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CAPITALISM PRODUCES economic crisis, military competition, environmental destruction, oppression and attacks on civil liberties. Each of these provokes resistance movements, but these need to be strengthened and united in order to build a better world.

Five years into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, it's clear capitalism has no way out but vicious austerity measures. In Toronto, the Richtree restaurant "closed down", firing all 50 unionized workers, and then "re-opened" with non-unionized staff. In Detroit, the Michigan state government appointed an "emergency manager" who shut down power for homes and public services, and who is going after unions.

Economic crisis is heightening inter-imperial rivalry, with the US and Russia clashing over their interventions in Syria—the US trying to hijack the revolution, Russia trying to crush it. Economic and military competition is driving a war on the planet, in a scramble for oil that is imposing toxic tar sands and leaky pipelines on indigenous communities, while pushing the world towards climate catastrophe.

Austerity and imperialism is sharpening oppression—including a backlash against women, the scapegoating of religious minorities, and cuts for people with disabilities. Governments are also increasing attacks on civil liberties—from Harper deporting war resisters, the Greek government prosecuting anti-fascists, and the Egyptian government arresting Islamists, socialists and people passing through the country.

Traditionally people turned to the ballot box for political resistance, and to their unions for economic resistance. But the austerity agenda is attacking unions, while revealing the limits of social democracy. From Australia to Nova Scotia, people have elected labour governments only to see them impose the same austerity and revive the right-wing. In Egypt millions voted for the Muslim Brotherhood as an alternative to Mubarak, just to see the same policies of neoliberalism and complicity with Israel.

Resistance

But resistance is fertile. Unionized workers are fighting to defend their jobs, like the Plaza

Hotel workers who fought off concessions. Non-unionized fast food workers are leading strike waves across the US for higher wages and the right to organize.

People in Iraq and Libya continue to demand a better world—exposing the failures of "humanitarian interventions"—while people in Britain stopped their government from attacking Syria and there is mass opposition to another war across Canada and the US.

Idle No More has sparked a growing awareness of Canadian colonialism and solidarity with indigenous struggles, and this is radicalizing the environmental movement. A growing climate justice movement is starting to unite indigenous, environmental and labour movements against tar sands pipelines.

There are movements against oppression—for indigenous sovereignty and disability rights, against sexism and Islamophobia—and campaigns defending civil liberties.

Unite

But the growth of these movements is not automatic, and unity among them is not spontaneous. Each faces attacks by the state and

corporations, and debates within movements that can build or derail them.

Some, frustrated by the pace of resistance, see current union labour or union structures as a barrier to change, and are trying to find quick fixes that bypass the patient work necessary to build rank-and-file movements. Some, frustrated with the contradictions in the Arab Spring, either support repressive states against resistance movements, or reduce the resistance to those with whom they agree.

But resistance is a process, not an event, and is best built through self-activity from below. The general strikes in Greece were not simply called from the top, but patiently built from below—from workplace to workplace, union to union. The Egyptian revolution emerged after a decade of intertwining struggles, and is continuing in the streets and workplaces as people fight to change the world—and through the process change themselves.

We need to build each resistance movement as broadly as possible, while also linking them to each other—through an organization of activists—into a movement against capitalism, and for the better world that is possible.

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Racism through underfunding

by VALERIE LANNON

ALONG WITH underfunding of health and education for First Nations, the Canadian government severely underfunds child welfare services. The disparity is over twenty per cent and has profoundly negative consequences. In 2007, a complaint was filed with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Child protection agencies that remove indigenous children from their homes do so in the belief that these children are being neglected (vs. physically or sexually abused). “Neglect” is usually the result of extreme poverty, which means parents are less able to provide safe housing, sufficient food or medical attention for their children. These problems are compounded when First Nations child and family services do not have sufficient funding to provide financial and other supports to parents, or to provide prevention programs (like respite care, parenting programs, cultural connections) that would prevent children coming into care.

Once in care, underfunding means that agencies have fewer resources to attract and support alternative caregivers in the communities themselves. This results in the tragic loss of children to their communities, as children in care are placed away from home, often in non-indigenous homes. This break from home and culture has been shown to have particularly negative outcomes in terms of children’s education, mental health, and employment prospects, as well as more run-ins with the legal system. Both the conditions that drive children into care and the resulting removal of indigenous children from their communities are symptomatic of Canada’s continuing colonialism.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (FNCFCs) filed the complaint. The Society’s Executive Director, Cindy Blackstock, is a long-time advocate for the rights of indigenous children. She notes that there are now more indigenous children in care, removed from their families and communities, than at the height of the racist residential school system. Indigenous children make up over half of all children in care in this country.

This case has seen the federal government maintain the duplicity it showed with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—namely the withholding of vital evidence, then releasing massive quantities of data when deadlines are too short for a meaningful review by the complainants. The government tried for years to have the case dismissed altogether, but Tribunal hearings finally got underway in February of this year.

For ongoing coverage of this story visit the FNCFCs website: <http://www.fncaringsociety.com/> and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), which has been streaming testimony from the Tribunal hearings: <http://www.aptn.ca/>

To support FNCFCs, sign up on the website to the “I am a witness” campaign: <http://www.fncaringsociety.com/i-am-witness>



Saint Mary’s frosh chant gives us a clear example of a bigger problem

by OMRI HAIVEN

WHAT’S MOST shocking about this story is not that the chant was an oversight but that it was purposefully oppressive and disrespectful. This isn’t casual rape culture, it’s meant as an attack.

Few things are more chilling than when those who are oppressors, in recognizing their own power and violence, continue the oppression, not in hesitation but with glee.

The “sensitivity training” that these leaders will undergo will not be adequate, we can be sure of that. No amount of “training” can change the culture that produced this and we must look instead to the organizations and institutions that incubated this crap for our answers.

The continued use of the word ‘inappropriate’ to describe the chant tells us a lot. Essentially, it means that violence against women is okay, as long as you don’t make it public. “It’s okay to disrespect women but please don’t go bragging about it.” The real message is that this display of sexism might have been appropriate had it been done, as is usually the case, with a little more subtlety.

According to this logic, the problem with the chant is not that it profoundly degrades women; the problem is that they got caught doing it. Women experience sexism on a daily basis but this incident is so appalling because it clearly exposes the underlying misogyny of our culture.

Given that this chant was practiced over multiple years we can assume that most, if not all, frosh leaders have participated in it, or at least stood by while it happened. This yearly tradition may account for why so many women students seem to be participating in a chant that directly objectifies them: it’s part of the culture of a school they’d like to fit into.

We can also assume that because the chant’s been done over multiple years, both the student association and the frosh coordinators had time to think long and hard about the chant’s meaning. Would it be that much of a stretch to conclude that there is a general culture at Saint Mary’s that condones this type of

behaviour?

This is not to say that other universities’ students are any better. They are perhaps, more conscious of what can be said in public or in polite company—what is appropriate—but the underlying problem remains the same: women are being objectified at our universities, through chants on occasion but by men every day.

The solution to this problem is not to discipline the mouthpieces of this bigotry (although that has its place); it is to speak out against the daily and systematic violence that we see happening to the women in our lives, on campus or elsewhere.

From women earning 70 cents for every dollar men make to the sex-worker support organization Stepping Stone having its funding cut, we have failed as a society if we allow for this inequity to continue. This is not just a case of a few bad apples, nor is it a case that is exclusive to my generation; this involves all of us, especially men.

This is republished from Halifax Media Co-op

Tell Harper: demand the release of Tarek and John

FOR MORE than a month, the Egyptian military regime has incarcerated Canadian emergency physician Tarek Loubani and filmmaker John Greyson as part of a broader counter-revolution. The Harper government has been characteristically silent and complicit. But Tarek and John are fighting their detention with a hunger strike, and the campaign demanding their release continues to grow.

Tarek and John were on route to Gaza, where Tarek helps with medical training, when they were arbitrarily arrested in Cairo on August 16. They have yet to be charged and have had their unjust detention periodically extended for no reason. A month into their detention they began a hunger strike.

The Harper government has refused to call for their immediate release, and only asked that the evidence against them be made available. This gives legitimacy to the military regime and its crack-down, which has included a French citizen being beaten to death while in prison.

Counter-revolution
The broader context is counter-revolution. Egyptians overthrew the US-backed

dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011, and in 2012 elected the largest opposition group—the Muslim Brotherhood. While the Brotherhood includes millions of poor and working class members, its leadership is committed to the capitalist state. So once elected, it continued the neoliberal policies of Mubarak, continued getting weapons from the US and supporting Israel, and consolidated power around its leader Mohammed Morsi.

After a year, millions of Egyptians again protested and went on strike, and the military regime attempted to stem the tide of revolt by removing Morsi and launching a counter-revolution. Claiming that “unrest” in Egypt is the result of Islamists, terrorists and foreigners, the military regime has gone from attacking Islamists to arresting socialists and people passing through Egypt.

Complicity

As an ally of US imperialism, which maintains conditions for Western corporations, the Canadian government supports the imperial architecture in the Arab world. Canada has sold weapons to Saudi Arabia, used to attack people in Bahrain. Harper supported the Iraq War and has a long record of complicity with Israel—

from defending their bloody wars, cutting humanitarian aid to Gaza after their democratic election, barring Palestine solidarity speakers from Canada, and cutting funding from Palestine solidarity groups in Canada. Harper supported Egyptian dictator Mubarak right up to his overthrow and has not condemned the military’s recent attacks.

The Canadian government also has a record of restricting civil liberties for Arabs and Muslims at home, and remaining silent on their detention abroad—including Maher Arar and Muayyed Nurrddin tortured in Syria, Abousfian Abdelrazik detained in Sudan, and Suaad Hagi Mohamud detained in Kenya. It was only mass pressure that returned these people, and there is growing support for Tarek and John.

Solidarity

Nearly 150,000 people have signed a petition demanding their release. There have been open letters from the medical community, such as the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, and the arts community—including writers Naomi Klein, Arundhati Roy and Michael Ondaatje, filmmakers Atom Egoyan and Sarah Polley, and actors Ben Affleck and Danny

Labour supports BC Premier’s disastrous natural gas plan

by SHANEE PRASAD & BRADLEY HUGHES

IT FEELS like the dawning of a new era in British Columbia, and not an era that bodes well for our climate.

Early in September, Jim Sinclair, the president of the BC Federation of Labour, and Tom Sigurdson, executive director of the BC and Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council met with newly-elected Liberal Premier Christy Clark. As publicized on the Premier’s website, the meeting was to “discuss strengthening skills training for British Columbians, upgrading the skills of current union members, and making sure the jobs in the North are filled by local people first, and then by British Columbians.” This meeting was also part of the publicity for the Premier’s plan to massively expand Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) extraction and exports from BC.

In an article by the two union leaders in the Vancouver Sun, they repeatedly endorsed the LNG plan as a way to provide jobs and economic growth: “Workers in British Columbia are looking to the labour movement to protect our birthright and ensure we have a rightful claim to the jobs that will come about from the economic boom... We are willing and eager to work collaboratively with government and industry in an equal partnership to find solutions to this challenge.” In the same article, they point out the need for “a comprehensive and accessible training plan.”

At the meeting, Premier Clark said, “Labour can’t do this alone. Industry can’t do this alone. We need to put aside our differences. People don’t care about politics. They care about jobs.” But there is nothing apolitical about resource exploitation jobs, and this has been proven over and over again.

For many, the awkwardness of the press conference and resulting partnership was that it seemed organized labour was reinforcing Clark’s assertion here. There is no doubt that job creation and training is vital in this province. Organized labour needs to fight for trades training for the jobs that will come from dealing with the climate emergency. Instead of praising the Premier and the expansion of LNG, we need a labour movement that demands that the government spend the money necessary to create construction jobs building clean renewable energy sources, build mass transit systems that are better than traveling by car, and give people jobs retrofitting homes and other buildings where they live. This would be a jobs plan that would create even more jobs than the government’s wishful thinking over LNG.

The other side of cheering for fossil industries, like LNG, is that climate chaos will directly affect the lives and livelihoods of workers in BC. Due to the global warming that has already occurred, we will see more flooding and forest fires in BC. Construction workers’ homes will be destroyed alongside their neighbours’.

Before considering and advocating for the viable alternatives, this partnership was too quickly accepted. At the unveiling of UNIFOR (the convergence of the Canadian Autoworkers Union and Communications and Energy Paperworkers unions), Naomi Klein gave an opening address. In it she explained that workers and their unions centered in unsustainable industries might not be inclined to join environmental movements to combat climate change because this delegitimizes their work, or threatens their livelihoods. She accepted this as a reality, but she also offered the following:

“The renewal of the public sphere will create millions of new, high paying union jobs—jobs in fields that don’t hasten the warming of the planet. But it’s not just boilermakers, pipefitters, construction workers and assembly line workers who get new jobs and purpose in this great transition. There are big parts of our economy that are already low-carbon. They’re the parts facing the most disrespect, demeaning attacks and cuts. They happen to be jobs dominated by women, new Canadians, and people of colour. And they’re also the sectors we need to expand massively: the caregivers, educators, sanitation workers, and other service sector workers. The very ones that your new union has pledged to organize. The low-carbon workers who are already here, demanding living wages and respect. Turning low-paying, low-carbon jobs into higher-paying jobs is itself a climate solution and should be recognized as such.”

Labour needs to be front and center in combating climate change. Organized labour’s partnership with the LNG industry and Clark comes from the despair of losing the recent election to the Liberals, and from an environmental movement in BC that organizes to halt construction projects, rarely putting forward a call for climate jobs. Yet a clear and strong commitment to combating climate change and replacing exploitative industries with sustainable industries needs to be part of a new partnership. Not a partnership between the Liberals and labour, but a partnership between the environmental movement and labour. There is a long way to go on both sides.

Glover. There was a contingent supporting Tarek and John in the Toronto Labour Day parade, and rallies outside the Egyptian consulate in Montreal and in Tarek’s hometown of London, Ontario. We need to continue to pressure the Canadian government to demand the immediate release and safe return of Tarek and John.

For more information, visit: <http://tarekandjohn.com>

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Oil workers strike in Libya

by **JOSH LALOR**

SINCE MID-JULY, Libyan oil production has been hampered significantly by protests from armed militias, tribal groups and striking oil workers.

Protesters have taken control of oil fields in the south of the country and oil shipping terminals on the Libyan coast. The drop in production is costing the government approximately \$130 million in lost revenue every day. As a result, the Libyan Attorney General has issued arrest warrants for the leaders of the different protest groups and Prime Minister Ali Zeidan

intimated that the use of military force may be needed if the protests do not end soon.

The protesters’ demands cover a range of different issues, including pay raises, increased security, an end to political corruption, and greater political autonomy at the regional-level. While the protests may not be coordinated, they ultimately stem from the same underlying problem—the distribution of oil revenues. Since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan people have not seen substantial improvements in their day-to-day lives. Speaking with the BBC, a young man in Tripoli described the situation

as follows: “We are starting the third year and people were promised that when Muammar was removed, their lives and income would improve, but there’s nothing. There are small changes.”

The Libyan oil fields and shipping terminals survived the revolution relatively unscathed, and before these protests Libya was operating at just under pre-revolution levels. While the recovery of the oil industry is seen as essential to a country overcoming 42 years of autocratic rule, it is also vital to the profit margins of international oil companies operating in Libya. Many Libyans are angry that while they

struggle to survive, billions of dollars are repatriated by these companies. Moreover, despite ousting Gaddafi, they are not experiencing any direct benefits from oil revenues collected by the government.

Overthrowing Gaddafi was just the first step of the revolution, and the equitable distribution of oil revenues and all resources is the next step. But NATO intervened with “humanitarian intervention” that hijacked the revolution and supported former Gaddafi regime elements to maintain inequality. As a result, there have been strikes and protests against the new regime in an attempt to continue the revolution.

Violence in Iraq the result of ‘humanitarian intervention’

by **YUSUR AL BAHRANI**

VIOLENCE IN Iraq is escalating, with at least 800 people killed in August, according to the UN. More than a third of the brutal bombings and suicide attacks are taking place in Baghdad. This is the result of Western intervention dressed up as “humanitarian”.

On September 21, a string of bombings killed at least 96 people in the Baghdad suburb of Sadr City, Ur District and the northern city of Baji.

In Sadr City, the funeral of one person turned into a mass funeral with hundreds killed and injured. The first bomb exploded next to a tent full of mourners. During traditional funerals, men and women usually have different places to mourn. When women and children heard the bomb, they rushed to the street searching for their male relatives. Later, a suicide attack targeted the funeral and a third bomb exploded when the police and ambulance arrived on site. An eyewitness described a scene in which a young man rushed to save his friend who was injured after the second bombing; while soaked with blood from carrying his injured friend, he was killed by the third attack.

The attack on Sadr City was the most brutal and led to at least 72 dead and hundreds injured. “Hospitals are not enough to treat all the wounded. Some are being treated on the floor in the hospital’s corridors,” said Abbas Al Kusheimi from Sadr City. There have been frequent car bomb and suicide bomb attacks targeting the city. All of the attacks happened at funerals, places of worship, busy shops and crowded areas in the city. In many cities, this year’s violence has been the worst since 2008.

Resisting Saddam and US occupation

While different cities have witnessed violence, to many Iraqis, Sadr City represents resistance to dictatorship and Western intervention. It is now known as the “Enlightening Sadr City,” which inspires others in Iraq but it also faces brutality and ongoing violence.

Prior to 2003, civilians in the city faced Saddam Hussein’s oppression, repression, brutality and discrimination. The unemployment rate was very high compared to the rest of the country, and the government’s education system continuously discrimin-

ated against Sadr City’s young men and women. Many of those who showed resistance were targeted and killed, including the community’s prominent leaders. Despite all the oppression, the rebellious spirit was dominant amongst people.

When the regime was overthrown after the Western invasion, conditions never changed and the situation has been deteriorating ever since. The same city that faced the dictator’s oppression resisted the US troops. “I lost one brother during 1990’s uprising against Saddam and another brother was killed by the American forces,” a man who lives in Sadr City said. From the beginning, people realized that military intervention was not “humanitarian.”

Against ‘humanitarian intervention’

The bloodshed continues in Sadr City and several parts of Iraq after the last US troops pulled out 18 months ago. The US-led invasion in 2003 is the main cause of the current violence and the corrupt government in Iraq. The US imposed a puppet regime to continue the repression and inequality of Saddam’s regime, while under-

mining the resistance by promoting sectarian divisions—from imposing a parliament along ethnic lines, to arming sectarian death squads.

While deaths have been increasing, thousands of pro-democracy protestors have been demonstrating against corruption. One of the most noticeable demands is to cut the high retirement salaries dedicated to the Iraqi parliamentarians and government politicians. While the economic inequality is increasing, parliamentarians and government politicians are opportunistically receiving overly-generous salaries and benefits. This has outraged ordinary people who faced brutal dictatorship for decades. In the southern city, Nasiriya, the government’s forces responded to the peaceful demonstrations with teargas.

While the world’s political leaders are arguing whether Western intervention is a solution to the Syrian crisis, innocent Iraqi civilians continue to pay the price of “humanitarian intervention”. At all times, it is critical to support the masses of people and reject imperialist intervention that hijacks revolutionary movements.

Justice for Haitham Mohamedain, Egyptian labour lawyer

HAITHAM MOHAMEDAIN, one of Egypt’s leading labour lawyers and an activist with the Revolutionary Socialists, was arrested on September 5 by Egyptian authorities.

Haitham was on his way to meet clients in Suez, where he had been defending steel workers whose strike for higher wages was broken up by the army. He was detained by the army near Suez and was transferred to a police station in the city. He was charged with assaulting an army officer. His arrest drew condemnation from trade unionists and activists across the world.

Haitham has since been released by Suez prosecutors without posting bail, but according to his lawyer, Ramy Ghoneim, he was read a list of very serious charges. These include “inciting violence”, “destruction of state property” and, most importantly, “establishing and leading the Revolutionary Socialists organization which agitates in favour of imposing a specific social class on the whole of society and overthrowing the social order of the state”.

Counter-revolution

This prosecution is part of a much wider crack-down on opponents of the Egyptian army. Thousands of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been arrested, and the authorities have begun to arrest and threaten activists from the revolutionary April 6 Youth Movement.

For years Haitham has played a leading role in defending workers in struggle, both in the police station and in the streets as a revolutionary activist. He has represented hundreds of striking workers in court who have been arrested on picket lines or who have suffered victimization by their bosses or assaults by the police. He is also well-known for his work with victims of torture through El-Nadeem Centre.

Haitham was at the forefront of the massive protests against Mohamed Morsi on June 30. Since the military takeover he has also been one of only a small number of revolutionary activists prepared to publicly condemn the brutal crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood by the army in recent months, including the killing of hundreds of protestors on August 14.

Activists around the world have organized a campaign in support of Haitham.

Here’s what you can do:

- Sign the statement calling for all charges against Haitham to be dropped. <http://bit.ly/16xj8VQ>

- Sign and circulate the Emergency Statement on Egypt. <http://bit.ly/18nFzRW>

For more information and other ways to get involved, please visit: <http://menasolidaritynetwork.com/>

This is republished from MENA Solidarity Network.

Israel continues to demolish Bedouin homes

by **HANAN JIBRIL**

ISRAEL HAS been demolishing the residential structures and livestock shelters of Arab Bedouins. The state has continuously been discriminating against the Bedouins and treating them as second-class citizens.

The Praver-Begin Bill was passed in January, calling for the transfer of more than 30,000 Bedouins as well as the demolition of about 40 villages which the Israeli state has labelled illegal. Many Bedouins refused to move because the government wants them to renounce the land which is rightfully theirs—land that has been

passed down from generation to generation.

The village of Al-Araqib has been destroyed 54 times in the last three years. The demolitions have occurred in at least six other areas, including Jerusalem. The latest incident occurred on September 16, where 58 buildings were knocked to the ground; all were residential structures and shelters for livestock in the Northern Jordan Valley.

“Israel has begun to evict Bedouin Palestinians out of their homes and begun to encourage and even help Jewish Israelis to move in,” said Joe Stork, acting Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “Prime

Minister Netanyahu should end the appalling discrimination against Israel’s Bedouin citizens, not support legislation that enshrines it.”

Israel destroyed Bedouin homes in the Negev, claiming they were built without legal permits. However, Israel has refused to legally recognize the land for decades. Much of the Bedouin land was bought through verbal agreements before the state of Israel had been established. The land had been passed down from their ancestors.

The United Nations considers the destruction of the Bedouin property a violation of international humanitarian law. The UN human rights office

urged Israeli authorities to halt the recent wave of demolitions of Bedouin structures. Many of the Bedouins and the protestors refer to the current violations as “Nakba” (catastrophe), the same term used to refer to the establishment of the Israeli state, which is based upon driving out the indigenous population.

There have been solidarity protests in Gaza and the West Bank demanding an end to the evictions of the Bedouins and the destruction of their homes. Being in solidarity with the Bedouins and Palestinians means exposing the human rights violations exercised by the Israeli state and the West’s continuing complicity.

Marx: the radical ecologist

THERE IS a growing consciousness among ordinary people that the world we are creating/destroying will not sustain animal, plant or human life unless there is a drastic change to the way we interact with nature. Marxism has important contributions to make to this urgent challenge.

Marxism and ecology

There is a myth that Marx was, and that Marxism is, only interested in ever-increasing production and the development of technology, subordinating nature to humanity no matter what the cost. This is not surprising given the distortions of Marxist thought that came out of Stalin’s drive to accumulate, in order to compete with Western capitalism, beginning in the late 1920s. As part of the counter-revolution that imposed a state capitalist regime, Stalin purged ecologists and ecological theory. Revitalizing this theory is important not only for historical record but also to contribute to the environmental justice movement today.

Marx saw interaction with nature as central to what makes us human (writing in the 1800s, he used the term “man” to refer to humanity)—not in a mechanical way where humans simply use nature, but a dialectical relationship where the interaction between humanity and nature through labour transforms both. “Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature...By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.”

Capitalism

Whereas Marx understood deeply that as human beings we cannot exist apart from nature—that we are a *part* of nature—capitalism attempts to break this relationship. Marx saw capitalism from its very inception as inherently unsustainable for both nature and humanity: “Capitalist production, by collecting the population in great centres... on the one hand concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil...Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology...only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the labourer.”

The drive to accumulate and the competition between capitalists translate into ongoing innovation and the development of new ways to produce goods. However this is driven not by what people need or by what is sustainable for the environment, but by profit. There can be no technological or consumerist fix to the climate crisis. One of the largest solar and wind energy providers in Canada is the oil giant Enbridge, which sees energy alternatives not as a method to stop the oil industry’s plunder of the earth, but as simply another method of making profit. Clearly we have to challenge corporate power and the way capitalism organizes our relationship with nature.

Alienation

Under capitalism, nature has become something outside of human beings, something we visit periodically, something that is instrumental for our needs, but which we are not a part of. As Marx writes, “For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognised as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws merely as a ruse so as to subject it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production.”

This is a reflection of the way in which capitalism has physically separated us from nature and given control over our labour—our creative interaction with nature—to profit-driven corporations. In the modern workplace, ushered in during the nineteenth century, workers have no say over what we produce, how we produce it, or for whom. Marx described the result as alienation: “The relation of the worker to the product of labor as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically opposed to him.” We can see this in the way the mainstream media portrays “natural disasters” like floods and hurricanes as a hostile planet threatening us—instead of seeing these climate disasters as products of society’s interaction with nature.

Ecological revolution

To overcome our alienation from the natural world, we must tackle at the same time our alienation from labour and from the work we perform on a daily basis, since the two are integrally connected. A system that treats human beings as expendable cogs in the machine will do the same to the natural world in which we must survive. To overcome this alienation we need to use the collective power we have to wrest the decisions about what is produced and how it is produced from those whose only concern is the bottom line. The coming together of concerns over the environment and the struggle for workers’ power is not two separate struggles, but the same one. Ultimately, we can only save our world if we can bring together the power of workers to challenge the priorities of capital and the realization that we are a part of nature—not its masters, nor its slaves.

As Marx’s collaborator Friedrich Engels wrote in *Dialectics of Nature*, “We by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly...The more this progresses the more will men not only feel but also know their oneness with nature, and the more impossible will become the senseless and unnatural idea of a contrast between mind and matter, man and nature, soul and body...This regulation, however, requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and simultaneously a revolution in our whole contemporary social order.”

INTERNATIONAL



Fifty years after Martin Luther King’s dream

by PAOLO BASSI

IN AUGUST 1963, in a speech that has gone down as a watershed moment in history, Martin Luther King stood in front of the Washington Monument and condemned the American racial apartheid system. The 1963 speech has become a central part of King’s myth—a myth safe enough for mainstream American history to promote and, indeed, safe enough for a day to be named in his honour. This myth teaches us King was a preacher who just wanted people to be better and the world more peaceful. The real King was far more intelligent and complex and rather more radical.

King was not after better people or merely asking for racial acceptance. He was demanding a better, more just, society for all. King was not alone. The American civil rights movement was part of a larger anti-colonial struggle that saw black and brown peoples fight to end European colonialism in Africa and Asia.

King after 1963

After the speech, as violence against the civil rights movement escalated—including the sickening murder of four little girls in Birmingham, Alabama—King and other black leaders began to fall in line with grassroots anger. King went from troublesome priest to subversive by publicly attacking the immorality of the violence being unleashed by Washington’s war machine in Vietnam. King decried the military’s criminal waste of money when millions of Americans lived in poverty.

While never a Marxist, King had

evolved politically and came to the revolutionary realization that the whole American capitalist/imperialist system was rotten to its core. Racism, war, crime, violence, poverty and inequality were created and maintained by a vast interlocked system that most barely saw, let alone understood.

In 1968, King went further and organized the “Poor People’s Campaign” to demand economic justice. The campaign intended to take a “multiracial army of the poor” to Washington to demand an “economic bill of rights” for the poor. King was becoming dangerous—class and inequality were things the American indoctrination system pretended did not exist.

In late March 1968, King came to Memphis to support black sanitation workers striking against low pay and discrimination. The city was using the old tactic of turning white workers against blacks by paying black workers less. On April 3, 1968, the day before his assassination, King gave his “I’ve been to the mountaintop” speech—his last and perhaps most heartfelt. More than any other, this speech reveals King’s fundamental beliefs. Socialist or not, King was his brother’s keeper and demanded we all be.

Fifty years later

Fifty years after his 1963 speech, what would King make of his country if he were allowed to wander freely? If King thought inequality was bad in 1963, today’s era of multinationals and billionaires would be beyond his belief. The poor may have more gadgets in 2013 but the relative poverty is far worse than 1963.

In 2013, King would find a cul-

ture claiming to be anti-racist or post-racial, with a black president symbolizing the gains of the civil rights movement. But King would be wise enough to know that a black candidate owned by the usual corporate, financial and military elites is as capable of doing their bidding as anyone else. King wouldn’t have to look too hard to find a disproportionate number of blacks still facing a grinding daily struggle. As the wealth gap has grown in general in the last few decades, the race gap has grown even more. Due to poverty, blacks suffer more stress, have more health problems and die sooner. This is what poverty does—it is an assault on body and spirit. King would be on depressingly familiar territory.

King would find that alongside a greatly enhanced military-industrial complex, in 2013 there is a vast prison-industrial complex holding about 2.25 million Americans, of which almost one million are black men. No other country comes close to such a nightmare. Half a century after the Jim Crow lynchings of his time, King would find the extrajudicial killing of Trayvon Martin, hunted and killed for being black. No stranger to being tracked by the FBI, King would find a fully developed surveillance state in 2013, with technology able to monitor citizens’ speech, travel, reading and personal communications.

But King would also be pleased to find a familiar and ongoing legacy of struggle—from the millions of Americans who were radicalized against the war on Iraq and those who reject an attack on Syria, to the wave of fast food workers, predominantly from racialized communities, fighting for economic justice.

Greek anti-fascists need our support

ANTI-FASCIST and anti-racist activists in Greece have been charged under Greece’s “anti-terror” laws for speaking out against the recent police killings of two Albanian escaped prisoners.

Petros Constantinou is an elected member of Athens City Council and the national coordinator of KEERFA (United Movement Against Racism and the Fascist Threat), an anti-fascist and anti-racist organization in Greece. In early July, Petros spoke out against the recent police killings of two Albanian escaped prisoners, describing their deaths as “the de facto application of the death penalty.”

In response, police have charged Petros under state “anti-terror” legislation for “terrorizing” the population and damaging Greece’s “international relations.” The only evidence for these charges was a distorted statement taken from the website of the openly fascist Golden Dawn party (Chrysi Avgi). The charges were announced the same day that fascists made death threats against Petros and defaced the local offices of a left-wing political party.

These charges represent an escalation of state repression against outspoken anti-fascist activists, including Konstantinos Moutzouris, former Dean of NTUA

(Athens Polytechnic); Savvas Michael, Secretary of the EEK (Revolutionary Labour Party); and members of Samos Hospital workers’ union, who blocked Golden Dawn’s racist blood donation program.

The ongoing persecution of anti-fascist and anti-racist activists in Greece must be stopped, along with the criminalization of newcomers, migrants and refugees. The Greek government must drop all charges against these activists and end all collaboration with the fascist Golden Dawn.

To sign the online petition or to send a letter of support, and for other ways to help, please visit: <http://www.socialist.ca/node/1889>

Popular resistance to the ‘Values Charter’

*The Parti Québécois’ proposed charter promotes racism, distracts from neoliberalism and hijacks legitimate demands for self-determination but, as **Chantal Sundaram** outlines, popular resistance has already begun.*

SINCE DEBATE over the Parti Québécois’ “Values Charter” exploded in late August over the banning of hijabs, crosses, kippas and other religious symbols, a number of developments have confirmed the real threat this legislation poses even before being tabled.

First, the right-wing opposition party CAQ revealed their support for the essentials of the charter, in particular the notion of banning teachers in primary and secondary schools from wearing religious symbols due to their status as role models and their position of authority in relation to minors.

Comments by ordinary Quebecois on francophone online news sites indicate that this argument does not hold sway with many: “Just because a teacher wears a headscarf, all their students would wear one too? On the contrary, the students would learn tolerance.”

Islamophobia

Then, while the debate raged, on the night of August 31 a mosque in the town of Chicoutimi, in the rural region of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, was doused in pig’s blood with a letter left at the scene: “You come here to our country to escape dictatorship, war, violence, hatred and death...why do you come to our country only to try to change it in the image of the country that you escaped? Leave your hijab, niqab, burqa, sharia, forget your primitive demands...integrate or go home. Enough! This mosque is baptized with the blood of fresh pork of Quebec!”

On the same day, a Muslim youth conference in Montreal was cancelled for security reasons by the city’s largest convention centre where it was supposed to be held after drawing criticism from the PQ over four speakers invited from France. Although it was held anyway at a nearby mosque, the expected 1,000-2,000 participants were reduced to 100. The PQ even asked the federal government to weigh in by banning some of the speakers.

As of mid-September, the PQ appears unwilling to water down their proposal in any way for quick passage in the minority legislature, preferring instead to encourage “popular debate” on their plan. But just as public debate on “reasonable accommodation” in Quebec in 2007 and 2008 had a less politically polarizing result than expected, dragging out debate now in order to provoke a distracting social crisis could backfire on the PQ even more, as popular support declines in the face of what the plan would mean in reality.

Neoliberalism

The “Values Charter” is an obvious attempt to scapegoat Muslims specifically and immigrants more generally, and to distract the Quebec population from the forward march of neoliberal destruction initiated by the Quebec Liberals and carried on seamlessly by the PQ. As they continue to undermine public funding for healthcare and education, they target public sector workers. And racist elements in Quebec society take the PQ actions as an excuse for their attacks on mosques.

This is a different version of what is happening elsewhere in



PQ leader Pauline Marois

Canada, where public sector workers are targeted as leaches on the taxpayer. In Quebec, the divide and conquer strategy of the moment is to play the racist card. But they didn’t invent it: it is a repeat of the same strategy used in France in the late 1990s and again in 2004, when the hijab was banned for students in public schools. This came on the heels of a massive strike by French teachers, a militancy which the French government needed to quell. The hijab debate unfortunately was effective in dividing French teachers’ unions internally at that time.

Teachers

The attempt to use Islamophobia for similar purposes in Quebec is not new, but the debate has evolved. The federation that unites nine public teachers’ unions representing 32,000 members, the FAE, asserts that while they are in support of the secularization of the state, the PQ charter is not truly secular. As FAE president Sylvain Mallette correctly states, “The right of our members to work is at stake.”

But the FAE also targets the hypocrisy of the PQ and the CAQ by demanding that the crucifix that has been hanging in the Quebec National Assembly since 1936 be removed. Both parties, which support the notion of a charter of “secular values,” also support maintaining the crucifix in the heart of Quebec’s state authority, as a symbol of the Quebecois heritage. As Mallette has pointed out in the media, “It is hypocritical to legislate a charter of secular values beneath a religious icon.”

Liberals

The teachers’ federation does call for regulation of religious accommodation, of religious holidays for example. But although the Quebec government under the Liberals in 2007 commissioned a report on religious accommodation, and the resulting Bouchard-Taylor report produced a number of recommendations that respected freedom of religion, accommodation, and multiculturalism, most have not been addressed. So, although the opposition Liberals cloak their opposition to the PQ charter in col-

ours of support for accommodation, their own track record is no better.

The Liberals are not only in opposition to the PQ, but also the voice of federalism within Quebec. And this means they must fly the mythical flag of Canadian multiculturalism high. But it is a myth, laid bare by the Harper government’s racist immigration policy, and militaristic rewriting of Canadian history. And yet, the myth of the Quebecois as being uniquely racist, due to their legitimate desire for self-determination, continues to be propagated. Despite the xenophobia and Islamophobia of the PQ and the equally opportunistic Quebec-bashing by federalists inside and outside Quebec, the fact remains that the debate inside Quebec over the charter is as complex and contradictory as the debate over secularism has been throughout the Western world since September 11, 2001.

Neutrality?

The Quebec minister who authored the “Values Charter”, Bernard Drainville, was quoted as saying, “The best way to respect the religious rights of all is to assure that the state has no religion.” This is absolutely true. But we live in a society in which the “neutrality” of the state is itself a myth, whether it comes to religion or to whose material interests it serves. The cross that hangs in the Quebec legislature is but a reminder of the fact that all notions of law and justice in Western society flow from a Judeo-Christian culture (although many of its precepts actually originate in variants of Islamic law). A truly secular state would put into question what “neutrality” really means.

This is not a debate about secularization. It is a debate about Islamophobia, racism, and the solidarity needed to resist the dismantling of the public sector by those who will resort to any means to accomplish it.

Resistance

On September 9, an open letter signed by 91 Quebec thinkers, mostly francophone academics, asserted exactly that. Entitled “Our values exclude exclusion,” it denounces the PQ’s charter and op-

poses any such charter on the basis of rejecting racism and the exclusion of immigrant women from social spaces.

Numerous institutions and municipalities, including the City of Montreal, have already declared intentions to use the plan’s proposed five-year exemption clause to opt out of the charter’s requirements.

And a CROP poll of 1,000 people—conducted online between September 12 and 15, and published in La Presse on September 18—became the second consecutive survey that week to record a major drop in support for the idea of a charter since the PQ first floated it a year ago. Overall, only 42 per cent of respondents supported it while 45 per cent opposed it, and those who strongly opposed the plan were twice as numerous as people who strongly supported it.

But most significantly, the CROP poll suggested the plan would skyrocket in popularity if the provision banning religious headwear were removed from it. In other words, there appears to be much less interest in banning the hijab than in banning other symbols like the cross.

While this poll was being taken, on September 14, thousands took to the streets of Montreal to protest the charter and demonstrate support for an inclusive Quebec. Hijabi women draped their heads in the Quebec flag, and some non-racialized Quebecois protesters joined those from a variety of racialized communities of Montreal.

Adil Charkaoui, a former victim of a Canadian federal “anti-terror” measure—Security Certificates, designed to prosecute Canada’s war on Muslims at home by subjecting them to secret trials without disclosed evidence—is now a spokesman for the Quebec Collective Against Islamophobia. Charkaoui said the September 14 demonstration is only one of several planned actions against the proposed charter.

This is the side of public opinion inside Quebec that the English Canadian media chooses to ignore in its haste to once again brand all Quebecois as motivated by ethnic racism. But this resistance is as real as PQ attempts to scapegoat, and can only be ignored for so long.

This is not a debate about secularization. It is a debate about Islamophobia, racism, and the solidarity needed to resist the dismantling of the public sector by those who will resort to any means to accomplish it.

From the Red Power movement to Idle No More

The Red Power movement set off a wave of action and raised the level of consciousness in both the indigenous and non-indigenous communities. Valerie Lannon looks at the history of this movement and how it has influenced the ongoing Idle No More movement.



A FORMER member of the American Indian Movement looked back at the days of Red Power and said, “I didn’t think of it as ‘a string of successes’ at the time, but I guess that’s what it was. It was a time when you questioned things, when what you hadn’t really thought about became pretty obvious. It was a time when you could make a difference.”

Red Power, like Black Power, set off a wave of action and a level of consciousness in both the indigenous and non-indigenous communities, which has never really ended. Before we get to the parallels between the Red Power movement and Idle No More, let’s look at the international context in which it took place, some of the key events of the older movement, as well as the legacy it left behind.

American Indian Movement

As early as June 1961, representatives from more than 60 tribes met in Chicago and issued a “Declaration of Indian Purpose”, and growing out of this was

the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) of young, mainly urban native activists. It was one of the first native activist organizations formed during the civil rights era. In 1968, The American Indian Movement, best known as AIM, was formed in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was inspired by the Black Panthers and was set up to address similar problems: police harassment, racism and poverty. It had its strongest bases in urban settings, but quickly became known on large reserves across the US and Canada.

The 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco was a turning point: led not by local tribes but by a “national” or supra-tribal organization (in this case the “Indians of All Tribes”), activists began targeting urban centres and/or national monuments or property as “surplus” government land that belonged to the indigenous people. The Alcatraz occupation lasted 19 months. The impact was electric and widespread. As one person said, “Every once in a while something happens that can alter the whole shape of a

people’s history. This only happens once in a generation or lifetime. The big one was Alcatraz.”

Another important event was the “Trail of Broken Treaties”, a caravan of hundreds of indigenous activists to the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building in Washington D.C. in November 1972, immediately prior to the presidential election.

There was also a shift to longer-term occupations in the early 1970s. The most famous of these was at Wounded Knee in the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota (the place of the US massacre of the Lakota Sioux in 1890). The siege lasted for 71 days. Subsequent tribal-based occupations occurred in 1974 and 1975, and were of varying duration, in locations everywhere from New York state, to Wisconsin, New Mexico, South Dakota and Washington.

By 1975, AIM began to make a priority of establishing or strengthening connections with indigenous peoples internationally, leading to an AIM offshoot called the International Indian Treaty Council.

Red Power in Canada

The precipitating event for the Red Power movement in Canada was the federal government’s release of its “Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy”, or a “White Paper” for discussion, in June 1969—the same year as the Alcatraz occupation. This document sought to extinguish all distinct status for First Nations people, the very status guaranteed under existing laws. The White Paper would have been the death knell of distinct First Nations cultures and rights, as paltry as these rights were under the Indian Act (enacted in 1876). The assimilation goal that underpinned the White Paper represented a continuation of longstanding colonial policy of the Canadian state.

Key events

What is striking about the Red Power era, and what distinguished it from other periods of native resistance, is the frequency of actions taken, and the direct action focus they took—as opposed to the lobbying efforts which were the main tactic

used previously. In January 1970, 200 Indians and Métis occupied the Alberta “New Start” Centre in Lac La Biche because the government cancelled its research programs. The summer of 1973 saw the occupation of the office of the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, and the occupation of the Minister of Indian Affairs office in Kenora, Ontario. The summer of 1973 also saw the Cache Creek, BC highway blockade to protest poor housing conditions on reserve. On October 16, 1973, hundreds of Mohawks fought police and smashed windows of band council offices on the Caughnawaga reserve in Quebec. The year 1974 was seen by some as the turning point in the Red Power movement in Canada.

One of the major events was the occupation of Anicinabe (municipal) Park in Kenora, in July 1974. An Ojibway group said the park had been wrongfully taken from them by the city of Kenora in 1959, to which it had been sold by the federal government without Ojibway permission. But the July occupation created an atmosphere to articulate

other demands, e.g. an end to police harassment in Kenora, better medical and dental services, removal of a particular judge (S.J. Nottingham), creation of a police college for First Nations peoples and cultural training for white police, creation of a local human rights committee, and appointment of First Nations justices of the peace. The occupation lasted 39 days, involving a standoff between 100 First Nations participants (including support from members of AIM) and police.

The next main event that year occurred on Parliament Hill in September 1974, immediately after Anicinabe. To build support, Louis Cameron, a leader with the Ojibway Warriors Society and of the Anicinabe occupation, went around Canada and launched the Native People’s Caravan to get people to Ottawa by September 30. He succeeded in attracting 900 people. On Parliament Hill, there were three lines of police. Indigenous people were unarmed but police had bayonets and tear gas and charged on the native people.

Debates within the Red Power movement

One debate was about tactics. One objection to AIM was that it was not sufficiently rooted in local communities to have credibility, e.g. its members wouldn’t know local habits or culture. Disagreement about tactics was somewhat related to generational differences, and somewhat related to lack of real inclusion. Other debates were created by conservative thinkers within the native community. The best example comes from a lawyer, William Wuttunee, who agreed with those on the right that the best way forward for native people was to assimilate into Canadian economic and political life. He supported the 1969 White Paper and, not surprisingly, was called upon frequently by the federal government to act as a native spokesman.

Relationship with other progressive forces in Canada

Many native people understood the links between their oppression and corporate greed. There were explicit anti-capitalists in the movement, just as there are today with groups like Idle No More. Some Red Power activists were heavily influenced by nationalist struggles for self-determination happening in Africa and Vietnam, and in their ideological explorations found that Marxist explanations of the causes of oppression

and imperialism made the most sense. One indigenous Marxist was Howard Adams from Saskatchewan. In 1975 he wrote, “If Native organizations are not politically active on a regular basis they cannot come together with non-Native people—it institutionalizes special status and gives a message to non-Natives that says ‘our problems are different from yours and our solutions are different.’ However, in fact, the problems are the same in the end; a small number of rich people get all the benefits of the capitalist society, and the vast majority, Native and non-Native, face constant insecurity and poverty.”

The NDP

In 1972, the NDP was elected in BC. Premier Dave Barrett appointed First Nations leader Frank Calder to his Cabinet, but as a “minister without portfolio”—so Calder had no effective mandate. This same duplicity was shown by the NDP in Manitoba. During the Berger inquiry into the MacKenzie Valley pipeline meeting in Winnipeg, the NDP declined to make a submission. They knew that if they supported the pipeline they would be unpopular with ordinary people. But if they spoke out too loudly against the pipeline, they would be hypocritical, as such opposition would fly in the face of their own behaviour towards native people, e.g. through support of hydro-

electric projects in northern Manitoba (flooding of South Indian Lake) and forced relocations.

Challenges and successes

Historically, and to this day, federal and provincial governments divide indigenous people by alternating their point of contact between national leaders and Band leaders—whichever will help the government get through its agenda the easiest. Outside the movement, both the NDP and labour leadership failed to consistently support indigenous struggles in a vocal, visible way, even though individual members of the NDP and labour were counted as allies by activists. Internally, there was a lack of structure (e.g. AIM to this day prides itself on its loose structure), illusions about international law and the UN, and a belief that self-determination on its own would solve the problems of poverty and inequality. But the challenges faced by the Red Power movement were far outweighed by the tremendous legacy left by the actions in the 1970s. Among the victories were: forcing the government to withdraw its 1969 White Paper (in 1973), cultural renewal (which also affected non-indigenous people), funding for social programs, increased access to education and increased content (e.g. native studies programs), increased confidence to resist with greater frequency and militancy of actions.

Comparison with Idle No More

The thread between the Red Power movement and Idle No More is with the 1990s confrontations in Oka and Gustafsen Lake, plus the native youth movement and warrior societies of the early 2000s. Indigenous activists look to the histories of their own peoples, as well as struggles elsewhere. Red Power activists were inspired by the Black Power and Vietnam struggles. The Warrior Societies were inspired by the Zapatistas, the Palestinian Intifada, and by the analysis of capitalist globalization and the need for alliances among indigenous peoples, students, workers and all oppressed people. Idle No More came on the heels of the Arab Spring, Occupy movement, and the “printemps érablé” in Quebec.

There are a number of similarities between Red Power and Idle No More. The basic demands are the same: control of traditional lands and resources, and control of community government. Both movements began in response to federal legislation: in 1969 it was the White Paper, and in 2012 it was the Omnibus Bill C-38. In both there is a high level of activity, increased pride in indigenous communities, debates between grassroots activists and formal “leaders”, tactical debates around direct action, and elements that are explicitly anti-capitalist. With both movements there is a need for solidarity, but there is relative ambiva-

lence of the NDP towards the movements’ aims, including around pipelines.

There are also a number of differences. First, Red Power was led more within the US while INM began within Canada. Second, like the civil rights, Black Power and anti-war movements, the public face of Red Power was male-dominated, whereas the public face of INM is much more female. Third, whereas Jeanette Lavall was opposed by many Chiefs and Councils for fighting discrimination against First Nations women, there is more unity today between men and women—with women leading the movement, challenging the oppression of indigenous women (like the missing and murdered aboriginal women), with support from INM men. Fourth, while both movements had a level of support from non-indigenous people, INM has explicitly called for and achieved greater support—including internationally. Fifth, the root causes of the issues people are facing are increasingly being identified with capitalism, to a greater degree than took place in the movements of the 1960s and 70s. Finally, there is a greater connection between militants in one movement and another, e.g. in the climate justice movement.

All of these factors mean that the potential for non-indigenous activists to link arms with their indigenous sisters and brothers is higher than when Red Power first made its mark.

STUDENTS

How do we build a fighting student movement?

THE CANADIAN Federation of Students (CFS) is the largest and most progressive of the campus student organizations outside of Quebec. It represents over half a million students from more than 80 university and college students’ unions across Canada. It was formed on October 18, 1981 as the merger of two national organizations—the National Union of Students in Canada and the Association of Student Councils—and student federations from Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

The intent was to create a united student movement in Canada, capable of providing student-oriented services and political representation at the federal and provincial levels of government. This came in the face of an announcement by the federal government of \$2 billion in cuts. At the founding conference, the campaign against the cuts was launched with the slogan “access, not axe us,” calling for the establishment of an all-grant system and a public inquiry into the future of post-secondary education (PSE). Their mandate was to reach out to public sector workers and community groups to build solidarity in resisting the cuts to other social programs.

In 1995, the CFS led a 100,000-strong strike against Income Contingent Loan Repayment (ICLR) schemes that would have dramatically increased tuition fees. ICLR schemes were part of the 1995 federal Liberal budget, a budget that made the deepest cuts to social programs in Canadian history (that is, until the 2012 budget from Stephen Harper and the Conservatives). The CFS-led strike engaged and mobilized tens of thousands of students and workers, defeated the ICLR scheme, and helped encourage the 1995 Ontario Days of Action — when workers organized general strikes in cities across the province.

Since then, the CFS has been actively lobbying on tuition-related issues, including holding several national days-of-action. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the only province where all public college and university students’ are members of the CFS, students pay the lowest average undergraduate tuition fees outside of Quebec. Tuition fees were reduced by 25 per cent in the 1990s and frozen since 1999, and the interest on the provincial portion of student loans has been eliminated due to the pressure the student movement applied to the then-Conservative government. Tuition fees in British Columbia were frozen between 1996 and 2002. Manitoba was also forced to reduce fees by 10 per cent in 2000.

The CFS also organizes on broader issues on campus, including campaigns against racism and Islamophobia, and for a woman’s right to choose. During the mass protests of 2003 against the Iraq War, activists inside and outside of the CFS mobilized thousands of students from coast to coast. These mobilizations — especially the 250,000-strong protest in Montreal — stopped the Canadian government from officially participating in war.

Undermining the student movement

Because of its role in building a progressive student movement, the CFS has faced stiff opposition from conservative and right-wing forces on campus. De-federation drives (where campuses vote to cut ties to the CFS) have followed claims that the CFS’ call for the abolition of tuition fees is unrealistic or undesirable or criticism that the CFS should not be involved in social justice issues.

The organizations that come to fill the void are inevitably organizations that are not progressive and are usually shells for the main two corporate parties of Canada. For example, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) was created in 1995 by the Liberal Party as a response to successful mobilization by CFS locals against the Liberal budget.

Ironically, some who consider themselves left radicals have encouraged de-federation campaigns on the basis that the CFS is not radical enough; these campaigns have failed to build a broad student movement and have instead played into right-wing campaigns that weaken the student movement. These campaigns also wrongly conclude that the CFS is a barrier to a more radical student movement in English Canada. But strong student movements are not simply called into being from above, but built from below by rank-and-file student activists — whether CFS members or not.

Organizing on campus takes lots of work, but can only be done by talking to rank-and-file students in classes and departments. We can’t turn our backs on mass student organizations or expect them to call a strike that has not been built from below (which would invite failure). If we want to spread the Quebec Spring, we need to learn the lessons and build a mass student movement from below, uniting with and strengthening the CFS. This doesn’t mean waiting for the CFS to take initiatives. Start a petition, organize a forum, find others who are committed to working for social justice on campus, and create a group that is dedicated to working on these issues. This core of activists can play a role in mobilizing other students and putting pressure on other student organizations to get on board as well.

Revolutionaries and student movements

Students need their student unions. Students also need to be united by progressive organizations like the CFS, which have an orientation towards engaging students through large-scale campaigns.

The Drop Fees campaigns and national days-of-action show why it is important to defend the progressive student organization that exists and fight against the right-wing on campus, those forces that would have us organized in student associations that would rubberstamp fee increases and fail to mobilize and reach out to marginalized students on campus and beyond.

The very strength of a broad-based student union is also its weakness. Elected student leaders are accountable to all their

OPINION



Australian election: no mandate for Tory agenda
Socialists in the Australian organization Solidarity analyze the election and the fightback needed.

TONY ABBOTT, a right-wing neoliberal infamous for his misogyny and social conservatism, is moving into The Lodge. Millions are horrified about what this government will do. But Abbott won’t have it easy if we build the resistance against him.

When Abbott declared Australia “open for business” in his election night speech, he meant open slather for the rich and powerful, like Gina Rinehart and the construction bosses.

But Abbott has no mandate for his big business agenda. Overwhelmingly, people voted against Labor — not for the Coalition.

On so many issues — same-sex marriage, climate change, penalty rates, jobs cuts, cuts to higher education — a majority oppose Abbott. He is already unpopular and distrusted. In an Essential poll, one week before the election, only 38 per cent described Abbott as trustworthy, 55 per cent thought him narrow-minded and 52 per cent judged him out of touch with ordinary people. Only 16 per cent preferred him as Liberal leader.

Sixty per cent told Essential poll in August that the Liberals were too close to big corporate and financial interests, and 65 per cent believed they would promise anything to win votes. Even Abbott’s victory wasn’t what it was anticipated to be — with a swing of just 1.7 per cent to the Coalition. Abbott and Treasurer Joe Hockey’s proposed “Commission of Audit” of government finances no doubt is about preparing the ground for budget cuts in the future.

The fight against Abbott will have to come from outside parliament. From in-

side parliament, Labor and The Greens have said they will oppose Abbott’s plan to repeal the carbon tax — but the tax is useless anyway and parliamentary resistance is likely to be token. After July 2014, the new collection of Coalition and right-wing Senators will hold a majority, giving Abbott a green light. The Greens and Labor combined will not be able to block him.

But the Coalition can be beaten back. Abbott is determined to go on the offensive against refugees and asylum seekers straight away. The anger displayed at mass rallies since Rudd announced the PNG deal can now be turned on Abbott and the Coalition and used to build the refugee campaign in the community and in the unions.

Abbott says he will resurrect the ABCC (Howard’s anti-construction union watchdog) within 100 days. If Abbott gets away with this, he will be confident to go further. But industrial action can make it a dead letter.

The company bosses are buying for blood, demanding a return to WorkChoices-style policies and an end to “red tape”. Abbott has promised to cull 12,000 public sector jobs, attack university research and hack \$4.5 billion from the foreign aid budget.

Abbott proclaimed himself to be the prime minister for Indigenous Australians but they will be some of the first attacked when he cuts \$42 million from the Aboriginal Legal Service. That will be just the first of many attacks if he gets away with it.

Copping it sweet and running a campaign to get Labor elected in another three

years, as the unions have done in NSW and Queensland in response to state Liberal job cuts, will do nothing to stop Abbott’s offensive.

In August 1996, six months after the Howard government was elected, thousands of unionists converged on Parliament House, angry at anti-union laws and proposed budget cuts. Howard’s government was rocked to the core as his popularity plummeted. But the union officials let Howard off the hook, winding back the struggle in favour of a campaign to get Labor elected.

Then Howard ruled for 11 years, imposing his white-blindfold view of history and his white picket fence view of society. He went on to attempt to smash the MUA in 1998, and ramped up anti-refugee policies. We can’t let that happen again.

Abbott needs to know from day one that there is a movement that will stand up to him. Building the refugee rallies and building solidarity for the NTEU’s battles against pay and university cuts will be hugely important. Defending the first victims of Abbott’s attacks, like the Aboriginal Legal Service, will be key. Union action against the ABCC and any anti-union laws can force Abbott back.

If there is one over-riding lesson from the last six years of Labor behaving like Liberals, it is that we can’t rely on them to resist Abbott’s agenda. All the more reason to build a socialist organisation committed to fighting Abbott and the system he represents.

This is republished from the Australian socialist organization Solidarity.

members, including both left- and right-wing students. This reality can undermine the confidence of progressive student leaders to take positions on issues that fall outside obvious “bread and butter” education issues. It can also slow the speed at which elected student leaders are able to respond formally to such issues when they arise.

This helps explain why holding elected positions can have a conservatizing influence on even the most progressive student leaders. It is also why student unions and the CFS cannot come out and call for general student strikes simply because a few dozen activists have waged a determined Facebook campaign.

Some “radicals” will say this is evidence of the ineffectiveness of student unions, and that provincial and national student organizations are “part of the problem.” However, this criticism misses the point: a student union can only be as radical as its membership.

Student union leaders who embark on a radical course with no meaningful base of support from the membership will ensure a backlash, such as electoral defeat to the right, and possibly a de-federation campaign from CFS. This top-down “left-wing” strategy has to be discredited.

Alternatively, student radicals who condemn the CFS and see the solution as organizing outside and around student unions

can cede ground to right-wing students who, if elected, won’t hesitate to put the collective resources of the student union to work on reactionary projects. Right-wing student leaders have opposed freezing tuition fees, blocked progressive initiatives, and squandered student resources, mostly on de-federation drives that are intended to divide and demoralize students and weaken the movement as a whole.

On every campus, there are right-wing students and left-wing students, but the vast majority fall somewhere in the middle, carrying a mix of both progressive and conservative ideas. What we need is not a handful of “radicals” trying to make change on behalf of students, but a network of “radicalizers” — who can win this middle majority away from the right and towards the left. This can’t be done through denouncing, bullying and intimidating them, only through patiently organizing and winning them to effective action and coherent politics through practice.

To be effective, radicalizers need to be in an organization that can generalize lessons across campuses, and link the student movement to broader movements including, the labour movement.

This is an excerpt from the new pamphlet “Students, austerity and resistance” and is available at Resistance Press Bookroom (see ad on page 10).

Socialist Worker Fighting Fund

Thanks to the support of our readers, we have received over \$14,000 in pledges and collections for the 2013 Socialist Worker Fighting Fund Drive. That means we’re well over the half-way mark toward our \$25,000 goal. We thank all our readers and supporters for helping us get this far. We hope that, if you haven’t done so already, you’ll consider making a contribution. We appreciate every dollar we receive, so help us extend the reach of Socialist Worker by making a pledge or contribution! Cheques, money orders or pledges can be sent to the Socialist Worker Fighting Fund, c/o Box 339, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 4E3.

\$25,000

REVIEWS



BOOK

Bolsheviki: a play about war and revolution

Bolsheviki: A Dead Serious Comedy

Written by David Fennario
Reviewed by G.F. Hodge

BOLSHEVIKI, THE latest piece of theatre from Montreal playwright David Fennario, tells the story of Harry “Rosie” Rollins, a veteran of the First World War and native of Pointe St. Charles, the Montreal neighbourhood in which Fennario himself grew up. Rollins is a chatty, hard-drinking and hard-singing bilingual Irishman who is accosted by young reporter Jerry Nines one Remembrance Day. Rollins proceeds to give Nines, and by extension the audience, a lesson in the hidden history of the so-called “war to end all wars.” Unlike what most us get in our high school history books, this is a history full of off-colour jokes, bawdy songs, insubordination, mutiny and revolution.

Rollins is the poor son of a single mother who grows up singing in taverns for spare change. He tells how, like many other Irish from the Pointe, he joined up as soon as the war started. Rosie’s war is the not a war of genteel officers’ clubs and discussions of strategy and private-schooled aristocrats shouting “tally-ho”, but rather a bewildering hell-hole of constant shelling, trackless mud and ambitious officers who happily send the men to their deaths.

Rosie tells the young Nines of how he stuffed a sock in the mouth of a dying comrade in order to make him quiet down, how he dreamed of shooting his company commander in the back, and how he was befriended by Quebecois private “Rummy” Robidou, who introduced him to the idea of a soldiers’ strike. Rummy is eventually shot by firing squad for refusing to undertake another suicide patrol.

Rosie tells Nines about how news of the Quebec anti-conscription riots in 1917 spread from bed to bed while he was in hospital recovering from wounds, and how a fracas started right in the hospital among the wounded, the first of the so-called “Wanna Go Home Riots”. Rosie tells of a war fought by working class kids on both sides, and how those working class kids came to realize that the real enemy was not the men on the other side of no man’s land, but rather their own officers ordering them into battle.

Rosie takes this realization back to Canada after the war, participating in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 and spending time in jail for being a

revolutionary.

Those familiar with Fennario’s work will recognize in *Bolsheviki* his ear for rough humour and the linguistic rhythms of the neighbourhood in which he grew up, as well as his clear call for solidarity among working people. Nobody writes bilingual slang better than Fennario, and the show paints a vivid portrait of a man radicalized by war and who tries to do something about it. The show’s great strength is its demonstration of the reality of revolution, that the movements that are capable of changing the world are not conjured up by “great men” but rather are formed by hundreds of thousands of ordinary people who decide they’ve had enough—ordinary people with dirt under their fingernails, who swear and brawl and like a drink.

The show is above all an acknowledgement and celebration of the potential power ordinary people have to change the world.

Bolsheviki was first produced in Montreal in late-2010. It’s not currently being produced anywhere, but pick up a copy of the published script if you can, or pester a theatre in your city to produce it. It’s a fitting salute, in Fennario’s words, to “all those Bolsheviki that didn’t make it into the history books.”

BOOK

Take a moment to savour, and eat real food too!

No Ordinary Apple: A Story About Eating Mindfully

Written by Sara Marlowe
Reviewed by Jonathon Hodge

AT FIRST glance, it might not be obvious just how political *No Ordinary Apple* can be. Sara Marlowe’s debut picture book ostensibly shows children that by slowing down, using all of one’s senses, and focussing on the task at hand, one’s food becomes a wondrous adventure rather than simply fuel. On that level alone, it works beautifully. But—like so many memorable works of creativity—it works on other levels too, and those levels are equally adventurous.

The book opens with Elliot returning from school to find his neighbour watching the house. He wants a snack, preferably candy. His neighbour Carmen offers an apple instead. Elliot balks, until Carmen walks him through a sensory tour that transforms his ordinary work-a-day apple into something extraordinary. Marlowe’s text, balanced by Phil Pascuzzo’s vibrant and quirky illustrations, makes for a lovely read and one that en-

gages children from two years old on upwards.

But there is something subversive lurking within Marlowe’s words. Elliot comes home from school, and his parents are not at home. Why not? Because they both have to work to maintain the sort of standard of living that will afford Elliot opportunities as he approaches adulthood. Only a generation ago (~30 years) such households required a single income, not two. Times have changed. Today, massive food conglomerates have enormous influence on the nutritional health of millions of consumers, through their monopolies of supply, dominance in supermarket distribution, and all sorts of manipulative marketing techniques designed to get us to buy more high-margin processed food. Marlowe’s call to return to a sensory and sensible approach to diet is a subtle throwdown to the likes of McDonald’s, ADM, and Coca-Cola, who’d rather we mindlessly quaff their pseudo-foods.

Related to this, Carmen jolts Elliot out of his complacent approach to the world around him, by challenging him to use his senses. When he does, the world is revealed as much richer

than he thought. It is but a small leap from using our senses to appreciate our food, to using our sense to reveal the nonsense of the world around us. Elliot, by slowing down in this case, takes his first step into a larger world; he takes his first step towards the hidden truth of that world.

Finally, when he asks what made the apple extraordinary, Carmen responds by saying, “You did!” In other words, his actions, his agency produced the change in his world. If he can change his lunch by his own actions, just imagine what he could change should he choose to act with hundreds or thousands of his neighbours, his community, his town?! Before one dismisses such notions as fanciful dreaming, consider the actions of hundreds of thousands of Egyptians who dreamed of one day living free of dictatorship—their own agency is what deposed Mubarak. Their task is not yet finished. In many ways, deposing Mubarak was Egyptians’ first step. Similarly, Elliot has taken one small step, the beginning of a long journey to a greater future.

No Ordinary Apple can be purchased through mindfulfamilies.ca

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Detroit: lights out for capitalism

I LOVE Detroit. Growing up in London, Ontario, equidistant from Detroit and Toronto, there was no contest. Neighbourhood bars where someone always had a cousin who lived in Canada and who bought you a drink; the Diego Rivera murals at the Art Institute; live blues, rock, jazz and soul artists playing in intimate clubs; real soul food; great sport venues: Detroit had it all. And now my dear Detroit is “bankrupt”.

In 2012, the Republican-dominated Michigan government enacted law PA436, which allows the state to dissolve any municipal or local government they deem “fiscally irresponsible”. Not surprisingly, they have targeted communities that are predominately working class, poor and black—like Flint and Detroit. In place of an elected government the state can appoint an “emergency manager” who wields dictatorial powers.

On September 11, in the midst of a late summer heat wave, areas of Detroit’s power went out for over four hours. Hospitals, seniors’ homes, courthouses, schools and streetlights went dark. Hundreds were trapped in sweltering elevators. Public buildings were evacuated. The reason? State appointed dictator Kevin Orr ordered public facilities to turn off their air conditioning to save power and strain on the city’s aging infrastructure, and to save money. In the words of Orr’s spokesperson, Gary Brown: “People didn’t respond as fast as we would like them to, so we had to send them a strong message, by turning off the power.” Brown then went on to tout privatization as the solution to the problem.

Why is Detroit broke?

How does a city go from being the richest (per capita) in the US in 1960 to bankruptcy in just over 50 years? Detroit was synonymous with the auto industry, the intersection of steel and fossil fuel that epitomized twentieth century capitalism. It also epitomized the contradictions of capitalism: a massive, efficient and collectivized workforce producing an isolated, inefficiently and individual mode of transportation. At one point there were over 300,000 unionized autoworkers at the heart of Detroit’s economy. Today less than 10 per cent remain.

Right wingers have their own explanations for Detroit’s fall. One points to the creation of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Environmental Protection Agency, both in 1970, and lays the blame on “government regulation” for getting in the way of free enterprise. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, city administrators foolishly “gifted” workers with pensions and health care. Then when times got tight they refused to bust unions and take back workers’ rights. And all this took place against the backdrop of NAFTA, as the US shipped jobs to low-wage plants in Mexico.

There is a theme that runs through these explanations: unionized US workers were (and are) overpaid and “entitled”. There was also an overabundance of democracy. City administrations were elected to see to the welfare of citizens. Workers with long and faithful service could expect a decent life in retirement thanks to contracts that deferred pay to the future—that’s what pensions are, after all. There was also the democratic muscle of their union organizations, trying to protect workers as their industry literally went south.

As a socialist I have many criticisms of the slow, concession-granting strategy of auto and steel unions through the 1970s and 80s. But for right wingers like the Republicans who rule the state government, the continued existence of any union power is an affront. Chief among the dictatorial powers granted to the “emergency manager” is the power to rip up union contracts.

Black power meets union power

Key to the decline of Detroit is the flight of money and population to the suburbs and beyond. And embedded in the way most analysts report this is racism.

In 1967, Detroit was the site of one of the biggest urban riots in US history. Of course the riots were primarily about race. They were the translation of the southern civil rights movement into the northern, urban environment of segregated neighbourhoods, racist hiring practices, and brutality on the part of an almost exclusively white police force. Detroit was about “black power.”

But there were other currents of rebellion and revolution in the air. In particular, the growth of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement attempted to fuse revolutionary politics and anti-racism to union organization in the auto plants. This history is brilliantly covered in *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, a great book dealing with the real history of the US working class. White and black revolutionary socialists were advocating solidarity and joint action, and beginning to win a hearing with white workers.

What followed was an opening of opportunities for blacks in many areas of employment, and simultaneously the beginnings of a flight of capital out of Detroit. Corporations sought to put an end to the threat epitomized by Detroit’s combination of black power and union power, planned their exit strategies and fled. Accommodation on the surface masked the deeper betrayal.

Detroit is capitalism’s essence. Its great art deco buildings were the product of its heroic youth, in the 1920s and 30s. Its auto industry flourished in the 40s and 50s thanks to war and the growth of the US empire. But capitalism always creates its own crises and its own gravediggers. Capital flees from the spectre of organized, self-aware workers, but ends up creating more gravediggers in another part of the world.

Capitalism has run out of places to run to, so it must smash down the remaining rights and power of all workers. To me, Detroit is a barometer of capitalism’s desperation and decline. It admits it cannot continue to offer even the hint of a good life, and democracy must be extinguished. But the memory of power and organization remain in its people, and I predict Detroit will not roll over and die. Recently, Detroit fast food workers have been part of the wave of fast food strikes sweeping the US.

Turning the lights off on 9/11/13 was an attempt to punish the workers of Detroit that will backfire. If capitalism offers only darkness, now is the time for a brighter alternative.

WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

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

Socialism and workers' power

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

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

Reform and revolution

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

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

Elections and democracy

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

Internationalism

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

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

Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal Peoples

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

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

Oppression

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

The Revolutionary Party

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

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



How do we stop a potential attack on Syria?

by PAUL STEVENSON

THE ANTI-WAR movement in Canada and around the world dealt a blow to the interests of US imperialism by, at the very least, postponing the planned US attack on Syria.

This is no small feat. When the initial reports of a chemical weapons attack came out on August 21, it appeared that a new coalition of the willing was about to lay siege to the people of Syria. US warships armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles began assembling in the eastern Mediterranean, waiting for the call to fire.

Victory to the anti-war movements

It was the brilliant demonstrations in the UK that caused the British Parliament to rebuff the calls from Prime Minister David Cameron to be part of an attack. The legacy of the Iraq war made British parliamentarians wary of getting into another debacle based on flimsy evidence.

That pushback was historic and it put US president Barack Obama in a difficult position. He couldn't secure a resolution for war from the UN and now his closest imperial ally pulled out. He decided that he needed some official body to legitimize the attack and so he went to the US congress. Americans, sick of more than a decade of war, are overwhelmingly opposed to an attack and began pressuring congress to say no to war.

The deal to secure Syrian chemical weapons, brokered by the Russians, offered a way out. And since Obama was close to losing the vote, he decided to climb back from the precipice.

This was a victory for the anti-war movement. The networks that were built before the attack on Iraq were able to mobilize very quickly. Even in Canada, where the Harper government had already stated that it would not be part of an attack, there were more than a dozen demonstrations across the country on two consecutive weekends.

Potential attack

The potential for an attack still re-

mains. The imperial powers are spending their time now trying to build a stronger case for war, and the US is working to ensure the world that a military strike is still "on the table."

What the Syria situation shows is that there is a huge debate within the US ruling class about how to project its power globally. They would like to see Assad removed, which would be a boost to plans for a potential attack on Iran, but they are unable to decide how to accomplish this task. They are also debating this question from a position of some weakness.

The relative decline of the US has been developing for decades. After the Second World War, the US was by far the dominant economic and military power in the world. The USSR was also powerful militarily but it wasn't able to project that power the way the US was. Over the decades, other economic rivals began to develop, thus reducing America's dominance on the global stage.

Since the end of the cold war, the US has been desperate to use its advantageous position to keep potential rivals at bay. It hasn't been completely successful. The emerging BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) have been growing and have formed a series of alliances aimed at limiting US influence globally. The military attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan have been failures for the US. Despite spending almost 4 trillion dollars on those wars, they haven't been able to secure the kind of control they wanted.

The US desperately needs to show that it can still project that power internationally. Syria has become a test case, and the possibility of an attack is still real. The anti-war movement will need to continue to discuss, debate and mobilize.

Debates and the United Front

There are a series of debates within the movements against the war that have come up about the approach to the resistance and the government of Bashar Al-Assad. There are sections of the movement that are arguing that we need to support the opposition to

the government as part of the call against war, and others that argue the movements should be firmly in support of Assad as an anti-imperialist fighter.

Both approaches are a problem for the anti-war movement. The situation in Syria is incredibly complex, with many different sections of the opposition espousing very different politics. Some sections of the opposition are, in fact, in favour of a US attack. On the other hand, those who support Assad often do so not because he is seen as a freedom fighter but because he is now in opposition to the US.

What this has created is a very divisive debate among the left, and within the Syrian and broader Arab community. For the anti-war movement to have any chance of success we need all those people to participate. Any call to action that supports one side over the other simply sets an artificial barrier to that participation.

The tactic of the united front aims to build a broad campaign, with socialists working side-by-side with larger progressive groups such as unions, faith groups and students. Each of those organizations will have their own position on an issue like Syria. The job of the united front is to bring them all to the table to focus on the central question; in this case, it's NATO/US/Canadian military intervention.

Many larger organizations that support the peace movement are loath to enter into the complex debate but are quite clear in their opposition to an attack. To make it a requirement that these groups must sign on to support for the opposition or the government would effectively end their participation in the movement.

The central question for the anti-war movement in Canada is how to stop our government from participating in an attack—not to decide the future of Syria. On that there is a broad consensus and that must be maintained. There is too much at stake, particularly in Canada, where the Harper government is pursuing rapid militarization and where anti-war groups need all the help they can get in pushing back against that agenda.

international socialist events

TORONTO

What Gender Does

Political discussion & dinner
Thur, Sep 26, 6:30pm
Organized by TO-West I.S.
For more info:
torontowest.is@gmail.com

Syria, Imperialism and the Arab Spring

Political discussion & dinner
Speaker: Sid Lacombe
Sun, Sep 29, 5:30pm
USW Hall, 25 Cecil Street
Organized by TO-Centre I.S.
For more info:
torontosocialists@gmail.com

Trotsky's Marxism

Reading group discussing
Trotsky's Marxism by
Duncan Hallas
Mon, Sep 30, 7pm
Resistance Press, 427 Bloor
Street West, suite #202
Organized by Toronto I.S.
For more info:
torontosocialists@gmail.com

Brazil's Revolt Against Austerity

Political discussion & dinner
Speaker: Sean Purdy
Fri, Oct 4, 5:30pm
Oak Street Co-op
120 Cornwall Street
Organized by TO-East I.S.
Info: 647-393-3096

YORK UNIVERSITY

War in Syria: Is the Arab Spring Over?

Mon, Sep 30, 2:30pm
York Student Centre, room
#311B, Keele campus

What's Behind Quebec's 'Charter of Values'?

Mon, Oct 7, 2:30pm
York Student Centre, room
#311B, Keele campus

Organized by York I.S.

For more info:
yorkusocialists@gmail.com

HAMILTON

How Marxism Works

Reading group discussing
How Marxism Works by
Chris Harman
Wed, Oct 2, 7pm
Organized by Hamilton I.S.
Info: socialisthamilton@gmail.com

VANCOUVER

Capitalism versus Nature

A one-day conference on
Marxist ecology
Sat, Oct 19, 12:30-5:30pm
Langara College, room
A218, 100 West 49th Ave
Organized by Vancouver I.S.
For more info: vancouver.
socialists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

TORONTO

Disability Pride March

Sat, Oct 5, 1pm
Queen's Park
http://torontodisabilitypride.
wordpress.com/

No Line 9!

Sat, Oct 19, noon
Metro Convention Centre,
255 Front Street West

GATINEAU

Rally against Values Charter

Sun, Oct 6, 2pm
Parc Jacques-Cartier

VICTORIA

PowerShift BC

October 4-7
http://www.wearepower-
shift.ca/

You can find the I.S. in:

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Gatineau, Vancouver,
Victoria, Montreal,
London, St. Catharines,
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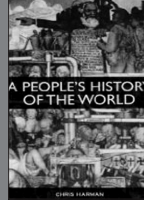
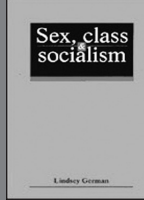
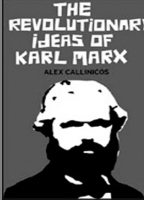
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RESISTANCE
PRESS
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PLAZA HOTEL WORKERS

A SMALL strike at the Plaza Hotel in Toronto was recently settled, beating back significant concessions.

Thirty-five members of the United Steelworkers were forced out on strike by an owner who was attempting to slash kitchen staff wages by five dollars an hour, room attendant wages by one dollar an hour, and to gut the collective agreement.

The workers turned down the offer by a significant majority and the union started a strong campaign to fight back against management. Weekly rallies were held and organizations such as the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the Ontario Federation of Labour and Unite Here held solidarity actions. Teachers' unions and others who had used the hotel meeting rooms met with the owner, expressing their support for the striking workers.

A call-in campaign was initiated and leafleting was done on numerous occasions at the owner's home as well as at a chicken farm owned by a family member who has a financial interest in the business.

As the strike was entering its thirteenth week, fifty Steelworkers from other workplaces went into the lobby of the hotel, chanting and leafleting and calling for a just contract. A woman activist from the Steelworkers was assaulted; her nose was broken and she received a concussion. Two days later a tentative agreement was reached with all concessions off the table and with a small wage increase.

The primarily women workforce, many from racialized communities, gained confidence through the work stoppage. They marched in the Labour Day Parade, took courses on "Workers' Rights and Your Union", and wore union t-shirts to the first meeting with management after the strike. Solidarity works!

LGBT SOLIDARITY

ON SEPTEMBER 8, people in over a dozen cities around the world rallied in support of LGBT people in Russia.

Activists organized coordinated rallies, protests and marches to show their solidarity with Russia's LGBT people, who are facing down new anti-gay legislation. There were events in Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Columbus, OH, London, Dublin, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Helsinki, Rio de Janeiro, Pretoria, South Africa and elsewhere.

The laws ban "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations". In effect this means Russian LGBT people face stiff prison sentences and heavy fines simply for being visible.

However, resistance is growing—both within Russia and internationally—to oppose "some of the most regressive, discriminatory and overtly homophobic/transphobic legislation [LGBT people] have seen in recent years."



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES RISING UP

by **MELISSA GRAHAM**

OPPRESSION KNOWS no borders, but neither does the resistance posed by disability rights activists—from London, to Montreal, to Toronto.

The tactics used by governments so far apart geographically look eerily similar: austerity, cuts to social assistance programs and supports, unlawful removal of people from these programs, and violations of human rights and other laws—including the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which both Canada and Britain have signed.

Britain

Since the austerity crisis began in Britain, disabled persons have been hit hard by cuts to their quality of life, financially as well as through hate crimes and humiliation. For a perspective on what British people with disabilities are up against, here's an example: Elenore Tatton died just weeks after she was assessed to be fit to

work despite having a brain tumour. Almost a third of people who had been found "fit to work" appealed, and that decision has now been reversed. Tragically, thousands have died waiting.

But this September, people with disabilities in Britain and Quebec called for the end of ableism, and fought back.

Around 200 campaigners for disabled peoples' rights protested at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in central London. They rallied outside the ministries for transport, energy, education and health, demanding equality for disabled people, before converging on the DWP. Activists came from all over Britain to be part of this week of action. Just two days before this, people with disabilities blockaded the entrance to BBC offices in West London after the BBC had been promoting the idea of cutting much needed welfare programs in Britain. There were also protests at inaccessible transportation sites.

The protests in the UK have been heard here in

Canada. In Toronto, there was a solidarity rally outside the British Consulate in support of people with disabilities in the UK fighting against the cuts.

Quebec

Meanwhile in Montreal, people with disabilities joined the fight by protesting proposed cuts to their support services. This would mean that more Quebecers with disabilities would be forced to live in assisted living centres known as CHSLDs. These centres are often described like prisons, where "people don't get to decide when they want to get up, what they want to do, what they want to eat." The cuts are slated to take place next year.

The level of activity taking place within the disability movement is encouraging, and people are taking notice. Momentum is building, and it seems the disability movement is rising up.

Join the Toronto Disability Pride March on Saturday, October 5, at 1pm at Queen's Park.

members from the local, but also Toronto city councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, members of a nearby labour law firm, labour leaders from the Toronto Labour Council, as well as many rank-and-file workers from the labour movement. Over a hundred community allies turned out as well.

Though the opening salvo against the company has been quite successful, it is critical that pressure be maintained if Richtree is to concede, bring back its laid-off workers and recognize the union. Actions against the company will continue into the coming months, and a number of allies have come together independently of the union to form a Richtree Workers Autonomous Solidarity Committee. One of the upcoming plans of the committee is to establish a daily information picket outside of the mall.

Everyone interested in getting involved in the solidarity committee, able to commit an hour or two a week to the solidarity picket, or interested in being involved in other actions, should contact: rtautonomoussolidarity@gmail.com

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

First Nations, environmentalists and workers uniting against big oil

ON OCTOBER 22, 2012, thousands participated in the Defend Our Coast Rally in Victoria, British Columbia. Those who gathered spoke out strongly against the Northern Gateway Pipeline and the environmental damage that it could cause to their province. The Tar Sands have wreaked havoc in Alberta and a coalition led by First Nations, which includes environmentalists and trade unions, has been organizing to stop the pipeline.

They have been galvanizing public opinion and have stood up strongly against the corporations and governments who are supporting profits over the needs of the people and the earth. A broad and representative movement is what can collectively make the changes necessary to stop the oil interests whose only concern is making money for their shareholders.

Green jobs

The importance of trade unions involving themselves in this struggle cannot be overestimated. At one point there was a perceived conflict between jobs and the environment, pitting unions against environmentalists. Much work has been done to bridge that gap by organizations such as the Blue Green Alliance in the US. It originally brought together the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club but has grown much broader since.

The Good Jobs for All Coalition in Toronto held a founding summit in 2008 with over one thousand people in attendance; its three objectives were dealing with the economic crisis, the environmental crisis and promoting an equity agenda. It brought together many trade unionists, anti-racist activists and environmentalists, and a Good Green Jobs for All Committee is one of its key components.

Line 9

Line 9 is now a threat in eastern Canada. Enbridge is pushing to reverse the flow of the pipeline between Sarnia and Montreal to ship tar sands oil east. It is touted to create jobs but in reality very few will result. However, there is the potential of very real risks to the 9.1 million people in Ontario and Quebec who live in its path. We have seen ruptures to similar pipelines in Michigan, Arkansas and other areas.

We know that Ontario alone has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the recent past, but the promise of significant employment is an illusion. By 2035 it is projected that only 6,335 jobs would be created because of the Line 9 project. We need investment in good green jobs for all that will protect and enhance the environment.

Tar sands is a very dirty source of energy and its development is scarring the land in northern Alberta and causing health hazards to those who work and live there. This cannot be the heart of a national energy plan.

On October 19, there will be a demonstration in Toronto at the National Energy Board hearings on Line 9. There has been a large grassroots organization building awareness in the community and opposition to Enbridge's plans. The Steelworkers Toronto Area Council has recently endorsed the demonstration and has provided funding to bus First Nations activists opposing Line 9 into the city for the rally.

Solidarity

This type of support and solidarity is necessary to build the same type of movement in Ontario as we saw in British Columbia. Environmentalists, First Nations and trade unionists should continue to develop ongoing links and relationships that will build the collective strength to defeat big oil. Our interests are not counter-posed and solidarity will move the fight forward.

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Stop Line 9!

Stop the Tar Sands!

by JESSE MCLAREN

WITHOUT AN environmental assessment, oil giant Enbridge wants to use a 38-year-old pipeline to pump toxic tar sands through the most populated corridor in the country—expanding tar sands production and oil spills, promoting climate change instead of green jobs, and undermining democracy and indigenous sovereignty.

Tar Sands

According to the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), “Northern Alberta is ground zero with over 20 corporations operating in the tar sands sacrifice zone, with expanded developments being planned. The cultural heritage, land, ecosystems and human health of First Nation communities including the Mikisew Cree First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort McMurray First Nation, Fort McKay Cree Nation, Beaver Lake Cree First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, and the Metis, are being sacrificed for oil money in what has been termed a ‘slow industrial genocide.’ Infrastructure projects linked to the tar sands expansion such as the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline and the Keystone XL pipeline, threaten First Nation communities in British Columbia, Canada and American Indian communities throughout the United States.”

In addition to threatening indigenous communities, the Tar Sands are Canada’s fastest growing source of carbon

emissions. This year, for the first time in human history, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide reached 400ppm. In this context we’re seeing increasing climate disasters such as hurricane Sandy and the epic floods in Alberta and Toronto.

Line 9

Despite this, oil giant Enbridge wants to use a 38-year-old pipeline, Line 9, to pump tar sands oil eastwards from Sarnia through Toronto to Montreal. Even if Line 9 doesn’t spill, it will increase tar sands production and global carbon emissions.

But the reality is that tar sands pipelines spill all the time—like Enbridge’s 2010 spill into the Kalamazoo River, the massive 2010 spill in Lubicon territory, Enbridge’s 2011 spill in the Northwest Territories, the 2013 spill that sent tar sands and the toxic chemicals used to make it flow in pipelines through a residential neighbourhood in Arkansas, and Enbridge’s 2013 spill in Alberta. These bitumen spills can’t just be “cleaned up” because some components evaporate and poison the air while others sink and poison the earth and water. After three years and a billion dollars in cleanup fees, the Kalamazoo River is still contaminated.

A spill from Line 9 could poison First Nations land it crosses, major waterways that carry drinking water, and towns and cities, including Toronto. Of course, the pipeline does not pass along Bay Street, but it does cut through the poor and racialized neighbourhood of Jane and Finch.



Indigenous sovereignty and green jobs

There’s been an outpouring of opposition against the Tar Sands and its pipelines, driven by the communities most affected. As IEN states, “Just a few years ago, people in Canada, U.S. and Europe heard little to nothing about the Canadian tar sands. Today, the tar sands have become a topic of national and international discussion as stories of cancer epidemics in the community of Fort Chipewyan, massive wildlife losses related to toxic contamination, environmental degradation and increased vocal resistance from impacted communities have shattered

the ‘everything is fine’ myth propagated by the Canadian and Alberta governments.”

The climate justice movement increasingly includes the labour movement. Line 9 will only produce a few temporary jobs in an industry that exposes workers to toxic chemicals while undermining the environment on which our future jobs depend. As an organizer from the Canadian Autoworkers said last year in the lead up to the Defend Our Coast sit-in in Victoria, “Tens of thousands of unionized and other jobs depend on healthy river and ocean ecosystems. We will be standing in solidarity with thousands of working people in BC and our First Nations sisters and brothers.”

Democracy

In an attempt to undermine opposition, Harper has scrapped environmental regulation. There has been no environmental assessment for Line 9, and Enbridge has given “donations” to municipalities along the route (including the Hamilton police, who arrested Line 9 protestors for occupying a pumping station). The National Energy Board (which the Harper government has called an “ally”) has excluded people from contributing to hearings and tried to divide the movement between those they allow at hearings and those they do not allow, all while monopolizing decision-making power. Meanwhile there has been no free, prior and informed con-

sent from First Nations for Line 9 or the Tar Sands.

But this hasn’t stopped massive opposition against the Northern Gateway pipeline west, and the Keystone XL pipeline south. These movements—uniting indigenous, environmental and labour activists—have been models for the emerging movement against Line 9. In October the National Energy Board is holding its hearings in Toronto, and many opposed to Line 9 will present their case inside. Adding to their voices will be a rally outside, on Saturday, October 19, to say “No Line 9, No tar sands pipelines!”

Join the rally in Toronto on Saturday, October 19 at 12noon, outside the Metro Convention Centre.

Idle No More day of action: October 7

by JOHN BELL

CYNICS HAVE been too quick to write the obituary for Idle No More. The movement to advance First Nations sovereignty, that dominated national headlines last winter, has not disappeared—it has gone local to debate, organize and get active.

In August, 60 First Nations activists and allies met to discuss “Building Unity to Action”. Now there is a national call-out for local actions to take place on October 7. Idle No More’s “Call for Change” is reprinted below.

First Nations people have long been on the front lines to stop the reckless exploitation of the land and waters, especially projects connected to the Tar Sands. This has made them the target of Stephen Harper’s omnibus legislation, ramming through laws that weaken environmental reviews of corporate development.

Idle No More has inspired protests and actions around the world. In September, Saami people in Sweden’s north organized a blockade to oppose Swedish and British mining corporations, in defence of their land and water. Among other things, they carried the Idle No More banner.

The problem goes beyond Harper. Indigenous people everywhere are challenging the corporate agenda that covets the raw materials growing on or buried under their lands. In New Brunswick, Mi’kmaq activists are at the centre of opposition to plans to use fracking to ex-

tract gas. This takes the prize for the most grossly under-reported national story of the summer. In Toronto, people from the Grassy Narrows First Nation of northern Ontario took their protest to Premier Kathleen Wynne’s front door. Their land and water has been poisoned by deadly mercury, left behind by logging operations. On the Thunderchild First Nation near North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Idle No More protesters set up a camp to block oil drilling plans. They opposed corporate plans and the elected band chief who agreed to the drilling without consulting the community. Eldon Okanee, one of the band members told the CBC, “It’s money at the expense of our values, customs, traditions, ceremonies, on our ceremonial lands. No. There’s gotta be a point where you can’t cross, and I think they’ve crossed it.”

Dozens of other local actions have been taking place all along. October 7 will be a day of protest to pull these many threads of resistance together.

Idle No More’s ‘Call for Change’

“Idle No More and Defenders of the Land, a network of Indigenous communities in land struggle, have joined together to issue this common call for escalating action. Our message is clear and in accordance with the principles of coexistence and mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. We call for Canada, the provinces and the territories to:

- Repeal provisions of Bill C-45 (in-

cluding changes to the Indian Act and Navigable Waters Act, which infringe on environmental protections, Aboriginal and Treaty rights) and abandon all pending legislation which does the same.

- Deepen democracy in Canada through practices such as proportional representation and consultation on all legislation concerning collective rights and environmental protections, and include legislation which restricts corporate interests.

- In accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ principle of free, prior, and informed consent, respect the right of Indigenous peoples to say no to development on their territory.

- Cease its policy of extinguishment of Aboriginal Title and recognize and affirm Aboriginal Title and Rights, as set out in section 35 of Canada’s constitution, and recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

- Honour the spirit and intent of the historic Treaties. Officially repudiate the racist Doctrine of Discovery and the Doctrine of Terra Nullius, and abandon their use to justify the seizure of Indigenous Nations lands and wealth.

- Actively resist violence against women and hold a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and involve Indigenous women in the design, decision-making, process and implementation of this inquiry, as a step toward initiating a comprehensive and coordinated national action plan.”

To read more on Idle No More, visit: <http://www.idlenomore.ca/>

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