinforced Tory leader Hudak’s campaign against “foreign workers” during the last election, supported the Liberal budget with trivial changes to taxes, was silent on Bill 115’s massive attack on workers’ rights, and refused to join tens of thousands of workers rallying on January 26 against the Liberal convention.

Contradictions of social democracy

This is not just the fault of individual leaders, but represents the contradictions of social democracy. Electorally, the NDP is driven to chase votes to secure a majority. Instead of building movements to change the views of the majority, it tries to represent the majority of the population regardless of their ideas. If the population is split over indigenous sovereignty, then social democratic parties will adopt a stance that reflects this confusion—rather than a principled stand that supports indigenous sovereignty and tries to intervene to win over the majority.

Politically, social democratic governments want to subordinate movements to Parliament, where they see power and decision-making residing. This is especially true of movements in solidarity with Quebec and indigenous sovereignty, which the Canadian state considers threats. Mulcair’s desire to lead the Canadian state means he must try to contain movements against it.

Economically, all mainstream parties are subordinate to the 1% and act to various degrees on their behalf. In the 1990s the BC NDP imposed contracts on teachers, and imposed wage controls on public sector workers. In times of capitalist crisis, social democratic parties—from the Labour party in Britain, the PASOK government in Greece, the ANC government in South Africa, or the NDP in Canada—are driven to impose austerity because they have no control over the economy. So the NDP in Nova Scotia has contracted out jobs and raised tuition fees.

Lessons of 2003

This doesn’t mean all mainstream parties are the same. Whereas the Tories and Liberals have their base in corporations, the NDP’s base is the labour movement. In 2003 a mass anti-war movement, made up largely of workers, won the NDP from its initial position of supporting UN intervention in Iraq to a principled anti-war stance—with or without the UN. As a consequence, the small NDP in Parliament was able to act as a megaphone for the movement—which split the majority Liberals and stopped Canada from officially supporting the war.

Through movements like this, we need to work with activists inside and outside the NDP to push their leadership to take principled stands against war, against austerity, and in support of Quebec and indigenous sovereignty. The NDP can not substitute for movements but it can magnify them.

In the work of building movements outside Parliament we can imagine a world of radical democracy free from capitalism, and we can build revolutionary organizations that can intervene to fight for every reform while raising the possibility of revolutionary change.

OPINION



Arshia Lakhani, of SAIA, discusses the struggle against Israeli Apartheid at York University

FOR DECADES, Palestinians have been denied their fundamental rights to freedom, equality, and self-determination by the State of Israel.

Despite condemnation by the UN and other internationally recognized human rights organizations, Israel continues its policies of ethnic cleansing, colonization, racial discrimination, and military occupation of Palestine. As a direct response to the inaction of international bodies, a plurality of Palestinian civil society organizations have taken it upon themselves to call for a global campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) in order to put international pressure on Israel to comply with international law on the question of Palestinian rights.

The Palestinian BDS campaign is modeled on the international movement that arose in opposition to the South African apartheid regime. The demands of the BDS campaign are: the end of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the dismantling of the Apartheid Wall as recommended by the International Court of Justice; the recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and the right of return for Palestinian refugees as stipulated in UN General Assembly resolution 194.

The movement began in 2005 and has since grown rapidly, spreading around the world.

Activists worldwide have campaigned in solidarity with the Palestinian-led BDS movement to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing human rights violations. Artists like US singer/songwriter Cat Power have cancelled their performances in Israel as part of the call for cultural boycott. Members of the United Church of Canada have affirmed a resolution to boycott Israeli settlement products. Importantly for students, the campaign has increased its presence on university and college campuses. Last November the York University Graduate Students’ Association voted overwhelmingly to pass a motion endorsing BDS, effectively amounting to a commitment to pressure the school administration to divest from companies that are complicit in Israeli violations of human rights. That was soon followed by a series of other student victories for BDS in the Toronto area, including

a similar motion at the University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Association.

The campaign calls on the York University administration to immediately divest from all corporations involved in Israeli war crimes against Palestinians. Currently, the York University Pension Fund is funneling millions of dollars in investments to companies that are complicit in, and profit directly from, Israel’s violations of international law. Prominent examples include BAE Systems, a company that sells guidance systems for fighter jets to the Israeli military, and Northrop Grumman, a company that manufactures parts for Apache Helicopters. Both of these companies sell their equipment to the Israeli Defense Forces.

York University has also invested in Lockheed Martin—a US company that is the world’s number one military contractor and largest arms exporter. Hewlett Packard, a company that has developed and sold computer technology to Israel for use in its military checkpoints in Gaza and the West Bank, is another. These checkpoints disturb the daily lives of Palestinians who are regularly subject to racial discrimination in the form of harassment by way of humiliating physical and psychological abuse, and arbitrary detention, as well as being prevented from accessing basic services such as education and potentially life-saving medical care. At the same time, these checkpoints provide ease of movement for Israeli citizens.

After researching and compiling these findings, Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) at York University officially launched their divestment campaign in September of 2012. SAIA is a network of students allied to the growing BDS movement who work to raise awareness about Palestine and Israeli Apartheid on campus. SAIA is working to gain the explicit support of all undergraduate students through their representative institutions in the form of a petition to urge the York Federation of Students to join the Graduate Students’ Association in endorsing the call for BDS. As a result of York’s unethical policy of war-profiteering, Students Against Israeli Apartheid has demanded that the university immediately divest from BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman, Hewlett Packard, and

Lockheed Martin; and secondly, to refrain from investing in all companies involved in violations of international law. SAIA is also calling for York’s administration to work with students, faculty, and staff to undergo a democratic and transparent process to ensure accountability and commitment to principles of social and environmental justice.

The campaign has encountered resistance from members of pro-Israeli campus groups such as Hillel. After the Graduate Students’ Association’s endorsement, Hillel at York released a statement condemning the motion, attacking SAIA on the basis of alleged lack of objectivity: “BDS only serves to promote a toxic and divisive atmosphere on campus. It does nothing to promote civil discourse and will never lead to any true learning or education about the Middle East.”

Rochelle Derlick, Hillel’s vice-president internal, has added that this type of campaign intends only “to isolate and delegitimize Israel.” They have since launched a counter-petition which claims to take a ‘neutral’ stance towards the conflict in an attempt to hinder the progress of the divestment campaign. However, as Desmond Tutu once said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

As it stands, such attempts to derail the BDS campaign have thus far been ineffective and SAIA York continues to gain momentum. Student awareness of York University’s complicity in war crimes and campus solidarity with the Palestinian struggle has reached new heights over the past year. SAIA has succeeded in organizing countless demonstrations, actions, and events on campus and is moving with confidence into the term ahead. The campaign has created new bonds of solidarity between campus groups, new alliances that will play an important role in struggles to come.

The recent surge in activism on campus has been one of encouragement—if it can happen at York, known for its hostility to student activism and reputation for campus repression, it can happen anywhere. The new York University slogan “this is my time” should be challenged by students and activists alike—we would argue no, this is our time.

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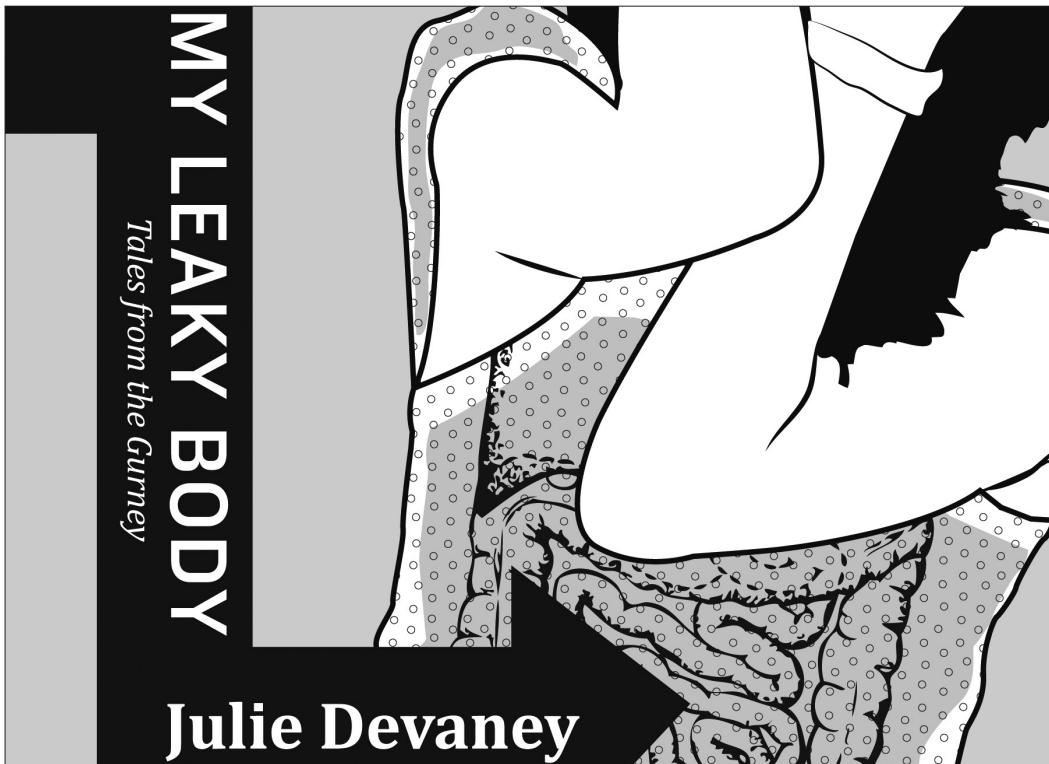
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REVIEWS



BOOK

It takes guts to write a book like this

My Leaky Body: Tales from the Gurney

Written by Julie Devaney

Reviewed by Bradley Hughes

I LOVED this book. This is Julie’s story of her discovery of her chronic disease and the ensuing battles with her body and the usually impersonal and frequently unsympathetic medical profession.

The inhumanness of our medical institutions and their practitioners led Julie to fantasize about presenting at academic conferences: “I want to read from my chart, sitting on an academic table covered with a real hospital sheet and wearing my very own gown.” From this image she developed her very successful play, *My Leaky Body*, and now this book.

But it is much more than a disease memoir or a book of self discovery and healing; she uses her visceral stories to make important political points.

The way she tells the story of her chronic bowel disease makes a very compelling narrative that is hard to put down; at the same time her depictions of the pain and doubt in her self make it hard to read. And yet, it is frequently

laugh-out-loud funny.

The book starts with Julie’s adventures as an activist, a grad student, and recent arrival to Vancouver. She quickly discovers that none of those are very forgiving to someone who has less than perfect health. In her repeated visits to hospital emergency wards she soon discovers that they aren’t very accepting of chronic disease either.

This is where much of the power of the book comes into play. The combination of the first person narrative and the evocative story telling puts the reader into Julie’s hospital gown to feel what it is like to suffer the (mis) treatment she is subjected to. Rapidly it becomes clear that our world and its institutions discourage humane treatment of one another. The doctors frequently treat Julie as a case to be treated; her opinions, pain and emotions rarely enter into their deliberations. Her supervisor and the chair of the department at grad school only believe that she is a troublemaker who chooses not to complete her work. Through her experience we see that our society does not treat us as humans; our abilities and strengths are not only different from each other but

each person also changes over time. At work, at school, we are expected to be interchangeable with each other, but also the same from day to day, no matter the state of our physical or emotional health.

Early in the book is a great depiction of socialism and condemnation of capitalism. In discussing the disconnect between our formal democracy and “the way power operates in our daily lives,” Julie writes: “why is it that we need to defer to the medical authority of doctors in order to be treated well? Surely, we would all prefer to enter the scenario as equals, where we can freely discuss possibilities and options, where someone else’s education and practical experience are simply a resource in collaborative decision making—not a license to dictate. ... When did the value of a professional opinion become directly opposed to respecting the deep wisdom and knowledge that we all carry in our own bodies?”

Let’s build a world where all our institutions celebrate our humanity, not try to eliminate it.

Find out when My Leaky Body will be at a conference or theatre near you: www.myleakybody.com

FILM

A vivid, violent anti-racist fantasy

Django Unchained

Directed by Quentin Tarantino

Reviewed by John Bell

FULL DISCLOSURE: I like westerns. I can sit through just about anything with six-guns and saddles, and if you asked me to name my top 10 movies at least three of them would be dusters.

I am less enthusiastic about Quentin Tarantino films. For every interesting set piece there is an annoying discur-sion; for every clever allusion there is a self-indulgent wink that brings the narrative to a jarring halt. For every Jackie Brown (the only Tarantino film I like without reservation) there is an Inglorious Basterds (which I disliked from beginning to end). For Tarantino, history is primarily popular culture—especially movies. So his films are deliberate fictions based on fictions. Taken together they form a parallel universe where the impossible can happen, and where the prime motivation is revenge, whether for personal or historical crimes. He is not unique in this: revenge is usually the motive in the genre movies he reveres and references.

So, with *Django Unchained* Tarantino has created a vivid, violent anti-racist fantasy drawing on the conventions of Italian rather than American westerns. The opening scenes show shackled slaves being driven through a surreal, rocky landscape. Any true western fan will instantly recognize the setting even if they don’t know the name Lone Pine, a California location used to film countless cowboy serials and low-budget features, a backdrop

subtler but every bit as iconic as John Ford’s beloved Monument Valley. For Tarantino that setting would be just as important as the characters inhabiting it. Lone Pine was the location for a series of important westerns by Budd Boetticher, featuring morally ambivalent characters and as much violence as was permissible in the late 1950’s. Sergio Leone, the director who brought spaghetti westerns to the world, admitted that he took much of his inspiration from Boetticher’s films. The western genre flourished in Europe even as it died out in America.

Now Tarantino repatriates the form and closes the circle. Many of the conventions of spaghetti westerns are here: a garish colour palette; an operatic, often intrusive soundtrack (including a theme written by Ennio Morricone); an amiable disregard for continuity; and most of all heaping helpings of gore-soaked violence. Even the name *Django* is lifted from a series of films starring Franco Nero, who appears in a cameo here.

But there is another crucial aspect of the spaghetti western genre imported by Tarantino. Many of those films were written and directed by Marxists and leftists. Sergio Corbucci’s original *Django* featured an over-the-top gang of ex-Confederate racists as foil for the avenging gunslinger, and the European westerns regularly portrayed advancing white settlers and authority figures as racists and villains. This is in stark contrast to American westerns that usually portrayed the Confederacy as a noble failure and former rebel soldiers as protagonists. It is through this lens, not the economic and political

reality of the pre-Civil War south, that Tarantino views slavery.

Some, prominently Spike Lee, have condemned Tarantino for this, but *Django Unchained* should be judged by how well Tarantino achieves his actual intentions. Overall, he succeeds. Lead Jamie Foxx is excellent as the avenging “fastest gun in the south”. Christoph Waltz is even better as German bounty hunter King Schultz—equal parts product of the Enlightenment and cold blooded killer of evil men, Waltz is the only positive white character in sight. It is not enough for them to wipe out a gang of hooded white supremacists: they have to be humiliated first for the dolts they are. Leonardo DiCaprio is suitably cartoonish as the vicious, verbose but none too bright plantation owner Calvin Candie, who relies on his elderly house slave (Samuel L. Jackson) to do his thinking. The duel between racist Candie and liberal Schultz at the dinner table is violent and entirely verbal, and the latter’s rhetorical quick-draw alone is worth the price of admission.

There are weaknesses. Women are only portrayed as victims. There is so much crimson splattered in the climactic shootout that you just want to cry “Okay Quentin, give it a rest.” And while both these things were true to the spaghetti western world he refers to, both are conventions that could have been left behind. But there are more plusses than minuses on the Tarantino balance sheet this time. It’s no masterpiece but *Django Unchained* is a satisfying and resolutely anti-racist entertainment. And it has saddles and six-guns.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

‘Divide et impera’

THE CONCEPT of divide and rule has been around a long time, no doubt as long as human society has been divided into classes. Stephen Harper and his crew deserve no credit for thinking up the strategy, but they sure know how important it is to wield it.

Tom Flanagan is Stephen Harper’s ideological guru, a charter member of the “Calgary School” of deeply conservative academics that formed the brain trust of the Reform Party and today’s Tories. He advised Harper through many campaigns. He is consulted all too frequently as a media pundit, and it should be recalled that in 2010 he used a CBC TV interview to call for the assassination of WikiLeaks figurehead Julian Assange.

In 2009 Flanagan published a document called “Resource Industries and Security Issues in Northern Alberta” for the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, a Calgary based “think tank.” It is worth reprinting the “executive summary” of this remarkable essay in whole:

“The rapid expansion of natural-resource industries in northern Alberta, accompanied by growing environmentalist and aboriginal-rights movements, raises issues of possible extra-legal and even violent resistance to industrial development. Five potential sources of opposition can be identified: individual saboteurs, eco-terrorists, mainstream environmentalists, First Nations, and the Métis people. All except the Métis have at various times used some combination of litigation, blockades, occupations, boycotts, sabotage, and violence against economic development projects which they saw as a threat to environmental values or aboriginal rights. Such incidents will probably continue in the future, as they have in the past. However, extra-legal obstruction is unlikely to become large-scale and widespread unless these various groups make common cause and cooperate with each other. Such cooperation has not happened in the past and seems unlikely in the future because the groups have different social characteristics and conflicting political interests.”

For Flanagan and the petro-interests he unceasingly serves, the “rapid expansion” of the Tar Sands and other northern mining projects is imperative. They honestly believe that their divine mission is to wring every penny (rounded up to a nickel) of Tar Sands profit before global warming forces the rest of the world to quit burning fossil fuels.

The document is a threat assessment. It clearly states that the real threat to unbridled Tar Sands development is unity between environmentalists and First Nations: “If two or more of the five categories of people described above...came together in a single movement, they could become a serious obstacle to development...”

Flanagan wrote that the chances of such unity are low for two reasons. First he argues that mainstream environmentalists simply want to stop developments like the Tar Sands while First Nations want to control and benefit from any development on their lands. Second he points out that First Nations responses vary, that there are divisions between and within the Nations.

Flanagan and his disciples are anything but stupid—these are real sources of tension within our movements and we need clarity, discussion and mutual respect to build real unity. But we need to know that while we work toward solidarity, the other side will try to take advantage of these differences to divide, weaken and conquer us.

Given all this, the wonderful unity between First Nations in BC and people far beyond the usual environmental groups, in opposition to the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, is the stuff of nightmares for Flanagan, Harper and the Tar Sands profiteers.

Environmental defence and indigenous sovereignty become completely intertwined and mutually beneficial. New layers of people are exploring a history of colonialism and what it means to be an ally. Small wonder that when Idle No More arose, general support for it was higher in BC than anywhere else.

The rapid rise of solidarity in BC must have caught the Tories napping. Their first efforts to break the unity were almost laughable.

Environmentalists were called traitors and compared to terrorists. Then they trotted out the old “ethical oil” arguments, now so thoroughly discredited they exist only as the punchline of a joke. Then Enbridge proudly announced the support of the Gitxsan First Nation, only to see the people of that nation rise en masse and throw the few bureaucrats who had signed the deal out of office. Then they released a map of the proposed tanker port with all the pesky islands that make navigation so dangerous miraculously erased. Can you say PR disaster?

Idle No More poses even greater challenges to the Tories, and to the very concept of the Canadian state. The move from a particular campaign to more general and sometimes deliberately vague aims makes it easier to employ divide and rule tactics.

So Harper’s team released an old report on problems in Attawapiskat, one that predated the election of Chief Theresa Spence, in order to discredit her. Newspapers ran stories about corruption and mismanagement in First Nations. The grain of truth was magnified to absurd proportions.

Troublingly, First Nations leaders like Matthew Coon Come, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, and current leader of the Assembly of First Nations Shawn Atleo made high profile visits to Harper while Chief Spence’s fast was going on. Here the Tories took advantage of the divisions within the indigenous community to weaken the growing grassroots movement.

And then comes Tory Senator Patrick Brazeau, whose claims to speak for indigenous peoples are met with almost universal laughter and insult, to make insulting jokes about Chief Spence at a Tory fundraiser. The real face of Reform Party/Tory racism is revealed.

Idle No More is not going away. Anti-pipeline solidarity continues to grow. Short of declaring martial law, divide and conquer is Harper’s only hope. So far they haven’t been very good at it, but rest assured the lights burn late in the PMO while they try to come up with an effective wedge. Forewarned is forearmed.

WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty. It kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of natural resources. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

Socialism and workers' power

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

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

Reform and revolution

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

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

Elections and democracy

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

Internationalism

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

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

Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal Peoples

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

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

Oppression

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

The Revolutionary Party

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

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



Workers' resistance in Bahrain

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

WORKERS AND other protestors who have been participating in the demonstrations since February 14, and even before then, are diverse. They come from different religious and political backgrounds.

Some of them had never participated in any protest before February 14, but were outraged by continuous oppression and discrimination. The decision to go on protests and later on strike was driven by the mass movement of people across Bahrain, but was faced with the regime's brutality. Bahrain, a small island located in the Persian Gulf, is the home to the US Fifth Fleet and is the West's ally in the region.

Economic inequality

The Bahraini revolution is just like any other legitimate revolution in the world: it is driven by people's revolt against ongoing exploitation and oppression, in this case by the Al-Khalifa ruling family.

The population in Bahrain is 1,323,535 including more than 600,000 ex-pats. Bahrain's GDP is high per capita (PPP): \$27,300. However, this does not mean that people are living in good conditions. According to a report released in 2004 by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), around half of Bahraini citizens living in the oil-rich region are suffering from poverty and poor living conditions. The gap between the very rich and the poor is significant.

The miserable conditions that the majority of the Bahraini population suffer from arise from different issues—social, economic and political—but they all stem from the Al-Khalifa ruling class that has been in power for more than two centuries. According to BCHR, poverty in Bahrain is mainly caused by unequal distribution of wealth, waste of public money, financial and administration corruption, poor planning and exploitation of foreign workers (who constitute 60 per cent of the labour force). The main issue behind the deteriorating conditions of workers in Bahrain is the accumulation of wealth and resources in the hands of a small group of people—mainly the ruling family and loyalists.

Sacked workers

People in Bahrain have many reasons to protest in the streets and occupy the Pearl Roundabout (which is the equivalent to Tahrir Square in Egypt). There could be no real democracy without solving the economic problems. Al-Khalifa will stay in power as long as they are able to control the population economically, politically and even socially.

Many Bahraini workers decided

to go on strike. However, the regime exceeded all levels of expectations regarding brutality. On the other hand, there were others who didn't go on strike, but the regime repressed them for participating in protests.

For instance, officials at Batelco, Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Services and APM Terminals Bahrain said they laid off more than 200 workers after their absence during a strike in March 2011. Al Wefaq opposition group stated that Bahraini firms fired hundreds of Shia workers who participated in pro-democracy protests. According to Amnesty International's annual report about the violations committed during 2011, at least 4,000 people who stayed away from their jobs during or were believed to have participated in the protests were sacked or suspended—including 300 from the state-owned Bahrain Petroleum Company.

Teachers persecuted

The state has gone as far as arresting and torturing activist workers who participated in the pro-democracy protests. Teachers who were calling for strikes and protesting have been one of the most targeted groups in Bahrain. As some eyewitness students describe, classrooms are depressing places while many teachers and students are spending their days behind prison bars.

Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila Salman were arrested for calling for a strike in their role as trade union leaders. Salman, the acting president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA), was released on November 25, 2012. However, Abu Dheeb, the previous president of BTA remains detained facing five years in prison. He is behind bars for exercising his right to freedom of expression and for demanding reforms to the education system. Salman and Abu Dheeb, along with other detained teachers, were tortured and ill-treated. In addition to torture in prison and solitary confinement, Abu Dheeb reported that even the pro-government nurse who took him to Al Salmaniya hospital to get necessary medical treatment had beaten him on the way to the hospital.

Medics persecuted

Amongst the workers who are struggling are the medics who were detained, tortured, and lost their jobs for treating injured protestors and for participating in peaceful protests. On February and March 2011, at least 95 health workers were detained during the regime's crackdown on pro-democracy protestors. Many of the medics' charges were quashed, while others were released on bail. However, nine medics still face charges.

On October 2, 2012, six medical professionals were arrested. Security forces raided their homes at dawn. The re-arrest followed the decision

on October 2012 of the Bahrain Court of Cassation to uphold the sentences imposed upon nine medics. During what's known as National Security period, the Bahraini authorities used torture as a method of obtaining confessions from detained activists including medics. Authorities continue to use this method on some detainees. Roula Al-Saffar was one of the health professionals sentenced by a military court to between 5 and 15 years in prison in September 2011. A civilian court on appeal acquitted her. Following her arrest on April 4, 2011 she said that she was tortured in detention.

She described to Amnesty International what happened to her during the Criminal Investigation Department interrogations: "A woman officer entered the room and said 'I will blindfold you and I will deal with you now'. Then three men entered the room and started hitting me... She had an electric device in each hand and hit me with it on both sides of my head at the same time. I felt dizzy and lost consciousness. I don't remember what happened straight after. Then they took me to another room and one of them called me a whore and insulted my family... On the third day she gave me electric shocks again and she asked if I went to the strike. Another woman started slapping me. She cut my hair with scissors. Then they burned my hair on the sides. They hit me and sexually harassed me by putting their hands all over my body... This continued for four or five days."

Other workers

All workers—teachers, medics, farmers, fishermen, journalists, etc.—suffer from the exploitation and oppression of Al-Khalifa regime. Fishermen surrounded by water from all directions (as Bahrain is an island) can hardly fish anymore. All waters are private properties of Al-Khalifa and their rich loyalists. They are living in poverty despite the resources around them.

Farmers have not enough resources and Al-Khalifa ruling family had confiscated the lands of their ancestors. Those who are working in the fields find farming a very tough task despite Bahrain's rich soil. Journalists are jailed for reporting about the ongoing violations. Other workers in different fields are substituted by foreign workers in an attempt to marginalize the Shia majority.

Those who were sacked from their jobs after the protests are suffering from deteriorating economic conditions. They continue to protest for their right to return to work. The only way to help the working class in Bahrain to achieve their goal in having real democracy is to break the wall of silence and demand an end to the West's support to the oppressive Al-Khalifa regime.

international socialist events

TORONTO

Tsar to Lenin

Fundraising dinner and film. Suggested donation: \$7-15 sliding scale. Sat, Feb 16, 6pm Oak St. Co-op Organized by TO-Coxwell I.S. Info: 647-393-3096

Troops out of Mali

Public forum discussing Canadian imperialism and lessons from the Iraq anti-war movement. Speakers: Ameth Lo & Sid Lacombe Tue, Feb 19, 7pm OISE, 252 Bloor St. W. Organized by Toronto I.S. Info: reports@socialist.ca

34 Years Since the Iranian Revolution

Featuring speakers who took part in the revolution. Sat, Jan 23, 6-9pm Venue near Bloor & Dufferin Organized by TO-West I.S. Info: torontowest.is@gmail.com

As long as the rivers flow: the Grassy Narrows blockade story

Fundraising dinner and film. Suggested donation: \$7-15 sliding scale. Sun, Feb 24, 5:30pm USW Hall, 25 Cecil Street Organized by TO-Centre I.S. Info: reports@socialist.ca

Ideas to Change the World

One-day political conference Sun, Mar 3, 11:30am OISE, 252 Bloor St. W. Info, registration & readings: ideas2changetheworld.org

YORK UNIVERSITY

Marxism and Islam

Wed, Feb 13, 2:30pm 430 Student Centre

Climate chaos: how is capitalism destroying the planet?

Wed, Feb 27, 2:30pm 307 Student Centre

Socialism, feminism and the fight against sexism

Wed, March 6, 2:30pm 307 Student Centre

Organized by York I.S. yorkusocialists@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY of TORONTO

Are all political parties useless?

Speaker: Darren Edgar Mon, Feb 11, 3pm

The liberal defence of murder: 'humanitarian' intervention

Speaker: Yusur Al Bahrani Mon, Feb 25, 3pm

How do ideas change?

Speaker: Evan Johnston Mon, Mar 11, 3pm

All meetings in Sid Smith, room 1080, 100 St. George

Organized by UofT I.S. uoftinternationalsocialists@gmail.com

VANCOUVER

Capitalism, sexism and liberation

Speaker: Alicia Vieira Wed, Feb 13, 2:30pm Langara College, room C509 100 W. 49th Ave. Organized by Langara I.S. Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

You can find the I.S. in:

Toronto, Ottawa, Gatineau, Vancouver, Victoria, Lethbridge, Montreal, St. Catharines, London, Mississauga, Scarborough, Halifax, Belleville & Kingston

e: reports@socialist.ca t: 416.972.6391 w: www.socialist.ca

For more event listings, visit www.socialist.ca.

SOCIAL FORUM

by JESSICA SQUIRES

REPORTS ARE already circulating about the meeting that took place in Ottawa on January 26 and 27 to plan a Canada-Quebec-Indigenous peoples social forum (renamed the peoples' social forum during the weekend).

About 150 people participated during the meeting, most representing a social justice group of some kind, with a high proportion from labour and a significant participation by about a dozen individual First Nations.

The social forum is part of a global process initiated in 2001 in Brazil on the heels of the historic 1999 demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization and has deep roots in Latin American activism and their critiques of neoliberalism from the perspective of the global south. The first forum saw 15,000 people gather, and developed a parallel process called the assembly of the social movements from which issued a call for action.

Since then, there have been social fora around the world in individual cities, states, and continents, with each one taking on the shape the movement in its specific location chooses and needs—the next one being this March in Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began. There have also been fora around specific issues, such as the World Social Forum Free Palestine held late last year in Brazil.

Critics have suggested the social forum is limited in what it can achieve because of its allergy to political parties and because the action-building aspect is held apart from the forum itself. It is sometimes criticized because of its lack of a shared focus and strategy. It also receives criticism for becoming too top-down and not representative enough of all groups and movements. On the other hand, the assembly of the social movements has allowed for huge movements to coalesce, even if only temporarily. For example, the 2002 social forum called for a global day of action against war to take place on February 15, 2003—a day that turned out to be the largest coordinated action for social justice in human history. It is this aspect of the social forum movement that can best show the collective strength of progressive forces.

Whatever else it is, the social forum movement has created occasions on which people can gather to discuss and debate about strategy and long-term goals. The peoples' social forum in what is called Canada (Turtle Island), planned for late 2014, will be another such occasion. The entire left and all movements for social justice in Canada should be there to make it as strong and effective as possible. The meeting in Ottawa was a promising beginning; while sharing all of the aspects, both positive and negative, described above, it was also a very good place to start to build towards what may be a historic opportunity for strengthening resistance to neoliberalism on Turtle Island.



INTERVIEW WITH A STRIKING PORTER AIRLINES WORKER

THE 22 workers who fuel, service and clean the aircraft for Porter Airlines at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport are on strike for their first collective contract. One of the members of COPE local 343 (Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union) sat down with Socialist.ca for an interview on the struggle for safety and a living wage at the Toronto Island Airport.

Can you tell me what this strike is all about?

At the heart of this strike, is the issue of safe working conditions. We have been working with dangerous chemicals that are unlabelled and some that have been mislabelled. When we reported to management that there were fuel leaks, they told us to “just put a bucket under it.” These are flagrant violations of health and safety standards and show a clear disregard for the conditions that we operate under. One of our demands has been a formal process for the reporting of safety concerns and a timetable for their implementation. We don't want to be told to “just get by” in dangerous working conditions. We are also seeking wages that are comparable with industry standards. The average income of those of us on strike is just above minimum wage.

We were forced to go on strike when Porter refused to bargain in good faith. They refused to implement the basic requests for necessary safety equipment. The group of us that are on strike now are the only ones trained to fuel and transfer fuel at Billy Bishop airport. To keep the airport running without us,

management and workers from other departments are fueling planes. These people don't have the training or practical experience that we do and that means the company is putting those people in danger and all the people flying on Porter Airlines in danger.

What was Porter's response to your attempt to organize?

Before becoming unionized, we sent a letter out to management signed by the workers explaining that the high turnover rate (based on the low wages and unsafe conditions) and constantly being understaffed wasn't an effective way to run our department. They did not come back with any adequate response as they felt that we were properly staffed at all times, which was definitely not the case. They have refused even our most basic requests. They seem to think that they can ignore our efforts and force us to accept their terms. They have been able to keep the flights going out because they have brought guys in from other divisions within the company to do our jobs for the time being.

What are the working conditions at Porter like?

We were constantly understaffed for many years and the turnover rate was well over 120 percent. The fuel trucks always have multiple issues and leaks. They never get fixed—just bandaged. Our requests for PPE (personal protective equipment) weren't properly implemented. We didn't even have proper fuel resistant coveralls or gloves. The union had to bargain those two issues and the coveralls weren't implemented until AFTER

we went on strike.

What would you like to see happen and what is the outlook for the near future?

Porter took months to look over their books to send us an offer. That offer turned out to be the exact same they offered other employees in other divisions. One of our colleagues that was in the union got a promotion just before we went on strike (so he crossed the line). This person would've tipped the scales in our favour quite some. At the very least we want Porter to come back to the table and be reasonable as we aren't asking for more than we deserve. We are ranked the 3rd best FBO in Canada and should be paid accordingly.

How can people show support for the workers there?

People should check out our Facebook group: FBO-Fighting for what is right and Twitter @occupyfb which is a good place to stay up-to-date on news and developments. If people would follow on those links, we would really appreciate it. People have been launching a boycott and speaking out on Porter's Facebook page; customers have been letting Porter know that they want us to be treated fairly and safely and that has been very positive and effective. We also welcome all solidarity visits to our picket lines. We really appreciate getting support from people and we have had some great visits from workers from Pearson Airport and we've been trying to reach out to other workers. People that want to come by and show support should come by our line at Bathurst and Queens Quay between 10am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.

the Federal Court on a motion to permanently stop proceedings against him. Meanwhile, Mr. Harkat learned recently that his case will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada later this year in a test of the constitutionality of the process—already ruled unconstitutional twice by the courts, and tweaked by the Harper government in early 2008 to make cosmetic changes that did not fundamentally alter the unjust nature of the certificate regime. Supporters can find updates at www.supportmahjoub.org, www.justiceforharkat.com, and www.justiceforjaballah.org. Sign a statement against security certificates at www.harkatstatement.com.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Labour and the struggle for abortion rights

WE RECENTLY celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Supreme Court's historic Morgentaler Decision.

A broad-based movement overturned the federal abortion law and allowed for the establishment of free-standing clinics providing medically insured abortions. The anniversary was noted with events across the country—from Vancouver to Prince Edward Island. The largest took place in Toronto, which had been the heart of the struggle, with a packed auditorium at the University of Toronto.

Veterans of the struggle spoke of the campaign that had overturned the law and young activists outlined the barriers that women are still facing. The audience was made up of trade unionists, women's advocates, students, anti-racist activists and many others who wanted to mark the victory. Quite a few had taken part in the struggle, others had not even been born yet, but all were committed to maintaining the gains women have made and continuing the struggle for reproductive justice.

The president of the Canadian Auto Workers attended as well as leaders from the United Steelworkers, unions that both played a role in the fight for women's reproductive rights. The importance of labour support can not be underestimated and is well worth commenting on.

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics was formed after a mass meeting showed strong support for challenging the law and mounting a campaign for reproductive rights. One of the first organizations that activists sought support from was the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL). A convention was taking place in November of 1982 and a strategy was developed to get labour on board. A floor debate took place and delegates lined up at the mics, overwhelmingly voting for a resolution committing the OFL to the struggle.

This was a major

breakthrough and led to individual unions following suit. Because the struggle was framed in the context of what a woman requires to have true choices in this society—the right to birth control in her own language and community, the right to childcare, a decent job, the right to live openly no matter her sexuality, to be free from forced sterilization and to have full access to free abortion—it garnered strong support.

When Dr. Morgentaler and the other doctors were on trial, the OFL held a large demonstration at the court house showing that the labour movement supported the campaign. Members attended demonstrations, worked as escorts for patients facing anti-choice harassment and defended the clinic when “Operation Rescue” attempted to shut it down with human blockades.

The strong support from the trade union movement showed that working people were in support of women's reproductive freedom. Unions stated that for a working woman to be equal in this society she needed the democratic right to control her own body as well as access to the services that are required to make this a reality. She also needs the support necessary to allow her to have the children she chooses to have. This was part and parcel of the campaign and was critical to its success.

Women and men fought for this important right. We are seeing attempts to roll back gains through Conservative private members' bills and motions in Ottawa, and threats to defund abortion in Ontario. There is still a complete lack of abortion access in Prince Edward Island and the government of New Brunswick refuses to pay for clinic abortions. The fight for reproductive justice continues. The labour movement is still one of its strongest supporters and the lessons learned from the grassroots campaign to overturn the federal law have relevance for us today.

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Socialist Worker

Egypt: the year the masks fell

THE EGYPTIAN people's great revolution, which threw the dictator and his cronies into prison, is still aflame as it marks its second anniversary. It has already toppled several failed governments, and forced the Military Council to quit after elections which brought Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood to power.

Their electoral success reflected the fact that the contest was with Ahmad Shafiq and the remnants of the old regime, as well as their deceptive claims of supporting the revolution's goals.

Less than a year later, the masks have fallen, and the true face of the Brotherhood's regime has appeared. They began their reign by honouring the killers of the Military Council, and made an alliance with the military to protect their new positions of power in return for allowing the military to retain its unaccountable economic empire.

The Brotherhood regime hurried to make peace with the businessmen who looted Egypt's wealth for years under Hosni Mubarak's regime. It threw itself into the arms of the IMF to implement the same programmes of privatization and put the country up for sale. This time Khairat al-Shater has replaced Ahmed Ezz and "Islamic bonds" are offered instead of Gamal Mubarak's bonds. There are investors from Qatar instead of Western investors, while the Brotherhood's militias take the place of the thugs of the National Democratic Party.

Both governments aimed to deprive millions of poor and low-income Egyptians of the



wealth of their country. The poor are being crushed by high prices and the disappearance of their rights to health-care, education, housing and work. Worse, they are being made to pay with their lives for the Muslim Brotherhood's failure. They meet their fate in fatal railway crashes, house collapses, capsized fishing boats and in the queues for bread, petrol and cooking gas.

Morsi's lies about justice for the martyrs have been exposed. He said avenging their blood was his responsibility, but this was nothing but an electoral slogan. Meanwhile the cleansing and restructuring of the Interior Ministry was ignored and it has re-

turned to its role—protecting the regime and oppressing its opponents.

The military still holds sway over the country. The people living in Qursaya Island whose lands have been occupied by the army are being referred to the military courts.

The government newspapers and media again have become mouthpieces for the glory of the regime and its achievements. The regime is attempting to restrict the judges, in a power struggle to ensure the loyalty of the Attorney General.

Meanwhile Brotherhood militias killed protesters at the Al-Ittihadiyya Presidential Palace.

Nor does the regime flinch from hurling accusations at the Copts, who are partners in the homeland and the revolution. Instead of boycotting Israeli goods, the government is intervening in negotiations with the Zionist enemy in order to develop the QIZ agreement. This is new evidence of its false talk about the Palestinian issue.

On the other hand, the past year has seen the continuation and radicalization of

the revolutionary spirit. We can see this in the reports of nearly 4,000 social protests, ranging from rallies to strikes to occupations and locking up managers.

Workers from more than 70 different sectors joined their voices in this cry against exploitation—from doctors to bus drivers to street vendors. The strike by the Cairo Metro workers, which partially succeeded in getting rid of their director, is proof of the decisive role which can be played by workers in the revolution. Workers in the Ankubab and Qoota Steel companies have

shown their ability to run their companies themselves. Their strikes are resisting the bosses' attempts to shut the companies down in an effort to avoid meeting workers' demands or repay their debts.

The Muslim Brotherhood is digging its own grave by following Mubarak's policies. But the absence of a revolutionary front capable of leading the revolution in the inevitable social battles to come is the real challenge. The leadership of the National Salvation Front made an error by including remnants of the old regime in its ranks. They are known for their social and political bias against the revolution, and the danger they pose is no less than that of the Brotherhood.

Therefore we call on the revolutionary youth in the Front to fight for the cleansing of its ranks. Participate with us and all the revolutionaries in building a genuine revolutionary front which can achieve the aims of the revolution—for bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity. Join the work in the factories, the streets, the neighbourhoods and the independent unions to prioritize the social interests of the millions of poor and low-income manual and office workers, peasants, and all those who work for a wage. They overthrew Mubarak and will topple any regime which stands in their way.

Glory to the martyrs and the injured! All power and wealth to the people!

This statement by Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists was translated and originally published in *Socialist Worker* (UK).

Mass labour demo at Liberal convention

by PAM JOHNSON

ONTARIO LIBERALS met at the historic Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto to choose a new leader.

Waves of angry public sector workers, including teachers, Ontario public service workers in OPSEU and education support workers in CUPE 4400, converged on the Gardens, confronting delegates and candidates about the Liberal attack on union rights.

On January 26, around 30,000 trade unionists and community activists marched through downtown Toronto and filled the street in front of the Gardens while delegates voted. This was the biggest demonstration in Ontario since the G20 protests in 2010.

The Rally for Rights and Democracy was organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour, with 125 buses coming from the across the province. The largest contingent was teachers, who came

from small and large communities with the same message: rejecting the attack on public services and jobs and Bill 115, which imposed contracts on teachers and took away their right to strike. The Liberals, in an attempt to undermine the protest, cynically repealed Bill 115 three days before the convention. But no one was fooled; the damage had been done.

Sandra Pupatello, an early favourite, lost the leadership race to McGuinty cabinet star Kathleen Wynne, who is now the first female Premier of Ontario and the first lesbian Premier of Canada.

Wynne is seen as a progressive candidate. She began her political career fighting education cuts during the Mike Harris era and has been associated with other progressive causes. But as a McGuinty cabinet minister she has been a staunch defender of the austerity agenda. One of her first statements was that she would not reopen contracts imposed

on teachers. In her first public statement on organized labour, she said, "I think there's not much patience for organized labour, period, public or private sector."

There is not likely to be an election soon; however, Wynne looks poised to coalesce the anti-Conservative vote because of a political vacuum created by the absent NDP. Ontario Conservative leader Tim Hudak has been loudly calling for union busting and gutting public spending. Wynne's victory is clearly the Liberals making a left tack in an attempt to find voters. Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horvath could not be bothered to show up at the January 26 protest, and the NDP's response to austerity and attacks on union rights has been muted.

On the day following Wynne's election, teachers' union leadership gushed that they had a productive first meeting and looked forward to good relations. The teach-

ers' unions had donated to four of the leadership candidate campaigns. But the actions of the teachers' union leadership does not square with the anger of the thousands of teachers who protested the Liberals' actions. Huge anger at the Liberals was directed more at Bill 115 and the way it snatched away union rights than the actual terms of the contract. Teachers' unions were not able to create a unified strategy; only the elementary teachers took serious action—striking before the bill's imposition.

The electoral arena looks bleak for workers who want to fight the austerity agenda, and a weak NDP means workers may be pushed back toward the left-tacking Liberals to fight off the Tory attack. But Chicago teachers who fought off a Democratic Mayor and a vacillating labour leadership showed that rank-and-file resistance could lead the way in a real fight for union rights.

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