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As they said in May 1968...



'Politics is in the streets'

On May 2, 2011 Stephen Harper bragged about winning a “strong, stable, national Conservative majority government” and that summer called for a Tory “hat-trick” in Ontario—adding a potential Tory provincial government on top of Rob Ford’s regime in Toronto. A year later, Harper is facing scandals on military spending and opposition to tar sands development, there’s a historic Quebec student strike, Rob Ford’s regime is in crisis, the vast majority of Ontarians want to tax the rich, and there are strikes breaking out from BC to Toronto.

People across Canada and Quebec have faced years of neo-liberal assaults, compounded by a severe austerity agenda that is seeing all levels of government attack

jobs and social services, and corporations impose layoffs and deep concessions. There is never-ending war and ecological destruction, with governments waging permanent war while the planet burns.

Anger at Harper’s austerity and the Liberals complicity, and inspiration from the Arab Spring and the Wisconsin occupation, led to a surge towards the NDP. While Harper consolidated a weakened corporate vote around the Tories, the big story from last year’s election was people voting for what they perceived to be an alternative to neoliberalism and war.

This opposition has continued to confront Harper in the streets—occupying Tory offices against OAS cuts and anti-refugee bills, rallying against Robocalls and tar sands, exposing scandals on Attawapiskat, spying and fighter jets. Workers are

starting to fight back—BC teachers, federal postal workers, Toronto library workers, Halifax bus drivers, and Steelworkers from Hamilton, London and Alma; workers have gone on wildcat strike in Edmonton hospitals and Air Canada airports. Students organized a pan-Canadian day of action against tuition fees, and Quebec students launched a historic strike which produced the largest demonstration in Canadian history.

Demonstrations, deputations and local organizing in Toronto have pushed back Rob Ford, and derailed Tim Hudak’s Tory election campaign. The Occupy movement coalesced the perception that “we are the 99%,” and that “the system’s not broken, it was built this way.”

All this happened outside the constraints of official “politics.” The federal NDP voted twice for war

on Libya and has yet to challenge the threats of sanctions and war on Syria and Iran; the new leader, ex-Liberal Thomas Mulcair, has been silent on striking Quebec students and Air Canada workers. In Ontario the NDP leadership has been more concerned about “making government work” than challenging austerity, despite the vast majority of people supporting taxes on the rich.

As the economic crisis deepens the chasm between what the system can deliver and what people and the planet need widens, people are starting to learn that the only way to challenge austerity, war and climate change is in workplaces, campuses and neighbourhoods.

As they said in May 1968 in France, when a student strike triggered a general strike that shook the foundations of capitalism: “politics is in the streets.”

Workers of the world



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Crown suffers partial defeat in Harkat case

by JESSICA SQUIRES

AFTER NEARLY ten years, Mohamed Harkat has won another partial victory from the crown in his security certificate case. While the Federal Court of Appeal (FCA) did not rule in favour of his appeal of the constitutionality of the Security Certificate process, it did rule that he was treated unfairly and that the judge made his ruling that the security certificate on Harkat was reasonable based on faulty information.

Security certificates result in non-citizens of Canada being detained for indefinite periods of time without charge, and without access to information used against them to allege a possible association with terrorist groups based on hearsay and intelligence whose source is very doubtful.

The court has ruled that the reasonableness of Harkat’s certificate, upheld in a Federal Court in December 2010, is set aside, and that a new hearing must be held to make its decision without taking into account the faulty material.

That material included summaries only of original transcripts of telephone calls supposedly recording conversations with Harkat. But CSIS destroyed the original tapes and transcripts, so there is no way of knowing what other, possibly exonerating, information might have been contained within them.

The FCA also ruled that the judge in the case, Justice Simon Noël, erred in creating a “class privilege” to protect human sources of information used against Harkat. That ruling may open the door to cross-examination of human sources, at least behind closed doors during secret proceedings.

The ruling is another blow against the feds’ security certificate process after two other security certificates were quashed in 2009, for Hassan Almrei of Toronto and Adil Charkaoui of Montreal, and after news last week that the notorious “Guantanamo North” prison was closed late last year in Kingston. And in late April Mohammed Mahjoub asked a court to throw out his certificate after crown counsel inappropriately took privileged materials belonging to Mr. Mahjoub and his lawyers, viewed and copied them and mixed them with their own.

Enough is enough. Abolish the security certificate process.



OPSEU solidarity group shows importance of rank-and-file organizing

A NEW rank-and-file body, OPSEU Solidarity group, was organized to call for OPSEU (Ontario Public Service Employees Union) to remain affiliated in good standing with the OFL (Ontario Federation of Labour). The group formed after the OPSEU executive board, without consulting the membership, stopped paying dues in 2011 and launched a smear campaign against OFL

president Sid Ryan.

To counter a resolution by the executive board to formally “disengage,” a resolution supporting continued affiliation was passed in twelve locals, two area councils (Toronto and London) and the Women’s Committee, and was sent to OPSEU convention held in Toronto in April.

Long-time activists could not remember a time when any rank-

and-file initiative had received such widespread support.

Solidarity group members from Toronto, London and Windsor ran a campaign at convention with “Solidarity” stickers and a leaflet titled “OPSEU belongs in the OFL” calling for labour solidarity in the face of austerity attacks. The board’s motion to disengage did not make it to a vote.

The Solidarity group also pro-

moted the OFL rally which occurred on the final day of convention (April 21) and organized buses—provided by Steelworkers and community group, ACORN—to take delegates directly from convention to the rally. Rank-and-filers organizing on their own have often been the key to creating the pressure to push labour leaders reluctant to fight. It is also the training ground for a new activist leadership.



Harper and First Nations: a tale of two panels

by VALERIE LANNON

April 13-15 in Victoria BC saw two amazing events in support of First Nations’ rights. One would have been supported, at least rhetorically, by Stephen Harper, the other not so much.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (www.trc.ca), holding hearings into residential schools, made its stop in Victoria April 13-14. Thousands of people attended. The strength and courage of survivors who told their

stories were moving and inspiring.

These hearings were demanded by First Nations for many years and are therefore, long overdue. The Commission’s report will not be available until 2013, while hearings and further research continue.

The Commission is funded by the federal government and it will be interesting to see how Harper responds to the Commission’s recommendations next year. The Harper government has been better

than the federal Liberals in terms of symbolic gestures at least, with actions that the Liberals refused to undertake, such as a formal apology for residential schools and signing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

But in terms of substantive support for First Nations, the record is dismal and Harper would not have been so thrilled with the April 15 event in Victoria: a rally of nearly 1,000 people to oppose the Enbridge Northern Gateway

pipeline.

First Nations elders headed the march. Post-rally workshops discussed strategies for fighting the colonialism embodied in Enbridge’s plans to endanger the lands and waters used by 50 First Nations along the pipeline route and the ocean passageways that would be used by super-tankers.

If Harper thinks he can placate First Nations with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he is dead wrong.

A time for solidarity: support the Haudenosaunee in Caledonia

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN

SIX YEARS have passed since the reclamation project began in Caledonia, and the government has yet to honour the treaty and land rights of the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

In 2006 the Haudenosaunee began the reclamation by occupying the land called Kanonhstaton (“the Protected Place”), also known as Douglas Creek Estates. They set up barricades and burned the injunctions served to them to vacate the site. The OPP raided, and were pushed back by First Nations and allied groups, including community members. Several people were arrested and charged.

The Haudenosaunee claim legal ownership of this land under the Haldimand Proclamation of 1784, in which the First Nation was allotted a section of land that includes Kanonhstaton. The land was never sold, but the

Canadian government does not respect that this proclamation is a living document and has not honoured the treaty.

The tension in Caledonia has been intensifying. The mayor and council of Haldimand county are vocal opponents to the First Nations community, and a part of the broader community in Caledonia is frustrated by the ways that the reclamation has impacted their property value and prevented commercial and industrial development.

Anti-racist racists

A group of non-native community members calling themselves Canadian Advocates for Charter Equality (CANACE) have launched a campaign in opposition to the reclamation project, and what they call “native lawlessness” and “land claim terrorism.” Another group, called the Caledonia Victims Project works with CANACE. Together they are propagandizing against what they call “reverse racism” and

mixing it with language from the 1960s civil rights movement, proclaiming their work to be part of Dr. Martin Luther King’s legacy.

In 2009, CANACE established the “Caledonia Militia.” In 2010 they organized an “anti-racist” rally on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to bring attention to what they call “race-based policing” that discriminates against white people. Recently, a 17-year-old Caledonia resident, in an attempted suicide attack, drove his car full speed into one of the main houses on the reclamation site.

The source of all this tension is the unwillingness of the Canadian government and the British crown to address historic injustices and honour the agreements they made.

April 28: walk for peace, respect and friendship

A greeting has been circulated from the Land Protectors of Kanonhstaton to native and non-native

allies for a walk to celebrate the principles of peace, respect and friendship on April 28. The march and rally will be focussed on building relationships between native and non-native communities, and celebrating how the reclamation project has brought people together and been an opportunity to teach people about treaties and land claim issues.

We must stand in solidarity with the Haudenosaunee by building stronger ties with the First Nations community—through learning about their struggle and raising awareness, and by joining their long standing resistance against colonialism.

The invitation from Land Protectors of Kanonhstaton says “whether native or non-native, all of us residing within Canada are treaty people.

We have both a moral and a legal imperative to uphold the nation-to-nation agreements made on our behalf by the British Crown and Canadian government with indigenous peoples.”

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It remains unclear if the government will now agree to meet with all three student associations. Even if they do, the student groups will insist on debating tuition fees, which Charest has stated is off the table.

Also, in an unprecedented gesture of unity, FEUQ stated they were going to include delegates from CLASSE on their own delegation if the Minister persisted in excluding them.

Solidarity

Through this whole mobilization, Québec solidaire has been supporting the movement in several ways, including the distribution of 30,000 copies of a special newspaper, contingents at several demonstrations and statements by Amir Khadir and Françoise David supporting student demands and arguing that even free education would be an achievable goal. This has not gone unnoticed and could bring a whole new generation of activists into the party.

The union movement has also been active in supporting the students, with the cégep and university unions taking the lead for obvious reasons, but also with statements by leaders and a physical presence at some demos. The student strike is helping radicalize workers, and May Day will likely be the largest in years.

Charest seems determined to end this strike without making any significant concessions by denying the students their right to organize and take collective action. His condescending jokes at the Plan Nord summit on April 20th were a clear indication of his will to not only ignore the movement but to provoke it deliberately.

This approach is only fueling anger and could lead to further confrontations on the campuses and in the streets. An escalation of repression is precisely what caused the transformation of a student mobilization into a national workers strike in the case of France in 1968. This is what the Quebec spring could potentially look like.

But the success of this movement may depend on broader support for the students by workers and unions.

It remains to be seen if that support will be forthcoming. Meanwhile a more immediate concern is whether Charest will call an election, trying to capitalize on the polarization he has purposefully sewn among Quebec voters. If he does, he may be in for a rude awakening.

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Revolution and counter-revolution under the Syrian ‘peace plan’

by **JESSE MCLAREN**

DESPITE IMPERIAL attempts to hijack it or stop it, the revolution in Syria is continuing.

For more than 13 months the people of Syria have been rising up against the repressive and neoliberal regime of Bashar Al-Assad, as part of the Arab Spring. Despite a brutal crackdown that has killed thousands—including prolonged shelling of Homs—the revolution has spread across the country and caused splits in the army.

The dictatorship of Bashar Al-Assad has opened up Syria to Western corporations (like Canada’s SNC-Lavalin, which has a contract to build a pipeline taking Iraqi oil through Syria to the Mediterranean) and tortured victims of the “war on terror” (like Canada’s Maher Arar), but it has partially supported resist-

ance movements in the region. As a result, the West has long wanted “regime change” in Syria to impose a more compliant regime and to confront Iran.

Shaken by the Arab Spring, the West is trying to regain control by hijacking the revolution in Libya and now Syria—using Saudi Arabia to arm sections of the Free Syrian Army, trying to impose the “Syrian National Council” (made of pro-West exiles) as the leadership, and using the “Friends of Syria” group to push for war.

But the US establishment is divided. “Humanitarian intervention” in Libya avoided quagmires like in Afghanistan and Iraq and installed the pro-West National Transitional Council stacked with former Gaddafi figures, but without troops on the ground the

NTC is losing control. The oil-rich eastern province of Cyrenaica declared autonomy, while the military commander in Tripoli who helped overthrow Gaddafi is suing former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw for sending him to be tortured by Gaddafi in 2004.

Meanwhile, imperial rivals China and Russia (which has a naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus) have been supporting the Syrian regime and vetoing UN sanctions. As a result, the UN “peace plan” reflects the opposing imperial drives: it keeps Assad in power, pleasing Russia and China, but if it falls apart the West can use it as an excuse for war.

Revolution: the real peace plan

Within Syria, the “peace plan” is

inherently unstable. Revolutionary forces used the cease-fire to promote widespread rallies. The Local Coordinating Committees, the heart of the revolution over which no imperial powers have control, called for Friday rallies that spread to 771 neighbourhoods, towns and cities, including Aleppo and Damascus. In response, Assad broke the cease-fire with more shelling.

There can be no peace in Syria until the revolution overthrows the Assad regime, which will require following the Tunisian and Egyptian examples of combining mass demonstrations with mass strikes. The ongoing Egyptian revolution can shape these developments regionally, while internationally we must stop our own governments from hijacking the revolution with arms sales or “humanitarian intervention.”

Hunger striker exposes Western-backed Saudi regime

by **AHMED EL BASSIOUNY**

Mohammad Al-Bajadi, a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), has been on hunger strike since March 11 protesting against arbitrary arrests and human rights abuses in Saudi prisons.

Al-Bajadi, sentenced to five years in prison after an unfair trial, stopped drinking water on April 7, to expose the brutality of the Saudi regime that is backed by Western

allies.

ACPRA stated that Al-Bajadi had fainted many times, indicating that his health is deteriorating. On the other hand, Mansour Al-Turki, the Ministry of Interior Affairs’ spokesman denied Al-Bajadi’s deteriorating health and stated that he is “taking his meals regularly and is in a good health.”

In 2007 Al-Bajadi was detained in solidarity confinement for four months after calling international attention to political prisoners. On

March 21, 2011, in the middle of the Arab Spring, he was arrested by domestic intelligence agents in Qassim province for being involved in organizing a small group demonstration in the capital city, Riyadh. Al-Bajadi has been in detention since then.

According to ACPRA, Al-Bajadi was arrested for publicly revealing the truth about the alleged death of the Yemeni citizen Sultan Abdo Al-Duais by torture in Saudi prison. Judges prohibited Al-Bajadi’s

lawyers from attending his trial in court. The lawyers were not recognized by the court and were not allowed to talk to him.

According to the Saudi authorities, Al-Bajadi was found guilty for the possession of banned books, contesting the independence of the judiciary, harming the image of the state and calling on political detainees to protest. The sentence was announced after a secret trial, ignoring all the demands for a fair public trial.

Mass hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners

by **AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN**

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS’ Day on April 17 was marked with a mass hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, and rallies in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and refugee camps in Lebanon.

These actions highlighted the plight of 4,700 prisoners being held in Israeli jails, where the treatment they receive violates international law and

the Fourth Geneva Convention.

On Prisoners’ Day, 3,500 Palestinians in Israeli jails refused their meals and 1,600 of them began an open ended hunger strike, joining 10 others already engaged in the action, to protest their illegal detention and bring attention to Israel’s policy of administrative detention and human rights abuses.

Some other demands of the hunger strikers include ending solitary con-

finement, allowing families to visit the prisoners, cancelling the ban on prisoners from engaging in academic studies and reading newspapers, and improving medical care.

Khader Adnan was released on April 17 from administrative detention following a 66-day hunger strike. Recently, Hana’a Shalabi was released following a 43-day hunger strike. It is important to note that Shalabi was released to Gaza with

the stipulation that she may not return to her home in the West Bank for three years.

Palestinians and solidarity activists internationally also marked this day with rallies. The international community demonstrated solidarity with a “Flytilla.” Hundreds of Palestine solidarity activists attempted to fly to occupied Palestine to publicize Israel’s control of movement around the occupied Palestinian territories.

Jordanians fighting for real democracy

by **IAN BEECHING**

SINCE 2011, protests have shaken the foundation of the ruling monarchy of Jordan.

With unemployment rates officially at 12 per cent and estimated by some as high as 25 per cent, growing inflation, rising energy costs, and a water shortage, many Jordanians have come to the conclusion that this country’s monarchy and appointed ministers are incapable of ruling in the people’s interest. Thousands of protesters, in a country of only 6.5 million, have been demanding “social justice” and “Real elections.”

King Abdullah II has responded with \$125 million in subsidies for basic goods and fuel and increase to civil servant pay. However, attempts to address protesters core demands of democracy have been vague at best. In desperate attempts to calm the streets, the king fired his government in both February and October of 2011, promising to hold elections where the government is elected not appointed. But no timetable has been given and the strategy is not working.

This April, workers in the country’s largest electricity generation company began an open-ended strike for wage increases. Unthinkable a year ago, protests have been spreading to tribal areas, traditionally the strongholds of government support. On March 31, Jordanian police resorted to force, arresting and beating 30 protesters. With 13 protesters charged, no inquiry into ill treatment has been announced. The West has been silent about the violations, as Jordan is a good ally of the United States.

UAE: pro-reform activists in custody

by **ANDRA PETRUSCA**

ON APRIL 9, six United Arab Emirates citizens were detained in Abu Dhabi after refusing the authorities’ request to take on another nationality and amend their citizenship status.

The six activists had their citizenship revoked back in December 2011, after signing a petition for reform directed to the ruler of UAE earlier that year.

Advocating reform, the activists’ actions were considered an offence by the authorities, who subsequently stripped them of their UAE nationality based on political grounds.

Lawyer Mohammed Al-Roken stated that they are being held after they were summoned to the Interior Ministry in Abu Dhabi. They were told that as a result of their citizenship status being revoked, they are in the country illegally and must sign a statement requiring them to find new citizenship within two weeks. Refusing to sign this statement, all six were then taken to an Abu Dhabi detention facility for allegedly having criticized the country’s ruler, and campaigning for political reform.

Increasingly, arrests and threats plague human rights activists and bloggers. Nabeel Rajab, director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, said that the recent arbitrary arrests of these six activists are part of the UAE government’s policy for targeting human rights defenders.

Anti-imperialism and feminism

Feminism is principally about the oppression and emancipation of women. Debates about the state have continuously arisen within feminist circles, similar to those in the civil rights movement or movements for national liberation. Socialists act as “tribune of the oppressed”—of all the oppressed—but do not shy away from criticism of liberal or bourgeois interests that threaten to divert the emancipatory impulse of struggles from below.

In addressing racism and imperialism, debates within feminism have been particularly intense.

A “feminism” that serves only to reinforce racially divisive or imperialist class structures ultimately will fail to emancipate women. But it will do more than this. It actually strengthens precisely the oppressive structures that it claims to challenge, providing a “progressive” gloss in the process.

Afghanistan

A particular wing of feminism in countries in the global north has recurrently identified with state projects of capitalism and empire. The US-led war on Afghanistan, for example, was welcomed by Laura Bush, wife of then US President George W. Bush. As Lindsay German notes in *Material Girls* (2007), though the First Lady was “not known to have spoken for women’s liberation before,” now she “made a plea in support of the war being waged by her husband in Afghanistan, on the grounds that it would help the women and children there.”

In the UK, the pro-war Labour Party administration similarly invoked feminist rhetoric to justify imperialist slaughter in Afghanistan. Cherie Blair, wife of Prime Minister Tony Blair, publicly offered to lend support to the war effort, in apparent defense of oppressed girls and women.

In 2007, then Governor General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean, travelled to occupied Afghanistan on International Women’s Day (March 8). She announced in a series of carefully staged media performances that Canada’s military intervention was making great “progress” for oppressed Afghani women.

The capacity of violent ruling classes to enlist the active support of a particular strand of feminism to their imperial projects has a long history. Hester Eisenstein carefully describes this process in her 2009 study, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women’s Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World*.

“Feminism in the service of empire is not a new phenomenon. Part of the arsenal of the European colonial regimes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the use of ‘colonial feminism’... This was a doctrine devised to bolster the narrative of the legitimacy of domination by colonial regimes, the ‘White Man’s burden’ of Rudyard Kipling’s poetry.”

The constructed ideology of empire projects the advance of women’s rights with “democracy” and “modernization.” This is absurd.

Not only does this claim minimize the continued oppression of women in the global north, it also dismisses the mass struggles from below that have wrenched reforms for women’s rights from reluctant “democratic” governments.

And claims that women’s rights are won through the raining down of bombs on homes, schools and villages are blatant hypocrisy.

Voices

Advocates of this type of reactionary feminism assert to represent all women’s interests. But to reduce feminism to its right wing dismisses the voices of masses of black, third world and indigenous women who have challenged imperialism, not least in the post 9/11 period. Such a reduction also neglects the role of socialist feminists, in the global north and south, who participated in the movement against war and racism that responded to the global “war on terror.”

West Indian feminist scholar and activist Peggy Antrobus, for example, wrote *The Global Women’s Movement* (2004) specifically as an appeal to challenge the imperialist war on Iraq.

Sunera Thobani, former leader of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada, addressed an audience weeks after the 9/11 attacks. Her speech at the Elizabeth Fry Society in Ottawa, in October 2001, was later published as an article titled “War Frenzy” (published in *Meridians*, 2002, and *Marxism*, 2003). The speech proved to be a formative event in the anti-war movement in Canada.

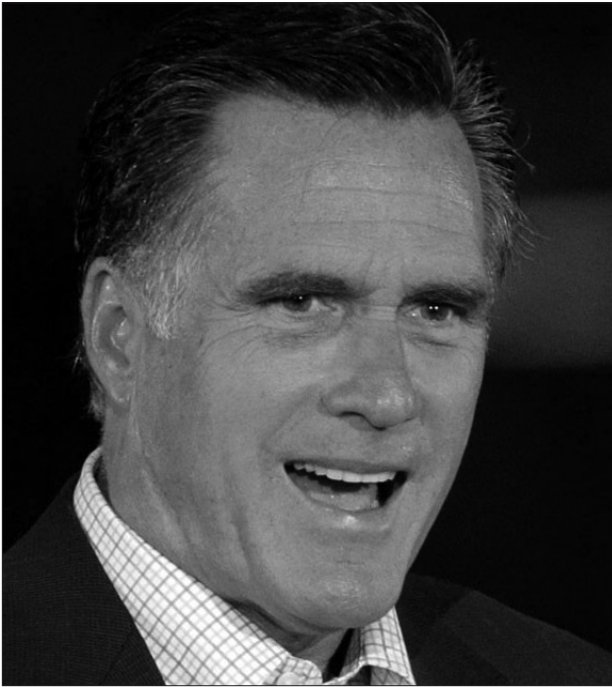
“In the aftermath of the terrible attacks of September 11, I argued that the U.S. response of launching ‘America’s new war’ would increase violence against women. I situated the current crisis within the continuity of North/South relations, rooted in colonialism and imperialism. I criticized American foreign policy, as well as President Bush’s racialized construction of the American nation. Finally, I spoke of the need for solidarity with Afghan women’s organizations as well as the urgent necessity for the women’s movement in Canada to oppose the war.” Thobani was vilified in the media and accused of “hate mongering.” At one point, the RCMP alleged Thobani’s speech was evidence of committing a “hate crime” against the United States.

But her only “crime” was to explain very clearly the nature of the US “war on terror,” and to call for an anti-racist, feminist and anti-imperialist response.

A movement in defense of Thobani’s right to freedom of speech ultimately reversed the tide. And the network that developed across Canada was one of the first expressions of a new movement against Canada’s participation in the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan.

Feminism clearly has an anti-imperialist wing that cannot be submerged, in theory or in practice, to the elite interests of the ruling classes whose interests are threatened by mass resistance.

INTERNATIONAL



US presidential candidates in fealty to the tax-dodging 1%

by ALLAN WOOD

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS in the United States are a quadrennial farce that would qualify as great absurdist theatre if not for the fact that the political theatre destroys so many lives.

All of the candidates—and President Barack Obama—feign at least some interest in the working class while their policies and occasional public gaffes reveal their true feelings and agenda: strengthening corporate rule of the country, stealing money out of the ever-shrinking wallets of working people to give to the 1% in the form of tax breaks, committing war crimes against several Middle East nations while stoking a fear of terrorism among their own people, and continuing their crusade to crush the working class through decreased wages and austerity cuts to essential social programs.

Obama and Mitt Romney, the likely Republican nominee for President, are proud members of the 1%. Both men attained their positions of political power by catering to the 1% and everything they do is (and will be) in fealty to the 1%.

But while Romney very clearly represents his own class interests (his net worth is approximately \$250 million) it’s less obvious that Obama does the same. He was elected on a groundswell of opposition to war, racism and poverty, but has demonstrated the unshakable loyalty of the Democrats to corporate America.

Obama has been wildly successful at continuing and expanding the inhumane policies of George W. Bush. A partial list of his betrayals and crimes include supporting \$23 trillion in bank and corporate bailouts, extending tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, instituting the most aggressive policy against whistleblowers in US history, beginning four additional wars of aggression against Pakistan, Yemen, Libya and Iran, continuing the US policy of torture and

illegal domestic surveillance, and authorizing the indefinite imprisonment of terrorism suspects even after they are acquitted.

Economic ‘recovery’

Obama has touted an economic “recovery” but steadfastly refuses to note who is benefiting. According to a recent analysis of tax returns, the 1% pocketed 93 per cent of the economic gains in 2010, and 37 per cent of those gains went to the top one-tenth of the 1%. No one below the richest ten per cent saw any gain at all; instead, most of the bottom 90 per cent have lost ground.

Citizens for Tax Justice reported recently that more than two dozen major corporations—including General Electric, Boeing, Mattel, and Verizon—paid no federal taxes between 2008 and 2011. Five corporations—AT&T, Boeing, Citigroup, Duke Energy and Ford—reported a total of more than \$20 billion of pre-tax income in 2011, yet paid absolutely nothing in taxes. In fact, they claimed refunds of more than \$1.3 billion, thanks to generous policies supported by both Republicans and Democrats.

Over the last decade, General Electric paid an effective tax rate of only 2.3 per cent on more than \$81 billion of income. Boeing’s tax rate over the same period was -7.8 per cent (a negative tax rate).

In 2011, US corporations paid an effective tax rate of just 12.1 per cent, the lowest level in forty years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Sixty years ago, during the Eisenhower administration, corporations paid 32 per cent of the federal government’s tax receipts; in 2011, they paid 9 per cent.

Meanwhile, as the November presidential election nears, Republicans are attempting to suppress voter turnout by any means necessary. At least 33 states have introduced voter ID laws this year, and it’s no secret what these anti-democracy bills are designed to do. In New Hampshire, the Republican House

speaker admitted the law would make it harder for “liberal” students to cast ballots. The Democratic governor of New Hampshire vetoed the bill.

Boycotts have been called against corporations that support these laws—and they are working. Coca-Cola pulled its support for one vote-suppression group only five hours after a possible boycott was announced. Additional pressure from watchdog groups, civil rights organizations, and thousands of concerned citizens has led the American Legislative Exchange Council(ALEC) to disband its task force responsible for pushing the Voter ID laws. Undeterred, the ALEC is now working to limit the ability of citizens to petition for referendums and constitutional changes in favour of workers, the environment, and public education.

Both parties in the US are bereft of ideas when it comes to addressing what working people truly need and they have no desire to come up with any. Indeed, they are being pushed by their corporate masters in the opposite direction. Only replacing the capitalist system through mass movements of working class people can lead to meaningful and necessary changes being made within society. Movements such as Occupy Wall Street, which was inspired by both the Arab Spring and the Wisconsin uprising, have revitalized broader movements against war, climate chaos, racism and attacks on workers.

With the Occupy movement gaining strength, it is no surprise that Obama recently announced that the upcoming G8 conference (May 18-19) would be moved from Chicago to Camp David, the private presidential compound located about 100 kilometres north of Washington.

No reason was given for the move, but the change in venue means the G8 delegates will be hidden away from the tens of thousands of protesters expected in Chicago.

Iran: nuclear talks resume, but US threats remain

by NIAZ SALIMI

AFTER 13 months of delay, the “Iran Six” or “P5+1”—the United States, China, Great Britain, Russia, France and Germany—resumed talks with Iran over its “nuclear weapon ambitions” on April 14 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Considering the history between the US and the Islamic regime in Iran, in addition to the recent increasing tensions over the sanctions and threats of military intervention, the mere fact that this talk took place and a follow up was planned for Baghdad in late May is a good sign.

The optimism stems from compromises from both sides. The first progress was that the Security Council did not insist

on enforcing United Nations resolutions to bring Iran’s uranium enrichment to a complete stop or to hand over their 20 per cent enriched uranium. In addition, the US also agreed that Iran’s nuclear issue will be resolved within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which means Iran has the right to enrich uranium on its soil under the International Atomic Energy Agency’s inspection.

The other development was the change in Iran’s approach. In the last meeting, Iranian chief negotiator Saeed Jalili’s position used rhetoric without offering a sustainable proposal, while in the April 14 meeting he focused on real issues.

Despite the cautious optimism, imperial threats could derail the talks; as hard-

line Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, “I think Iran should take immediate steps: first stop all enrichment, take out all the enriched material and dismantle the nuclear facility in Qom. I believe that the world’s greatest practitioner of terrorism must not have the opportunity to develop atomic bombs.”

This is pure hypocrisy coming from a nuclear-armed Apartheid state that terrorizes the Palestinians, and the great powers are not making the same demands on Israel as they are on Iran.

In addition, it’s not clear whether the West will halt its threats of sanctions and war against Iran as these negotiations proceed. Continued sanctions could undermine negotiations, which could then be used as a pretext for war.

The politics of social media

With talk of “Twitter revolutions” and “hacktivism,” **Chris Bruno** *takes a look at the impact and influence of social media on how people are fighting back around the world.*

Now that 985 million people use Facebook and Twitter, having a Facebook account has become almost as ubiquitous as having a phone number. Social media has entered our social lives and become indispensable. With mainstream media outlets using phrases like “the Twitter revolution” to describe the Arab Spring, social media has entered our political lives as well.

Despite the inaccuracy of such phrases—implying that a website was the cause for an international uprising—the general message, that social media plays an important and necessary role in social change, deserves attention.

Debates

Among the left today, we will often see two deeply polarized attitudes to social media and internet activism, often divided along generational lines.

The first is the dismissal of social media: that it is but a fad and shouldn’t be taken seriously. The idea of “harnessing the power of the internet” for political ends is seen as wasting time and effort. Instead we should focus on tried-and-true outreach and organizing methods.

The second is the heralding of Twitter as a “messiah,” or more generally, the idea that social media, by its collaborative, democratic, and anarchic nature, will inevitably produce social change. The use and abuse of social media then becomes the most important thing in the world. Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring are cited as the proof of this strategy’s success.

Both of these views (however exaggerated) are equally dangerous because they assume internet activism plays an antagonistic role with regards to traditional “on the ground” activism. It assumes that we can only do one or the other.

Today, one cannot exist without the other. While long time activists may not see the merit in this new form of organizing, arguing that we managed to do “just fine” before this fad, they miss the point. Just as an online chat supplements but cannot replace a face-to-face meeting, a Twitter post can add to, but can’t replace, a protest.

Occupy Wall Street

Let us take Occupy Wall Street (OWS) as our case study. Could the Occupy movement have been as successful as it was (or still is) without the use of social media? Without the use of Facebook as a forum for discussions or without online networks of activists? Or without Twitter as an organizing tool and a source of grassroots reporting? Would it even have made a blip on the mainstream media’s radar without our viral YouTube videos of police brutality? Would anyone have cared about the movement if “Brooklyn bridge” and “Occupy Wall Street” had not made the trending topics on Twitter? No—not in 2011.

But could it also have been as



successful as it was without the constant outreach and agitation in every major city in North America, without especially the massive support from labour unions and religious organizations, without the posters and leaflets that covered every square centimeter of our cities for months? Or without the general assemblies—the flesh and blood examples of direct democracy and consensus decision-making taking place in our downtown squares? Most certainly not.

And furthermore, the Occupy movement did not just spring up out of nowhere. It started out as a simple web page and call-out put forth by Adbusters in the summer of 2011, which inspired months of planning, organizing, and collaboration—all in the context of the Arab Spring and the Wisconsin occupation. General Assemblies met months before the day the occupation officially began.

In a few weeks, the occupation of Wall Street grew from a few dozen earnest activists willing to spend the night, to a few thousand participating in daily demonstrations and occupying a park indefinitely. Until labour unions got involved after week two, the mainstream media paid no attention. And that’s just in New York City.

Occupy Oakland only received widespread attention after they were able to mobilize more than 20,000 people for the November 2 general strike and shut down the port of Oakland. A feat they were only able to accomplish by acting on public outrage at the Oakland Police Department’s teargassing of occupiers, and by collaborating with community organizations and local labour unions representing the workers at the heart of

the struggle.

We can see through these, and other recent struggles, the importance of the strategic use of social media along with traditional tactics.

With the use of Twitter we were able to quickly—often within minutes—mobilize for urgent actions (as in the November 15 attempted eviction of OWS). When the mainstream media didn’t feel the need to provide coverage of the movement, and when the police refused to allow the press to report on their abuses of power, we were there with our phones to tweet it to the world.

Contradictions

The importance of social media—to distinguish it from the traditional media channels—is that it is able to bypass the institutional barriers inherent in the old forms of dissemination. Now, everyone is a reporter. The paper you work for is your blog or your Twitter feed. Now your news isn’t just what the *New York Times* or CBC decided to cover—for we have the likes of Facebook and Reddit.

We can’t ignore that the websites and technologies we now know and love are the properties of massive corporations whose interests lie in private profit and not social change; we understand that the 1% own, control, and use them for their own means.

The illusions of social media are that it is built up and sustained by its community while its financial backers simply maintain the servers, that it is our job to do the work, that we collectively take the role of entertaining and informing ourselves. However, ultimately the control rests with the businesses that own social

media. They can shut down individual accounts or delete postings, and they could shut down their whole service if the interests of the 1% were in immediate danger. That’s exactly what happened in the early days of the Egyptian revolution, when the telecommunications companies shut down the service, yet the so-called “Twitter revolution” continued through outreach in workplaces, mosques and neighbourhoods. The institution of social media, then, is both a stroke of financial genius and an experiment in anarchism, insofar as we are allowed such an expression under our benevolent (capitalist) dictators.

Social media added more democracy to the movement. With multiple easy ways for getting involved, and with a movement that used the technology available to them to its fullest, they were able to receive praise and criticism from anyone and everyone. You could find out about the movement without ever going to the park, but the tens of thousands who joined Occupy in parks and streets across North America were the ones who changed history. The internet made Occupy accessible to all.

As a supplement to, not a substitute for, old tactics, social media plays an important role. It has the ability to reach those who have neither the time nor desire to participate in the existing political infrastructure thus far. It provides another effective way to organize and mobilize for our actions, and it provides a truly alternative media—one that is organically created by the masses and gives us a more complete picture of what’s going on beyond our doorsteps.

Could the Occupy movement have been successful without the use of social media?

Rumbles of resistance across Canada

by **KATIE LEONARD**

AS THE austerity measures being imposed on workers become increasingly incisive, working people are fighting back all across Canada.

Despite uncertain outcomes, workers are willing to engage in long struggles with employers in hopes of keeping good jobs and pensions.

In Sudbury, workers at Vale Inco remained on strike from July 2009 to July 2010. ECP workers at the Brantford, Ontario plant went on strike in August of 2008, after the company demanded a cut to wages and benefits of 25 per cent. The strike continued until March 2011, when the company decided to close the plant down. Despite the less than ideal outcome, workers at ECP have shown their willingness to fight for as long as necessary for good jobs.

Today, locked out workers at a Rio Tinto plant in Alma, Quebec are refusing a contract which would allow jobs to be contracted out at half the pay. Since the lockout began on January 1, they have received solidarity from workers around the world. Workers

at a Rio Tinto plant in Kitimat, BC have pledged \$60,000 per month until their own contract comes up for negotiation in July, and on March 31 a global day of solidarity drew approximately 8,000 people from across Quebec and as far away as South Africa and Australia.

The fightback is not just to protect jobs, but also to save much needed services.

Here workers have been able to garner public support. Library workers in Toronto began a public campaign to support library services and workers last fall that translated into a short, successful strike with much public support.

Teachers in British Columbia successfully equated the attack on their unions with an attack on public education.

After nearly a year without a contract, teachers staged a three-day walk out in early March with high levels of public support. Their struggle is ongoing.

In other places, workers resistance is taking decidedly radical forms. Service workers at Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton walked off the job in February of

this year, and were quickly joined by workers at University of Alberta Hospital and the Northeast Community Health Centre, who have been without a contract since last spring. The wildcat strike garnered media attention and public sympathy for the union, and resulted in a back-to-work protocol and no action taken against strikers.

But Edmonton is not the only place where radical tactics led to positive results. A spontaneous wildcat strike of Air Canada workers disrupted flights for a day at Pearson Airport in Toronto, in response to the suspension of three workers who had sarcastically applauded Labour Minister Lisa Raitt as she walked through the airport. They were joined by workers in Montreal, Quebec City, and Vancouver. The strike lasted thirteen hours and by the end, no disciplinary action was taken against striking workers.

Although these struggles are not always easy, and the outcomes are not guaranteed, workers all over Canada have shown that they are willing to stand up and fight for good jobs and services, not just for themselves, but for the next generation as well.

United against oppression

by **YUSUR AL BAHRANI**

MOHAMED BOUAZIZI set himself on fire in front of a local municipal office in the central town of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia.

After a series of protests all over Tunisia in December 2010, dictator Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government welcomed him, not realizing that the Tunisian revolution would spread to other Arab countries as well, including Saudi Arabia. The end of Ben Ali's rule inspired Arabs, and later people around the world, to rise against oppression, repression, dictatorship and even austerity.

The "Jasmine Revolution" was not the only force that ousted Ben Ali: behind the scene workers, students, and the unemployed have been protesting and going on strikes for the past few years.

In 2008, unemployment triggered a huge protest in the mining area of Gafsa where unemployment was 30 per cent. Workers and students in the area were mobilized and found their way to the streets demanding an end to

the unemployment problem and for better education and health services. Teachers joined the protests too and a mass worker strike happened in the area. Ben Ali's forces brutally attacked protesters and workers. Resistance didn't end, but went underground. Two years later, workers, students and unemployed youths united together demanding "the fall of the regime." When the Tunisian trade union federation called a general strike, Ben Ali was ousted.

Inspired by the Tunisian revolution, Egyptians gathered in Tahrir demanding the fall of the regime. On February 9 mass strikes spread across the country including in Suez, and on February 11 Mubarak resigned to hand power to the Egyptian army.

Similarly, Egyptians have been building for their revolution during successive years of strikes and protests. Waves of workers' strikes weakened the regime. For instance, workers in Mahalla have gone on strike several times since 2007, encouraging others. In January 2009, 900 workers in Nile Cotton Factory in

Mahalla went on strike. Thousands of pharmacists, doctors, nurses, teachers, students, railway workers, etc. all joined the strikes in different Egyptian cities. Some of these strikes led to independent trade unions, which have continued to emerge since the fall of Mubarak.

While protesters gathered in Tahrir in January 2011, others have been going on mass strikes in several work sectors including factories. After more than a year since the revolution began, Egyptians are still going on strike and protesting for better economic conditions, democracy and an end to the existing military rule.

In other Arab countries like Bahrain and Jordan, workers, students and unemployed graduates have been protesting against deteriorating economic conditions, dictatorship and oppression. Many workers and students were dismissed from work and universities, while others have been arrested and brutally tortured. Despite the crackdown, workers and students remain united against oppressive regimes.



WORKERS of the WORLD

Across the world, the ruling class is trying to bail out a failing economic system on the backs of the rest of us but people are fighting back. Socialist Worker looks at the global state of resistance.



Europe: crisis, austerity and rebellion

by **JOHN BELL**

THE EUROPEAN economic zone never recovered from the disastrous slump of 2008. Since then it has been an endless round of governments scrambling to slash workers' wages and social services in order to transfer wealth to tottering banks.

But across the continent workers, students and the growing army of the unemployed are demonstrating, striking and repeating in every language: "We won't pay for your crisis."

Electoral politics are in turmoil. Socialist (in name only) governments in Greece and Spain are booted out for imposing austerity measures.

In a recent by-election, British fire-brand George Galloway humiliated both Tory and Labour candidates by running on a strong anti-cuts, anti-war platform. And in France, far-left candidates stand to make historic gains in elections that will certainly see Sarkozy's conservative government thrown out.

Early in April a Greek pensioner committed suicide in Athens' main square, saying he would rather die than sift through garbage for food. He also

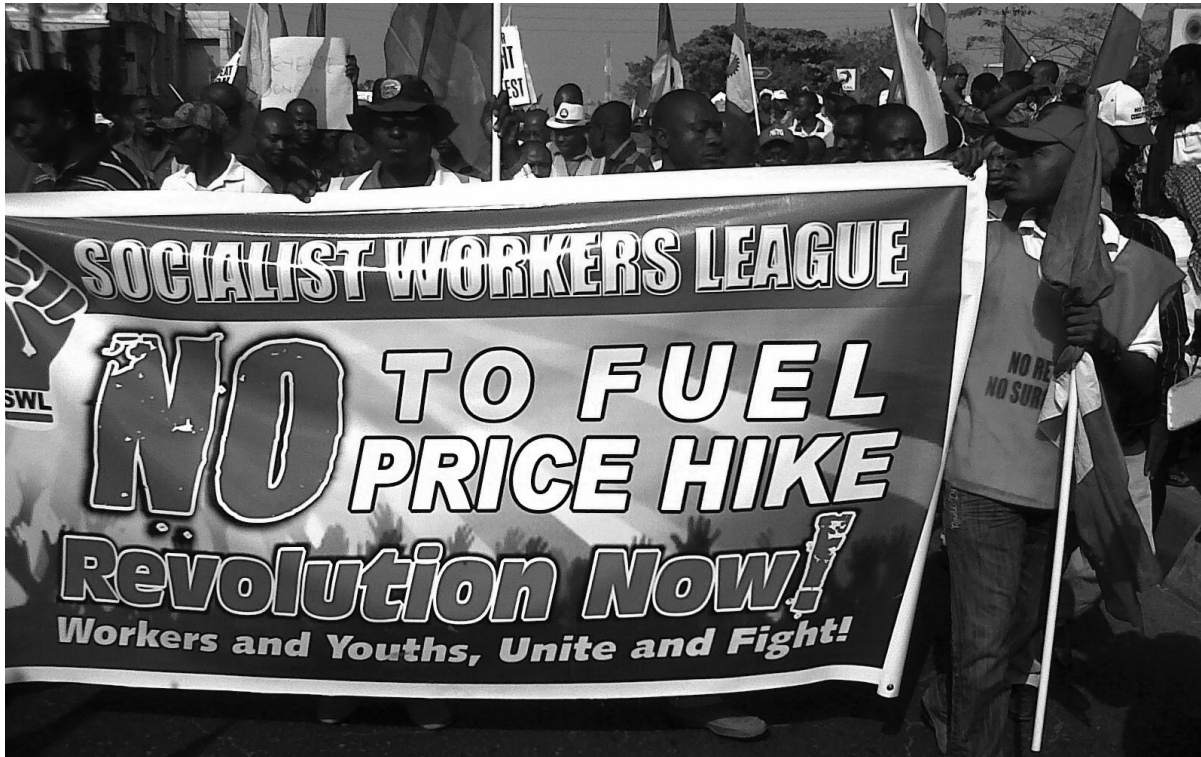
called on young people to rise up in revolt.

Panos Garganas is editor of *Workers Solidarity*, *Socialist Worker's* sister paper in Greece. He spoke about how grinding austerity was ripping through the lives of pensioners.

"Pensions have been cut by around a quarter since the crisis first hit in 2008," he said. "And the government has pledged to cut pensions further this summer. This is what causes the levels of desperation that have led to this latest suicide."

All is not despair. Workers at Eleftherotyopia, once Greece's second biggest selling newspaper, took over production after months of not being paid. They turned it into a voice of the revolt, selling it directly to ordinary people at big public events. Similarly, workers occupied and ran AlterTV after bosses stopped paying them. They turned the station into a voice for all workers' struggles. When bosses cut the power, electrical workers came in and hooked them up again.

In Italy, the unelected Monti government has imposed increased sales taxes and health care user fees in an effort



Sub-Saharan Africa: the year of revolt

by **PETER HOGARTH**

2011 WILL be remembered as a historic year of revolt, with no signs of the global resistance abating in 2012. However, when talking about the incredible fightbacks that have rocked the world, seldom does that talk turn to sub-Saharan Africa; often it seems like resistance to austerity and repression stop in North Africa.

This is hardly the case and there are a number of extremely important fights that have been raging across Africa. These aren't the armed, guerilla combat of impoverished child soldiers that Kony 2012 would promulgate. Rather, these are clashes of the African urban working class against their bosses and the state. The influence of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt go much farther than the Arab world and Occupy Wall Street.

Roughly a year ago, Botswana was shut down by its first-ever mass public sector strike. More than 90,000 government workers brought the country to a standstill for ten days. After only winning the legal right to strike a year prior, the Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions—composed of government-employed doctors, nurses, cleaners, teachers and cooks—called the strike demanding a 16 per cent wage increase. The workers had been without a raise since 2008. This strike could be seen in a larger context, as the austerity and privatization that

fuelled this struggle came from the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who reduced the size of the public sector and the public sector wages. The action featured mass solidarity strikes by secondary school students and clashes with the police.

2011 also saw demonstrators in Senegal force the president to retreat from a planned constitutional change that would have allowed him to stay in office for another term. In Burkina Faso, student protests against the police murder of a student turned into mass demonstrations that shook the government, including a revolt by presidential guards who had not been paid for months.

Uganda and Swaziland both saw anti-government protests. Two hundred thousand struck in South Africa and students demonstrated against poverty and inflation at the University of Kassaia in Sudan.

Revolt continues

2012 has already seen incredible movement by the African working class. January saw a mass strike that shook Nigeria. Protesting against government plans to scrap the fuel subsidy, strikes and protests brought up to ten million people out into the streets, shutting down most of Nigeria's economy at a cost of \$600 million a day. Despite the sellout of the struggle by the trade union leadership, this mass movement was able to wring concessions from the government and has offered opportunities for social forces

to regroup and organize for the future.

In March, nurses in Kenya went out on strike for two weeks for better public services and wage increases. They showed incredible bravery, defying deals made between the union tops and governments, and staring down the government's decision to fire 25,000 nurses. They refused to go back to work until all of their fellow workers were reinstated.

Kenyan male and female sex workers marched in Nairobi's central business district demanding an end to discrimination, police harassment and for access to health, legal, medical and social services.

March also saw a one-day general strike in South Africa, the first in over ten years, that united organized and unorganized workers against labour brokers and increased road tolls. Two hundred thousand people marched in cities across the country, and mining, metal industry and retail stores were severely affected by the work stoppage.

These demonstrations show not only that the African working class is getting inspired, organized, and fighting back. It also is a sign of the times, showing how anti-austerity campaigns can be fought.

As the demands of organized and unorganized workers for higher public sector wages and higher quality public services coalesce around a united fightback against employers and the state, the year of revolt continues, in Africa and beyond.

India: general strike makes history

by **YURI PRASAD**

In March, millions of workers took part in what is being described as India's biggest ever general strike.

Workers in mining, banking, transport and other sectors joined the mass stay away.

They demanded government action to combat spiraling prices, a universal minimum wage and new protection for non-union workers.

The scale of the strike took many by surprise.

For the first time all 11 of India's union federations took action together. In some areas their numbers were swelled by thousands of

unorganized workers.

The action was particularly strong in states that had until recently been governed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

In West Bengal and Kerala, the party was anxious to prove it was still a force to be reckoned with, despite a drubbing in last year's elections.

Anger at the Communists for implementing neoliberal policies has led many workers to abandon the party. But poor people's hatred of the bosses and the government remains strong.

"We are fighting for our rights against a government that is anti-people," said All India Trade Union Congress general secretary, Gurudas Dasgupta.

His words found a ready echo in West Bengal's capital Kolkata where police and hired thugs tried to intimidate strikers, and police arrested many.

The state government tried to break the transport strike with its own buses. But the city remained paralyzed as rail tracks were blockaded and autorickshaw drivers stayed off the streets.

The scale and success of the strike should increase the pressure on unions to call more action.

This article is reprinted from *Socialist Worker (UK)*.

ONTARIO BUDGET

NDP misses opportunity to fight austerity

AFTER STUDENTS occupied and workers demonstrated against austerity, the Ontario NDP have supported the Liberals' budget and missed a chance to build the movement against the 1%.

NDP leader Andrea Horwath claimed victory by avoiding an election and getting Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty to raise taxes on the wealthiest. But McGuinty has played a shell-game: "The richest Ontarians...would be asked to pay a two per cent surtax, which would generate \$470 million next year, all of which would go into reducing the deficit."

In other words, tax the rich then hand it over to the banks.

The other concessions—\$242 million for child care, \$20 million for Northern Ontario hospitals, and \$55 million for social assistance (a meager 1 per cent increase in monthly support, against a 2.2 per cent inflation rate last year alone)—will be paid for by moving money from other line items like education and health care. Because these figures don't reflect new spending, and because the \$470 million in new tax revenue will be paid directly to the banks to reduce the deficit, there is no impact at all on McGuinty's plan to cut \$10 billion from public services. In short, this Liberal/NDP deal leaves McGuinty's austerity program entirely untouched.

Referendum on austerity

What was the alternative? Had the NDP voted down the budget they could have triggered an election as a referendum on austerity, on their terms of debate. Taxing the rich is wildly popular, with 78 per cent of Ontarians supporting it and Horwath's popularity surging at the mere mention of taxing the 1%. The NDP could have increased their 23 per cent share of the vote by leading a fight against austerity, sidelining both Tories and Liberals, and combining the ballot box with the streets.

Instead, the NDP leadership counter-posed and undermined both by avoiding a referendum on austerity and supporting the austerity budget. According to Horwath: "I feel that we serve the public better by getting to work here in this legislature than chasing votes in an election." By reducing elections to "chasing votes" the NDP missed an opportunity to hold a referendum on austerity, and instead joined the legislature in imposing it.

Missing the orange wave and the Occupy movement

In the context of the economic crisis, the Arab Spring and the Wisconsin occupation, last year's historic "orange wave" that catapulted the federal NDP into office showed people's hopes for a real alternative—despite the NDP's modest platform. But the NDP leadership drew the opposite conclusion: that they needed to campaign to the centre. While Andrea Horwath didn't challenge Tim Hudak's attack on "foreign workers" during the election campaign, Conservatives in Toronto were stopped by a mass grassroots campaign that turned the tide against Rob Ford and derailed Hudak's campaign. But the NDP didn't reflect this anti-austerity mood in the election. The result: the lowest voter turnout in Ontario history, with no change to the combined Tory-Liberal vote, and the NDP only gaining votes from the greens.

The apathy towards mainstream politics was juxtaposed with the inspiring Occupy movement that exploded at the same time. This came from, and contributed to, the mood to fight the austerity agenda of the 1%, like McGuinty's budget.

Students delivered 40,000 petitions to cut tuition fees in January, organized a national day of action in February, and occupied education minister Glen Murray's office in early April—inspired by Quebec's historic student strike. April 21, up to 20,000 workers from across Ontario demonstrated at Queen's Park demanding not only higher taxes on high incomes, but also higher taxes on banks and corporations.

Despite the NDP supporting the austerity budget, the movements outside the legislature have not gone away, and will be key to challenging austerity in the weeks and months to come.



OPINION



F-35 scandal: we need a Canadian Spring now more than ever

Rabble.ca editor Derrick O'Keefe looks at the real cost of Harper's fighter jets.

THE LATEST bomb has dropped from the F-35 scandal in Ottawa. After appearing before the public accounts committee earlier today, Auditor General Michael Ferguson told the media that the Harper government "would have had" information about the real cost of the fighter jets in March 2011 when parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page released his report about the increased cost of the F-35s.

In other words, today the Auditor General confirmed what any discerning observer had already concluded: Harper and his cabinet ministers must have known that the real cost of the F-35s was at least \$10 billion more than they were telling the public.

To understand the full significance of this, it's important to remember the timeline of events. In July 2010, Harper and Peter MacKay announced -- without having held any open bidding process -- that the purchase of 65 F-35 jets from Lockheed Martin would cost \$16 billion including maintenance. By October 2010, then Auditor General Sheila Fraser was already predicting the true cost would be much higher. Then on March 20, 2011, Kevin Page released his report estimating the price at \$28.5 billion. The Harper government publicly attacked Page's numbers, and insisted on their original estimated cost. And all this helped trigger the last federal election.

On March 25, 2011 Harper's government was brought down after a non-confidence vote and a finding that the Conservatives were in contempt of Parliament for refusing to disclose full information about the cost of the fighter jets, as well as the cost of their crime legislation.

Throughout the election campaign, Harper and his campaign insisted on figures between \$14-16 billion. But, at the highest levels, they must have known it was false.

So they lied. Harper knew, and Harper lied. Harper lied before, during and after the election campaign that saw him win a majority

government.

Day after day on the campaign trail to his long sought majority government -- not to mention during TV appearances and in the leadership debates -- Harper repeatedly lied about the cost of the F-35s. And the fighter jets were no marginal issue; they were arguably the central plank in the election campaign.

For a reminder of how this looked and sounded during Canada's 41st federal election, take a look at this video clip from a Harper campaign event in early April 2011. Displaying his trademark angry-guy-keeping-himself-carefully-under-control tone and cadence, Harper insists "the contract we signed shelters us from any increase in those kinds of costs" and that he was "very confident of their cost estimates".

This week Harper and his ministers and their spokespeople have pulled a 180, insisting that 'no contract was signed' for the F-35s and that they can simply 'reset' the bidding process.

I say if there was no contract, and if the cost Harper touted was a lie, then there is no mandate either. Harper's government is illegitimate. We need to 'reset' the government, if you will. I think more Canadians than ever see this or at least sense this, but nevertheless I have no illusions that Harper will be toppled in the House of Commons anytime soon.

For this to happen, we will need a mass movement outside Parliament, in order to change the balance of political forces in the country, and to fully denounce not just the form but the content of the corruption of Harper's government. And the real content behind this fighter jets scandal is the militarism and corporate power the government serves.

There would be no F-35 scandal if the Harper government was not determined to pursue an aggressive foreign policy, as part of NATO and its increasingly wide-ranging interventions. (For a reminder, check out Peter MacKay saying as much just last week.)

To amend a US political cliché:

'It's the military-industrial complex, stupid'.

The corporate connections to this government's militarism aren't hard to find. In fact, you can find them in the person of Nigel Wright, Stephen Harper's current chief of staff. It's unfathomable why the information first reported two years ago about Wright's connections to Lockheed Martin has not been raised by the Ottawa press corps this week:

"Prime Minister Stephen Harper's new chief of staff Nigel Wright is already the focus of troublesome questions because of his links with the largest military procurement in the history of Canada even though he doesn't start until January.

"As the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Mr. Wright has enormous influence over aerospace, defence and energy policy -- areas where he also has an ongoing personal business interest," Liberal treasury board critic Siobhan Coady (St. John's South-Mount Pearl) said. "This could pose a conflict of interest and must be fully investigated," she stated Monday.

Wright is a director of Hawker Beechcraft Inc., a partner with Lockheed Martin, which is selling F-35 stealth fighter to Canada for \$16 billion in an untendered contract. Onex purchased Hawker Beechcraft for \$3.8 billion."

I know we're talking about stealth bombers here, but I have no clue how Wright and his links to Lockheed Martin have managed to stay under the radar of this scandal.

All this comes on top of the "robocalls" scandal -- with Elections Canada investigating incidents in 200 ridings -- that points to widespread electoral fraud by people connected to the Conservative Party.

The force needed to defeat this government, and roll back their agenda, will need to be built right across the country -- in the streets, in meetings halls and in our public squares.

We have never needed a Canadian Spring more than we need it right now.

This article originally appeared on Rabble.ca

May 25-27, Ryerson University
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REVIEWS



FILM

Satisfying Hunger Games

Hunger Games
Directed by Gary Ross
Reviewed by John Bell

READING THE Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins, it struck me how respectful it was to its audience, “young adult” fiction with the emphasis on the “adult”. The books are gritty and violent, the characters are damaged and often unlikable, and the romance is equivocal to say the least.

By making the Hunger Games books the first real post-Potter phenomenon this audience proves it knows substance when it reads it. The themes, plotting and characters are superior to the Potter books. They are inspired in part by a Japanese novel and later a film called Battle Royale, which told the story of school children forced into a deadly gladiatorial competition designed to terrorize the population into submission before a totalitarian regime. These, especially the hyper-

violent film version, are certainly not suitable for young people. Collins also acknowledges that part of her inspiration came from the media manipulation in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. So we are introduced to Panem, a post-apocalyptic US society where a tiny, alienated elite inhabiting the “capital” rule a nation of 12 strictly isolated districts, each organized around an economic specialization. Protagonist Katniss Everdeen is from District 12, where coal mining is the only sanctioned employment and where poverty and hunger are only alleviated by her ability to sneak out of the compound to hunt game with a bow and arrow. Each year two teen-aged “tributes” are drawn by lot from each district, transported to a technologically manipulated arena, and forced to fight to the death. The victor is promised a life of celebrity and ease. The spectacle is broadcast live: effete inhabitants of the capital embrace it as the pinnacle of “reality

TV” entertainment; inhabitants of the districts are forced to watch in punishment for a past, failed revolution, as a form of social control. It is impossible not to see the connection to the Occupy movement, and to identify with the District workers as the 99%. Opposition to Panem (pan-empire); sophisticated critique of mass media; and themes of solidarity and revolt: no wonder young people made these books such a phenomenon. So much did I enjoy the books, that I was somewhat reluctant to see the film version of the first volume. I’m happy to report that the movie retains most of the novel’s power. The decision to tone down the graphic violence is commendable. The performers—lead Jennifer Lawrence and Stanley Tucci—clearly convey what is at stake. It is hard not be happy to see such subversive themes reach a huge, appreciative audience. Here’s hoping subsequent films build on this good start.

BOOK

Inspiration and lessons from Wisconsin workers

Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back
Edited by Michael D. Yates
Reviewed by Darren Edgar

THE WINTER months of 2011 saw public sector workers in Wisconsin facing brutal attacks on their livelihoods—indeed, their basic democratic rights—but these same workers, along with private sector unionists, students, activists and broader community members, stood up for themselves and fought back. Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back is a collection of 16 essays written by labour activists, journalists and scholars in an attempt to make sense of the events which took place in Madison, Wisconsin during those first few months of 2011. It is divided into three parts: the first documents the events, the second analyzes the events and teases out lessons to be learned from them, and the third applies these lessons to other existing or developing events and connects with the lessons learned from these. While the last two parts have solid an-

alysis and draw workable conclusions for the most part, it’s in the first part that proves this volume’s worth. With five different writers reporting on the same events in five different essays in this first section, it could be expected for repetition to be rampant. While this does creep into the last of these essays, it’s impressive just how different even the reportage is. The first essays contextualize well the political and economic lay of the land in Wisconsin, and the United States in general, which led to the uprising and occupation: 40 years of neoliberal policies, creating economic stagnation and the decimation of the working class. “Capitalist Crisis and the Wisconsin Uprising” by Andrew Sernatinger is especially good, providing an excellent timeline of events which will be sure to enlighten even those of us who were paying close attention to developments on the ground at the time. From Tea Party Republican Governor Scott Walker’s election, to his corporate tax giveaways which created Wisconsin’s budget “crisis,” to his Budget Repair Bill aimed at solving this manufactured crisis on the backs of

workers while simultaneously stripping public sector unions of the right to collectively bargain or even collect union dues, these essays clearly provide the context for how such an abysmal state of affairs has developed. While the response from the people of Wisconsin to this affront was heroic—inspired by the Arab Spring and, in turn, inspirational to Occupy Wall Street—it was ultimately overtaken and undermined by a labour bureaucracy and a Democratic party that had no idea how to respond to this unexpected display of working class power. Correctly, the writers in this collection acknowledge this as being a result of too little rank-and-file organizing within unions, and how this is the key to a better organized and more militant labour movement. Connecting this newly developing and vast array of militant rank-and-file workers with students and other will combine workers’ economic weight with the energy of people everywhere to fight for a better world—of affordable education and health care, good green jobs and living wages, an end to war and environmental destruction, and true democracy.

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Tar Sands Superman

STEPHEN HARPER is nothing if not thorough. His agenda, whether in majority or minority government, has been to turn Canada into the “Saudi Arabia of the 21st century”.

Harper always reveals his real intentions at big international meetings. It was at the 2006 G8 summit that Harper announced his intention to convert Canada to the new “energy superpower”. Recall his words: “[Global investors] have recognized the emergence of Canada’s global energy powerhouse. Or as we put it, the emerging energy superpower our government intends to build. This is no exaggeration.”

It was at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, in January, that he announced his intention to raise retirement age to 67, and to sweep aside the democratic environmental review processes that threaten to hinder his dream: to rape the Canadian landscape and extract every last ounce of saleable resources.

Recall his words: “[W]e will make it a national priority to ensure we have the capacity to export our energy products beyond the United States and specifically to Asia. In this regard, we will soon take action to ensure that major energy and mining projects are not subject to unnecessary regulatory delays—that is, delay merely for the sake of delay.”

He used the same forum to reiterate his devotion to continuing tax cuts for the rich and to limiting “growth of our health care spending.”

Harper loves to play the big-wig on the international stage. We could speculate that playing Tar Sands Superman in front of potentates, bankers and bosses reveals a drive to compensate for personal shortcomings.

One thing is beyond speculation: his penchant for making profoundly important policy statements to foreign nobs and nabobs is yet another expression of his contempt for democracy and for the Canadian people.

So it should come as no surprise that the most recent budget contained a continued commitment to tax cuts for said nobs and nabobs, screwing with our pensions, and opening the door wider for provincial health care privatization.

Budget documents are huge, so small details get overlooked. Also tucked into the most recent budget is “\$8-million... to help the Canada Revenue Agency target registered charities.”

Preventing truth spills Yes, Canadian charities are like kryptonite to Tar Sands Superman. And no charity is a greater traitor to the petro-state than the Suzuki Foundation. Government rules state that if charities use more than 10 per cent of their revenues for “advocacy” they can lose their charitable status.

In an effort to forestall CRA’s crackdown on the organization he created to educate Canadians on environmental issues, David Suzuki has resigned from the board of the Suzuki Foundation.

In an open letter to Canadians, Suzuki stated: “I want to speak freely without fear that my words will be deemed too political, and harm the organization of which I am so proud. I am keenly aware that some governments,

industries and special interest groups are working hard to silence us.... This bullying demonstrates how important it is to speak out.”

Also under attack from Revenue Canada is ForestEthics. In a maneuver designed to thwart Harper’s tax gambit, ForestEthics has split itself into two separate entities: a charitable one to do research and education, and an advocacy group to directly take on Harper’s petro-agenda.

Every Canadian should be outraged at the gross, political use of our taxation system to silence dissent. This same tax system that delivers more than \$1.4 billion in subsidies per year to the fossil fuel industry is now spending my money and yours to gag important voices at a crucial time for the environment and the future Canadian economy.

You can be sure that CRA will not be harassing equally all charities that dabble in political advocacy. I’m thinking of the Fraser Institute, the right-wing think tank that, as far as I can see, spends all of its efforts to advocate for “free-market” privatization, climate change denial, union-busting and other corporate-friendly policies.

The taxman is attacking environmental groups guilty of the “crime” of providing scientific proof that new west-bound oil pipelines, and the coastal super-tanker traffic that goes with them, are environmental disasters waiting to happen. The Suzuki Foundation work leads to the inescapable conclusion that unfettered Tar Sands development is an environmental disaster already happening.

At the same time as he is trying to gag enviro-NGOs, Harper has announced sweeping changes to the environmental review process. Public input—what we used to call democracy—is sharply curtailed. Some “small” projects won’t have to do any review, and I guess it is up to the government to decide what qualifies as small.

More of the oversight is to be done by the Environment Ministry. Oh did I mention that hundreds of scientists and researchers at Environment Canada are being laid off? Or that those who remain are thoroughly gagged by their political masters?

And Harper would hand environmental responsibility to the provinces. Corporations are delighted. Witness the reaction of Travis Davies, from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers: “We’ve got provinces here in Canada that have been doing very good regulatory work for a very long time—in the case of Alberta, for almost a century.”

Harper has all but declared that he is going to stop the review process into the Northern Gateway pipeline project. He is going to ignore the voices of people in community after community, First Nation after First Nation, that are virtually unanimous in opposition to the pipe.

Harper and Joe Oliver, his Natural Resources Minister and chief Tar Sands booster, refer to all this as “strengthening environmental protection.”

He is going to build his Petro-Canada come hell or high water, which pretty much describes the future that climate change will bring if we don’t stop him. In Harper’s own words: “This is no exaggeration.”

WHERE WE STAND

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

Socialism and workers’ power
Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capital-ism reaps its profits off our backs.
Capitalist monopolies control the earth’s resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collect-ively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Reform and revolution
Every day, there are battles between exploited and exploiter, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living condi-tions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers’ unity and solidarity.
But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

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

Internationalism
The struggle for socialism is part of a world-wide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements.
The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers’ revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution which killed millions created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal Peoples
Canada is not a “colony” of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of the Aboriginal peoples and the people of Quebec.
We support the struggles for self-determin-ation of Quebec and Aboriginal peoples up to and including the right to independence. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work towards giving the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

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

The Revolutionary Party
To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democ-ratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organ-izations 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.



GLOBAL CRISIS
GLOBAL RESISTANCE



Marxism 2012: Global Crisis Global Resistance is a three-day political conference of more than 30 talks and panels from May 25-27 at Ryerson University in downtown Toronto.

Join the discussion about how to build a better world. Topics include the Arab Spring, the #Occupy movement, rank-and-file rebellion, anti-imperialism, environmental justice, disability rights, anti-oppression and much more. We all have questions. Together, we have answers.

FRIDAY MAY 25

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

- The global fight against austerity: from the ballot box to the street (Room 1)

SATURDAY MAY 26

10:00 am – 11:15 am

- Egypt and the Arab World: the year of revolution (Room 1)

11:30 am – 12:45 pm

- The 2012 Quebec student strike (Room 1)
- Thomas Mulcair & the NDP: what next? (Room 2)
- Why is the 1% imposing austerity? (Room 3)
- What’s green about Marxism? (Room 4)

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

- Building rank & file resistance in labour / lunch break (Room 1)

SUNDAY MAY 27

10:00 am – 11:15 am

- Eyewitness to the Greek rebellion (Room 1)
- ‘Never going back!’ How women won abortion rights (Room 2)
- The new class struggle in Africa (Room 3)
- From Libya to Syria: revolution vs ‘humanitarian’ intervention (Room 4)

11:30 am – 12:45 pm

- Palestine: imagining the one-state solution (Room 1)
- Racism, Islamophobia & economic crisis (Room 2)
- 1972: when Quebec workers occupied (Room 3)
- Chile: students & workers rise up (Room 4)

2:30 pm – 3:45 pm

- Tar Sands, pipelines & Indigenous sovereignty (Room 1)
- ‘Occupy everything!’ The history of the Russian Revolution (Room 2)
- Can capitalism be reformed? (Room 3)
- 1965: Canada’s rank & file rebellion (Room 4)

4:00 pm – 5:15 pm

- ‘From each according to their ability’: socialists & the disability movement (Room 1)
- Quebec, First Nations & the Canadian state (Room 2)
- Too many people? Population, immigration & climate change
- The radical roots of hip hop (Room 4)

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

- Can we stop the Harper Agenda? (Room 1)

12:45 pm – 2:00 pm

- Are you a revolutionary? Introduction to the International Socialists / lunch break

2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

- Women, workers & resistance in Iran (Room 1)
- The red in the rainbow: socialists & queer liberation (Room 2)
- The role of socialists in Egypt’s revolution (Room 3)
- Hacktivism, social media & revolution (Room 4)

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

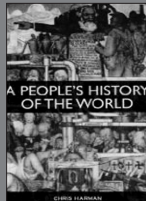
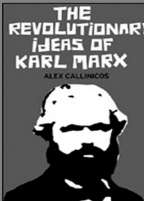
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OTTAWA MAY DAY

by SHANE SADORSKI

AS THIS year's International Workers' Day draws closer, it looks more and more like May 1 will be an uncomfortable day for the 1% and their enablers in Canada's capital region.

Taking their cue from last year's Arab Spring, the global Occupy movement, and now our own "printemps érable" ("Maple Spring"), which has brought hundreds of thousands of striking students into the streets of Québec, a coalition of local activists, community groups, trade unions, NGOs, Occupiers, and progressive voices in the Ottawa-Gatineau region have banded together to mobilize against cuts to public services announced in last month's Federal and Ontario budgets.

The new coalition, Solidarity Against Austerity, will loudly take to the streets on May 1st to make it clear to the political elite that we, the 99%, will not be made to pay for the global economic crisis created by out-of-control corporate crony capitalism.

The day of action kicks-off at 11:30 a.m. when people who make up the real majority in this country gather at Confederation Park and march to the Prime Minister's Office for a noon-hour rally in opposition to the Harper government's attack on public services.

At 2pm, an open Teach-In Against Austerity will take place where activists will share information amongst each other on "How austerity is hitting us" and "How we can fight back and build alternatives". The teach-in will be followed at 5:30pm by an open-table Community Supper where people from the community will break bread together in solidarity. Finally, at 7:30pm, the mobilization continues by celebrating the power of the people with the 99%'s very own May Day Music Festival at the National Arts Centre. Other May Day festivities are also in the works for the evening, including a workers' day celebration at the SAW Gallery near the University of Ottawa.

Throughout the day, those unable to make it to the events on the main program will be encouraged to take the fight against austerity directly to their neighbourhoods and workplaces by organizing their own autonomous actions. For Solidarity Against Austerity, the May 1st day of action will be just the first step in building a growing local movement of resistance to austerity to defend universal, quality, democratic public services, and to oppose privatization and discrimination.

For the latest information about Solidarity Against Austerity's May Day actions in Ottawa, be sure to follow @MayDayOttawa and #may1ott on Twitter, checkout <http://www.facebook.com/SolidarityAgainstAusterity> on Facebook, visit the www.MayDayOttawa.ca website, or drop an e-mail to against.austerity@gmail.com.



GEARING UP FOR PRIDE

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN

IT'S PRIDE season in Toronto! Pride week this year is June 21 to July 1. The theme "Celebrate and Demonstrate" may be an indication that the Queer community is re-politicizing.

Over the past few years, the attempted exclusion of the group QuAIA (Queers Against Israeli Apartheid) from the parade mobilized Queer activists to respond to issues of censorship. A new group, Pride Coalition For Free Speech, organized a political pride march carrying the message "Our Pride Includes Free Speech". An

alternative march called Take Back the Dyke has been organized autonomously for the past two years without the endorsement of Pride Toronto.

Pride Toronto is already planning the festivities for 2014, when the city plays host to the fourth World Pride event previously hosted in Rome, and in Jerusalem. There were protests against the holding of World Pride in Jerusalem because of Israel's policies towards Palestinians no matter what their sexual orientation. This year it will be in London, England.

In April, Pride Toronto

held public meetings to hear questions and ideas from the community, and present the plan thus far. World Pride is an opportunity for the Queer activist community to bring human rights to the forefront and organize opposition to state and corporate sponsorship.

Something about the consciousness of the community has shifted. Not only has the Queer community learned about Israeli Apartheid, there is a sense that the community is coming together with a reinvigorated understanding and a growing sense of awareness of the political roots of Pride.

VANCOUVER'S PROGRESSIVE EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

by PARRY MUDHAR

On a sunny April 22, thousands marched to Vancouver's Earth Day celebrations at Commercial Drive's Grandview Park.

The message of preserving our Earth's environment was not limited to the large numbers of socially active youth presenting speeches. Entire families held homemade signs with messaging ranging from ending our use of single use plastics to stopping BC's Northern Gateway Pipeline.

Green Peace, Forest Ethics, and Science World worked with children to make crafts out of ordinary recycled goods and built awareness of the importance and sensitivities of our environment and interconnected ecosystem.

Mayor Gregor Robertson spoke of his goal of building Vancouver as the world's greenest city by 2020. He was followed by Vancouver Parks Board member Niki Sharma, who took a strong stance against Kinder Morgan's BC oil transportation program.

The vast majority of environmental issues revolved around the unpopular anti-tanker and oil transportation projects being put forward by the Conservative government.

When interviewed, one participant stated, "An important lesson to take home is that we are all consumers but we have a duty to make sure the products we use every day are constructed and handled in a responsible manner."

Earth Day has truly been a vehicle for change for many Vancouverites.

WE ARE ONTARIO

ON FRIDAY April 20, the Ontario Federation of Labour along with almost 100 other community, environmental, labour, social justice, student and peace groups announced the formation of the "We are Ontario" campaign.

Following on the great strides made with the "We are Wisconsin" and "We are Ohio" campaigns, the new coalition seeks to challenge the austerity agenda of Premier Dalton McGuinty on a province-wide scale.

"The Premier has tabled a budget that cuts funding for hospitals, schools and social assistance while refusing to heed to public demand for corporations to pay their fair share after years of paying less," said Ontario Federation of Labour President Sid Ryan. "By putting the interests of bankers ahead of Ontario families, Premier McGuinty has awakened a deep and diverse opposition that reflects every community in the province."

The campaign was kicked off by a press conference and then a mass meeting at Holy Trinity Church which welcomed activists from throughout the province. Representatives from various groups talked about organizing mass rallies, door-to-door campaigns and days of action to combat austerity.

It remains to be seen what the plan of action for "We are Ontario" will look like but the essential elements of organized labour working with community groups is a fantastic step in the right direction.

FILM SCREENING

WE ARE WISCONSIN

'The fight that inspired labor in North America'

Special labour screening and fundraiser for union activists, complete with a panel discussion with the film-maker and Wisconsin activists.

**May 2, Ryerson University
Jorgensen Hall
Theatre Lib 72
350 Victoria (at Gould)
\$10.00**

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Students and workers unite against austerity

THE HUGE demonstration that took place on Earth Day in Montreal is an indicator of the deepening anger and bitterness at the base of society in Quebec.

Three hundred thousand marched including many CEGEP and university students who had earlier taken to the streets in the hundreds of thousands protesting tuition increases and the austerity agenda. They have been rallying and marching for months, unwilling to give up their fight against the provincial government.

Busloads of locked out Rio Tinto workers travelled from Alma, Quebec to join the march. They linked their struggle against a giant multinational attempting to halve the wages of new hires with the neoliberal cutbacks of the Liberal government.

There had been an earlier demonstration of ten thousand in Alma on March 31 that brought solidarity to their fight with buses coming from as far away as Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario.

In Montreal the spirit and creativity of youth was brought together with the strength and power of the organized working class in a magnificent demonstration which represented every strata of Quebec society that is under attack.

On that same weekend in Toronto fifteen thousand people rallied and marched against the Ontario government and its draconian budget that will be more devastating than the attacks of the Harris regime in the mid-nineties. Huge cutbacks are being brought in and there will be significant job losses in the public sector.

The Elementary Teachers Federation, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation and now the doctors have walked away from the bargaining table. The government is trying to impose wage freezes and cuts and is refusing to negotiate.

The climate is heating up and although we saw defeats for CUPE locals 79 and 416 in bargaining with the city of Toronto, the library workers staged a two week strike with strong community support and were able to stave off the worst of the concessions. The spirit of the primarily women workers was inspiring for anyone who joined their picket lines.

There was solid strike preparation with meetings in

every workplace and a broad community campaign. Real attempts by the membership to popularize the struggle were front and center.

A library worker spoke of their fight at the International Women's Day rally and they led the march of thousands through the streets of Toronto. Public readings with authors were held at rally sites and library users and the broader community warned to their fight against the Ford regime.

There was also a victory in the Cleaners Campaign with the city of Toronto, which put off the contracting out of almost 1,000 cleaners' jobs. This would have turned decent wages into poverty wages.

We have seen significant setbacks at Vale Inco, and US Steel in Nanticoke and Hamilton in recent years. The CAW workers who developed strong cross-country support in their fight against Electro-Motive Diesel in London missed an opportunity by not occupying the plant and making the company a site of resistance against corporate greed.

On the other hand members of the Machinists Union slow clapped and taunted the Minister of Labour as she walked through an Air Canada terminal after taking away their right to strike. When they were suspended fellow workers walked off the job in Toronto, Quebec and British Columbia and shut down flights across the country.

The theme of tax the rich has been very popular in the lead up to the provincial budget in Ontario and polls are showing that voters want to maintain needed services. There is a growing mood against the austerity agenda. It is a question of how we can organize that into a sustained fightback.

We have seen major upheavals in Greece, India, Spain, Chile, Egypt, Tunisia and other countries around the world. Building the confidence of ordinary workers to fight back on their own behalf is critical in these times.

History tells us that it is the broad based activity of the working class that will make real change. When workers are in struggle we must all be there to strengthen their fight. The large demonstrations in Montreal and Toronto show that workers, students and the poor are willing to take to the streets.

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Printemps érable: another May '68?

by JESSICA SQUIRES

FORTY-FOUR years ago students in Quebec went on strike for the first time. Inspired by events in Paris that same year, the students demanded student assistance reform, democratic reform of the cégeps to give more control to students, and the establishment of a second French-language university in Montreal.

Students are in the streets for the ninth time this year. As we go to press, about 170,000 students remain on strike in Quebec, and some have re-joined the strike, having previously returned to classes, in reaction to the government's increasingly dismissive and disgusting attempts to divide Quebec society on the issue of tuition fees.

But this strike, now well into its third month with no end in sight, was never just about tuition fees. From the beginning, La CLASSE, a temporary coalition initiated by ASSÉ representing about half of those on strike, has consistently made their struggle about the very future of Quebec itself.

This point was made abundantly clear on April 22 when Earth Day organizers saw more than 300,000 people gather in downtown Montreal—the largest demonstration in Canadian history. The numbers were swelled by the ranks of student strikers and their supporters, as well as workers—including 100 locked out workers from Alma (six hours drive from Montreal), who three weeks prior had their own global day of action that striking students and workers across Quebec, Canada and the world joined. The sea of humanity in the



Place des arts was sprinkled with red square badges—the symbol of the strike. The size of the crowd outstripped the 200,000-strong demonstration the strikers organized exactly one month earlier, while at the same time hundreds protested Charest in Gatineau.

Quebeckers have had it with Charest—on education, jobs, natural resources, and the environment.

Just as they were in 1968, the students have been influenced by global events, including the Arab spring of 2011, the worldwide Occupy movement, and student up-

risings everywhere from Colombia to the UK.

From the start, they have been met with the brutality of state repression in the form of police riots, tear gas, batons, and mass arrests. They have been militant and consistent. And they have been non-violent, until recently when some have begun to fight back against police.

A wave of injunctions requested either by local administrators or by anti-strike students (scabs) following a call by the Minister to reopen institutions and give classes by all means necessary has led to police occupations of

several campuses.

Response

Students have fought back and won against several of these injunctions, both in the courts and through mobilization.

In one high-profile example, students, professors and supporters at Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) successfully occupied the university, shutting it down; and then successfully disrupted classes again on a second day. Both events were entirely non-violent, but resulted in mass arrests—161 the first day, and a further 150 the second. The movement

succeeded in shutting down the campus for the remainder of that week. On April 23 professors went before a judge to ask for the injunction to be lifted, since police presence on the campus has threatened their health and safety. Some professors were assaulted or arrested while inside the university.

Of course, the most effective responses to the repression have been the insistent demonstrations—over 160 in Montreal alone since mid-February—and the huge turnouts on March 22 and April 22.

Unity

In the last strike that took place in 2005, the main student unions, the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FÉUQ) and the Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FÉCQ), negotiated with the government without the third organization—the most militant and the one that started that strike—Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), at the table. They won a great victory, but the cost was high: it took six years to rebuild the movement and the willingness to strike once again to win back what has been lost in the years since, including a \$500 tuition increase since 2007.

In recent days, the government has attempted to bring about a repeat of the events of 2005 by inviting FÉUQ and FÉCQ to the table without CLASSE. Government officials blame this on the failure of CLASSE to denounce violence. But to their credit, FÉUQ and FÉCQ have refused to meet without CLASSE also in attendance.

On Earth Day, CLASSE met and debated for hours on end about the tactical situation. In a brilliant move, they called the government's bluff by issuing a statement clearly opposing violence against people, and against vandalism aimed at workers, and stating that state violence and intimidation is unacceptable, and that civil disobedience is entirely legitimate and they did it perfectly. Informed readers will understand the nuances; the state will; and everyone else will say, yes, that is reasonable—because it is.

page 2 >>>

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Teachers vs. austerity

by ANDREW HODGE & PAM JOHNSON

FROM BC to Ontario, teachers are in the cross-hairs of the austerity agenda, but are starting to fight back to defend public education.

In BC, 41,000 teachers are confronting the Orwellian "Education Improvement Act" (Bill 22), which will increase class sizes, cut funding from education and scapegoat teachers. With public and student support, teachers staged a three-day strike in early March, and recently withdrew extra-curricular activities. Teachers voted on an action plan that could include strikes, but it will

require rank-and-file organizing and solidarity to carry this through and push back the BC Liberals' austerity agenda.

In Ontario, 15,000 workers rallied at Queen's Park on April 21 against McGuinty's austerity budget. A major target of McGuinty's austerity budget is teachers—a group that gave huge support to his last election campaign—so teachers were out in full force at the rally. One teacher reported that almost 30 per cent of teachers from his school attended the rally. This speaks to an appetite to fight the attacks.

The Ontario budget calls for a wage freeze, an effective wage cut that

will cost junior teachers up to \$85,000 in lost wages. All teachers will lose the option to exchange unused sick days for money upon retirement and it drops sick days to six per teacher.

In addition, the government is now openly saying they wish to re-evaluate the pension set-up, with an eye to future sustainability, which is code to call for conversion of a defined benefit to a defined contribution pension plan (a glorified RRSP).

Ontario teachers have not struck against their employer, the school board, since 1976, before most teachers were working.

So there are questions about how prepared the

teachers' unions are to wage a fight. Communication networks in locals need to be revitalized and strategies planned to mount a campaign to push back cuts and possibly to strike.

Intermediate steps like information pickets, town hall meetings, etc. will be needed to prepare and give confidence to teachers.

But there is no question that a significant number of teachers are ready to begin this fightback. One OSSTF (Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation) member who attended the rally said teachers are more open to the idea that "we have to push our own leaders to act now instead of in six months time."