

# Socialist Worker

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## MAKE 2014 THE YEAR WE STOP THE PIPELINES



The panel picked by the Tories to review the Northern Gateway Pipeline project has produced its report. Enbridge could not have got a more glowing pro-pipeline recommendation even if they paid a high priced public relations firm to write it. Nonetheless the opposition to the pipeline is getting stronger and we can stop this project and the others like it. There have been several large rallies against the proposed pipeline and the similar Kinder-Morgan pipeline. This movement has taken its lead from the First Nations who are along the pipeline route and downstream on the rivers it will cross. At the huge rally at the provincial legislature in Victoria, BC, in October of 2012, hundreds joined in civil disobedience by erecting a cloth representation of the length of an oil tanker, and thereby breaking the law regarding erecting structures on the grounds

of the legislature.

Thousands joined the rally that was addressed by First Nations leaders, labour leaders and leaders of the environmental movement. It is this connection between the First Nations, labour and other activists that holds the power to stop the pipeline and changing the world.

Another example was the outpouring of support for the Elsipogtog nation when their blockade of a natural gas fracking company was attacked by the RCMP. These sorts of blockades are the future of pipeline resistance across Canada. Solidarity actions across the country will make them a success.

### Solidarity

A giant step forward came just a few weeks before the Northern Gateway panel released its report, when several unions signed the Solidarity Accord in support

of the Save The Fraser declaration. The Save The Fraser declaration is a statement by over 130 indigenous nations within the Fraser River watershed that states: "We have come together to defend these lands and waters from a grave threat: the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines project. This project . . . and the federal process to approve it, violate our laws, traditions, values and our inherent rights as Indigenous Peoples under international law." They continue, "We will not allow the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, or similar Tar Sands projects, to cross our lands, territories and watersheds, or the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon."

The Solidarity Accord pledges: "We, the undersigned, say to our First Nations brothers and sisters, and to the world, that we are prepared to stand with you to pro-

tect the land, the water and our communities from the Enbridge pipelines and tankers project and similar projects to transport tar sands oil." Unifor and the BC Teachers' Federation have signed the declaration.

### Organize

It's time to start building the networks at your workplace, in your community, and at your college or university to make this solidarity concrete. It's time to organize for actions to stop the pipeline. If you are in a union or a student union get them to sign the Solidarity Accord.

Go to [www.holdthewall.ca](http://www.holdthewall.ca) to sign the accord yourself. Start an action committee to plan actions in your community or on your campus. As long as business as usual means burning more fossil fuels and endangering forests, rivers, and oceans with oil spills we need to hold up business as usual.

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# ‘Indian hospitals’

by VALERIE LANNON

**WHILE THERE is growing awareness of funding inequities in health and education, the horrific legacy of residential schools and the removal of indigenous children away from their families, much less is know about Canada’s “Indian Hospitals.”**

Laurie Meijer Drees, Co-Chair of the First Nations Studies Department at Vancouver Island University, has done a fine job of addressing this with her highly recommended book, *Healing Histories: Stories from Canada’s Indian Hospitals* (University of Alberta Press 2013).

## “Indian hospitals”

Through the The Indian Act the Canadian government forced indigneous people to seek treatment from a “properly qualified physician” that ruled out traditional healers. As with residential schools, we can see this as an action by government to both control the lives of First Nations peoples and to negate the worth of their traditions.

Indigenous people had ten times the rates of tuberculosis, because of overcrowding in residential schools, plus poor living conditions on reserves and in remote communities.

After 1945, they were put in segregated facilities (“Indian hospitals”) that denied the use of traditional healing methods, had substandard care, and were more interested in segregating patients from the non-indigenous population than healing them. As we saw with residential schools, where starvation was used to “test” the resilience of pupils, in Indian hospitals, patients were often “tested” for new drugs or treatments.

The largest of these hospitals were in BC and Alberta, with between 250 and 500 beds.

## Resistance

But there was resilience too. Unlike residential schools, Indian hospitals became a place of employment for First Nations people. “By the 1980s more than three thousand community health representatives and health liaison workers worked at the community level”, and many more at professional levels on band lands and in urban settings.

In some ways, however, this employment pattern can be seen as an early mechanism by which First Nations reclaimed their authority for looking after their own people. Boosted by the Red Power movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, First Nations asserted their right to health care that addressed their needs, with personnel and in ways and that respected their traditions.

Today those steps continue. First Nations in BC successfully argued for a First Nations Health Authority, which is about to see the transfer of hundreds of positions and hundreds of millions of dollars, towards services on reserve that are more culturally relevant, more prevention-focused and more community-based.

This book is a reminder of Canada’s ongoing history of colonialism and resistance.



# Stop the Northern Gateway pipeline

by BRADLEY HUGHES

**The recently released Joint Review Panel report on the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project is a a one-sided whitewash of the pipeline company’s proposal.**

Despite overwhelming opposition to the pipeline, three panelists picked by a Tory government, who less than a third of us voted for, have decided that they know better than we do what is best for us and in their opinion Northern Gateway knows best of all. They recommend that the project go ahead with 209 conditions on the builders.

## Undemocratic

In January 2010, the National Energy Board and the Tory Minister of the Environment set up the Joint Review Panel to asses the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline and make a recommendation to the federal cabinet who will make the final decision. The panel received 9,000 letters on the project, and as they themselves admit, “most of the letters argued against approving the project.”

They heard evidence from 393 participants and accepted oral statements from 1,179 individuals, and there was overwhelming opposition--with detailed objections by First Nations, governments, scientists, and individuals. The report follows each time with the assertions that according to Northern Gateway either the problems don’t exist or they have a plan to deal with them.

# End Canada’s unjust laws

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

**Two recent hearings, part of longstanding struggles, put into question the integrity of Canada’s legal structure for the defence of basic rights and civil liberties.**

On November 4-5 supporters gathered at the Ontario Court of Appeal in Toronto to show solidarity with Ottawa professor Dr. Hassan Diab, a Canadian of Lebanese descent is unjustly accused of an act of terror in France over 30 years ago and threatened with extradition.

Canadian extradition law allows for an extremely low

## Colonial

According to the panel,“aboriginal groups and individuals said the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project would have negative effects on their rights and interests. They said that construction, routine operations, and spills could potentially affect Aboriginal activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering, and their use of traditional sites. Northern Gateway said the project would have minimal effects on Aboriginal activities and sites during construction and routine operations, and it proposed measures to reduce or eliminate those effects or to compensate for them.”

The panel decided that Northern Gateway understood the First Nation’s concerns better than they do: “the project’s potential effects on the socio-cultural wellbeing of communities can be effectively addressed.”

First Nations disagree. Over 130 indigenous nations have signed the Save The Fraser Declaration: “this project which would link the Tar Sands to Asia through our territories and the headwaters of this great river, and the federal process to approve it, violate our laws, traditions, values and our inherent rights as Indigenous Peoples under international law...We will not allow the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, or similar Tar Sands projects, to cross our lands, territories and watersheds, or the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon.”

standard of evidence, and presumes the reliability of the case by a foreign state with which Canada has an extradition treaty.

The Harper government signed the extradition order regardless, surrendering Diab to France, making this case very similar to one of extraordinary rendition, that is, illegal delivery of an innocent person to a foreign jurisdiction where he or she will receive mistreatment, torture or other. The possibility exists that Dr. Diab will not be tried at all in France but jailed indefinitely under French anti-terrorism laws, or charged with secret

## Dangerous

The project itself is a multibillion dollar plan to build a pipeline to ship diluted bitumen (the tar in tar sands) west from Alberta to a port in Kitimat, in northern British Columbia along with a second pipeline to ship toxic condensate from the port back to Alberta. Both pipelines are hundreds of kilometres long and cross hundreds of waterways that could become contaminated.

The report ignored the question of climate change, the damage that will be done when the contents of the pipeline are burned, and threats downstream.

After a page full of objections to the project based on the harm a spill would do to the Great Bear Rainforest, salmon streams, grizzly bears, cultural activities, and the obvious difficulty of reaching pipeline spills in winter weather or dealing with tanker spills in heavy storms, the panel simply agreed with the corporate view that “the environmental effects and risks were acceptable.”

The report also takes at face value that the proposed spill response would be sufficient and that the corporation behind the project, Enbridge, can be trusted to live up to their commitments. The submission to the panel by the Government of British Columbia explained why Enbridge shouldn’t be trusted. In a section entitled “Enbridge does not follow procedures or learn from mistakes,” the BC Government’s submission reviews the re-

sponse of Enbridge to its own previous spills and notes that not only does Enbridge not follow its own policies with regards to pipeline spills, but that each time it gets caught it profusely promises to enforce its own policies next time. “Enbridge has not demonstrated an ability to learn from its mistakes in order to avoid spills . . . given its pattern of making similar commitments in the past, there are serious reasons for concern that the commitments it has made in this proceeding will be hollow.” In a spill in 2010 into the Kalamazoo river, Enbridge failed to report the spill for 17 hours. The 20,000 barrels of crude oil leaked due to a defect in the pipeline that had been discovered five years before the spill. In January of 2012, Enbridge officials decided, without inspecting the damage to the pipe, to keep a pipe in operation that was leaking natural gas into the Gulf of Mexico.

## Build the resistance

Fortunately the opinion of the majority against the pipeline can be enforced. Over the next few months we have the opportunity to make the movement against the pipeline and in solidarity with First Nation’s rights to control their land even bigger. We can build a movement of rallies and strikes and direct action that can halt construction on this pipeline and build an even bigger movement for climate jobs to replace the fossil fuel industry completely.

on Mohamed Mahjoub, of Egyptian origin, as a terrorist threat to Canada.

The ruling upheld the Security Certificate as reasonable, even though Mr Mahjoub has never been charged with any crime, and even though Canadian Security Certificates were declared unconstitutional in 2007.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms was won through the struggles of movements, organizations, and unions. But in the end, they are only rights won on paper, and have to be continually defended in order to make these rights a reality

# Residential school torture

by JOHN BELL

**THE HARPER government has done everything possible to deny justice to the victims of the racist Residential School program. Begun even before confederation, the program was designed to forcibly assimilate First Nations children, and has been accurately described cultural genocide.**

Survivors of the St. Anne’s Indian Residential School in Fort Albany, Ontario, have been fighting for years for the release of the results of an Ontario Provincial Police investigation into sexual and physical abuse. Five school employees were jailed as a result of the investigation, which discovered among other things a home-made electric chair used to torture the children into submission.

When survivors applied for compensation they asked for the OPP files. For six years the Department of Aboriginal Affairs denied it had the reports. They lied.

In December the government will argue before an Ontario Superior Court that it should not have to disclose the documents, which it has had all along. This is part of a strategy of delay and denial that proves that Stephen Harper’s 2008 “apology” for the colonialist policies was hypocrisy. “I remember the elders saying the words came out of his mouth but the eyes told a different story,” said Edmund Metatawabin, former Chief of Fort Francis First Nation.

## Truth and reconciliation

In 2008 the federal government was ordered to release all documents to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and to the victims and their families. It has done everything possible to delay the process.

Information disclosed thus far shows First Nations children were subjected to medical experiments--denied nutrition so the effects of vitamin deficiency could be studied. Experts predict that even worse horrors will be revealed if the rest of the documents ever see the light of day.

Under Harper, Aboriginal Affairs spends more money on litigation than any other government department, almost double the closest competitor. Last year alone the legal bill was over \$106 million--money spent to deny justice and self-determination for First Nations.

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# Egyptian revolution challenges repression

by HAITHAM MOHAMEDAIN

**EGYPTIAN REVOLUTIONARY Socialist and labour lawyer Haitham Mohamedain is a leading activist in the struggles against the military’s new “protest law”. He writes from Cairo on why this resistance shows that the revolution continues.**

The revolutionary groups that called for, organised and participated in the Revolution of 25 January with the Egyptian masses are still mobilised. They are keeping alive the slogans of the revolution and calling for the realisation of its goals of bread, freedom and social justice. They have fought against Hosni Mubarak’s regime, and the Military Council, so that every month of the year now brings with it the memories of revolutionary battles and mass uprisings.

The latest of these uprisings came on 30 June this year. The uprising would have happened whether the revolutionary forces took part or not, as the presidency of the dictator Mohamed Mursi had witnessed the greatest mass protests in the world. During March, April and May this year Egypt occupied the number one position in the rates of global protest, with two protests taking place every hour. Most of these were labour and social protests against policies similar to those pursued by Mubarak.

The Muslim Brotherhood regarded these protests as a “conspiracy to overthrow Mursi”, and responded by raising their battle cry—meeting mobilisation with counter-mobilisation. They did not understand at all that the mood of the masses had changed. They had won partial sup-

port of the masses in the elections reflecting the hopes and aspirations for change which the Brotherhood had promised.

This change was a mirage and hopes and aspirations turned into a state of anger which swept the country on 30 June. The movement was full of contradictions. There were the workers and the poor, who wanted to improve their social conditions, and rejected the continuation by the “Mursi Mubarak” regime of policies which entrench social inequality.

Then there were the young revolutionary activists who found themselves in an unenviable position. They were between an immense, powerful mass movement on the one hand and on the other faced the apparatus of the state and Mubarak’s cronies. They, led by the right-wing camp (the army and police and the bosses), sought to hijack the revolutionary wave and keep the anger of the masses directed solely towards the Brotherhood.

Because of the absence of a revolutionary party, and a mass revolutionary front, the institutions of the state succeeded in assuming the political leadership of the masses. And on 3 July, the military announced officially that it was taking the reins of power.

## Frustration

This movement saw some frustrating scenes. Police officers, enemies of the revolution, were being carried shoulder-high by Mubarak’s cronies, and some were deceived by their apparent “repentance” and their claim to be on the side of the people. The revolutionary forces hit a wave of frustration and confusion.

This state of frustration and con-

fusion increased with the massacres committed by the military at Raba’a al-Adawiyya, Al-Nahda Square, Ramsis and outside the Republican Guard Headquarters.

Slogans began changing before our eyes. “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice” became “War on Terror”. “The people demand the downfall of the regime” became “The army, police and the people are one hand”. “Revolutionaries, free people—we will complete our journey” became “Thanks for your ‘mandate’ to take power, now go home”

But the revolutionary groups began to shake themselves free of frustration, and to escape from stagnation. They announced their resistance to the plans of the counter-revolution led by general Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. They set themselves the immediate goal of raising slogans and banners in the streets in the face of the general’s portraits and the posters for the “People’s police”.

They worked to loosen the grip of the fist of the military regime over the streets and squares of the revolution. The army had sent tanks to occupy the streets and muffled all voices, except for those praising the leader, or “mandating” him to murder.

## Confidence

The revolutionary forces once more moved towards the road of the revolution and went out into the street. They managed to demonstrate in front of the Supreme Court against Mubarak’s release from prison. They launched a demonstration to Maspero to commemorate the military’s massacre of the Copts. For the first time since 3 July these places rang with chants against military rule.

After these events, the youth movements began to recover their self-confidence. They mobilised to commemorate the uprising in Mohamed Mahmoud Street. For two days they were able to raise the voice of the revolution and its flags once again in Abdin Square, Mohamed Mahmoud Street. They reached the square of the revolution, Tahrir Square, for the first time since the 3 July and drove out Al-Sisi supporters and raised the banners of the martyrs.

This raised the revolutionaries’ morale significantly, and the state’s rabid campaign faltered. These mobilisations have caused a state of confusion, albeit limited, in the ranks of the ruling military-liberal alliance.

But they quickly papered over the cracks and announced that they were declaring open war against anything that represented the revolution, and anyone who raised its slogans and mobilised in the streets, on the campuses and in the factories. They issued the “law to prevent demonstrations”, and gave the green light to the Minister of the Interior to exercise repression, using this law to brutally smash revolutionary protests and rallies, student demonstrations, and workers’ sit-ins and strikes. They think that this way they can stop the mass movement which is rising day by day and growing in strength and determination in the face of the ruling regime’s arrogance and oppression.

If you want to end the revolution, we promise you that we will continue it. We tell you that your prisons are much too small for the revolutionary masses of Egypt. The revolution of 25 January continues.

*This is republished from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# Iran’s nuclear deal

by NIAZ SALIMI

**AFTER TALKS in Geneva, an agreement has finally been reached between Iran and the 5+1 group (US, China, Great Britain, Russia, France and Germany).**

The deal to curb Iran’s nuclear activities will last for six months while a permanent agreement is sought. In return President Obama talked about easing sanctions and releasing \$4.2 billion in frozen assets.

The West, specifically the US, cannot ignore Iran and its role and influence in the region. The election of a more moderate president, Hassan Rouhani, in June 2013 created a situation where all the interested parties could go back to the negotiation table without losing face.

Iranian people took to social media and the streets to show their support for the elimination of sanctions and military attack. A large group welcomed Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif at the Tehran airport. They chanted supportive slogans and demanded freedom to all political prisoners at the same time.

## Pre-deal relations with Iran

The US overthrew Iran’s democratically elected government in 1953 and installed a brutal dictator, the Shah. In 1979 a revolution overthrew the Shah, removing US control—and its for this reason, not the repression of the Iranian regime that followed, that the West has been hostile to Iran since then.

After September 11, 2001 the US invaded Afghanistan and Iraq with the intention of then invading Syria and Iran. But resistance to these occupations created quagmires, and Iran has increased its influence in the region.

In the past 10 years, even after Bush left office, the talk about Iran’s nuclear program never left the headlines. After so many extensive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) there is no precise report on the true nature of this program, but it has been used by Western powers as an excuse to strain the Iranian government’s ability to maneuver in the region—including its \$7 billion loan to Syria and strong support for Assad.

Like Western threats of war on Syria—using Assad’s repression as an excuse for a war which would only make conditions worse—the West is using the Iranian regime as an excuse for brutal sanctions and episodic threats of war that punish the people. It is also hypocritical coming from the 5+1 group who are themselves nuclear armed, and who support nuclear armed Israel.

## Canada’s position

While we have to wait to see how this conditional agreement develops in the next six months, it is shameful that Harper led Canada into the camp of warmongers, Israel and Saudi Arabia, by dismissing the prospect of peace and balking at lifting any of its sanctions against Iran.

Being in solidarity with people in Iran means insisting on their right to self-determination free from sanctions and foreign interventions.

# Bedouins resist Israel’s Prawer plan

by HANAN JIBRIL

**THE PLAN to evict 40,000 Bedouin Arab homes in the Negev desert has been postponed after the Prawer Plan faced mass protests and rallies from Palestinians, Israeli activists, and concerned people around the world.**

Earlier in the year Netanyahu’s government proposed a bill that would demolish over a dozen villages and leave thousands of Bedouins homeless. Humiliation, discrimination and forced displacement are regular ongoing situations

the Bedouins face on a daily basis. The Israeli government met mass protests all over historic Palestine. Workers in Negev held a strike. The University of Haifa banned students from waving the Palestinian flag during an anti Prawer protest. The protestors faced aggression, intimidation and brutality.

“The withdrawal of the Prawer Plan bill is a major achievement in the history of the Palestinian community in Israel,” Adalah, the legal center for Arab minority rights in Israel, stated. The Israeli government claimed the Bedouins had approved

of the Prawer Plan. However, that is not the case. “The Israeli government’s fortunate failure to pass this discriminatory law is an opportunity to start treating Bedouin as equal citizens,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Human Rights Watch’s Middle East director.

It came down to a difference in parliament; far-rightists opposed its offer of cash and land ownership to the Bedouin, while left-wing lawmakers planned to displace Arabs so as to expand settlements’ housings. While the plan was not completely cancelled, the Israeli state’s decision

to postpone it proved the power of the masses of people.

Benny Begin, a former Israeli cabinet minister and architect of the plan, recommended that the bill be shelved. However, the Israeli prime minister agreed to “carry out the development plan for Bedouin settlements in the coming years,” suggesting that the plan would be revised rather than shelved. It is not yet clear whether the plan was shelved or postponed, but it is a victory for the Bedouins of the Negev desert who have been facing ongoing discrimination.



Marxism and religion

PROBABLY THE most well-known, widely shared and least understood notion of Marx’s take on religion is encapsulated in Marx’s phrase that religion is the “opium of the masses.” Ironically, in some ways left and right thinkers can converge in their understanding, or misunderstanding, of Marx’s famous statement.

Essentially the argument is that Marx is implying that religion is like a drug for the ignorant, who are dupes, believing in superstition, rather than science. For so-called left-wing thinkers, such as Christopher Hitchens or Richard Dawkins, religion is the root of all evil and can be wiped out through logical argument, as in Dawkins’ book *The God Delusion*.

Islamophobia

And in the post 9/11 world, most pernicious of all, thinkers who once considered themselves to be on the left, such as the late Christopher Hitchens, aligned themselves with politicians like former president George W. Bush. The attacks on the Twin Towers in September 2011 were decried by Western leaders as proof of the irrational, terrorist, fundamentalist nature of Islam. Of course, they couldn’t afford to look at the real causes, the continuing oppression and exploitation of peoples in the Middle East, with the collusion and support of US and Western imperialism.

Islamophobia is a tool that Western ruling classes are also using to justify wars abroad and divide and conquer at home. As austerity bites and working people face job loss, cuts to public services, attacks on union rights, our governments use anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism to defend military spending and focus people’s anger on their neighbours, rather than on corrupt and venal politicians and their corporate bosses.

Marxism

Some base their understanding of the Marxist approach to religion on the experience of Stalinism—which condemned religion as reactionary, and demanded atheism from the parties and countries it ruled. But Stalin represented a counter-revolution that turned Marxist theory and practice on its head.

It’s instructive to look at the rest of the quote from which Marx’s famous “opium of the masses” phrase is taken: “Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo... Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.”

In other words, religion is a creation of human beings, which helps them to deal with the alienation inherent in an unjust world. But this doesn’t mean only passive suffering and acceptance. Religion can also be a tool that people use in their attempt to fight back, and socialists need to be part of this fightback, building unity across faiths.

As Lenin explained in his 1909 article, *The Attitude of the Workers’ Party to Religion*: “Why does religion retain its hold?... Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressivist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: ‘Down with religion and long live atheism; the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!’ The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view... It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist but in an idealist way... The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible suffering and the most savage torment... No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this root of religion, fight the rule of capital in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.”

Solidarity

It’s been critical that teachers unions in Quebec have opposed the Islamophobic charter that the ruling Parti Quebecois have imposed to distract from austerity. We must defend the individual’s right to practice their religion, both as a simple matter of freedom of expression, and as the only way to create the solidarity needed if we are to smash this system—which creates the very conditions of that give birth to religious ideas in the first place.

As Lenin argued, “It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.”

INTERNATIONAL



The ongoing threat of nuclear weapons

by PAOLO BASSI

WHILE THERE’S debate about Iran’s potential to become a nuclear power, including its recent deal, there is silence towards the massive existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons that threaten the world.

The economic crisis of the 1930s was only “solved” by world war—with decimated continents that needed to be rebuilt, and a permanent arms economy that continues to grow. The Manhattan project provided an unlimited budget to develop the atomic bomb, which unleashed horror on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Then the US recruited Nazi scientist Wernher von Braun into its militaristic space program, and entered a Cold War with imperial rival USSR—including the absurd fallacy that nuclear weapons are necessary to prevent nuclear war, which nearly led to nuclear annihilation during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Nuclear proliferation

This absurdity continues. The so-called “security council” of the United Nations (US, Russia, UK, France, and China) is made up of the most dangerous countries in the world, which sell the most weapons and possess their own nuclear weapons. France would never test its nuclear weapons in Paris,

but has made use of its colonies for these dangerous tests—from Algeria to French Polynesia. Since 1945 there have been more than 2000 nuclear tests and explosions around the world.

The West not only encourages nuclear proliferation through its own weapons programs, and those it encouraged in others—like the US-India nuclear deal—but also through its threats of war. The US invaded Iraq and Libya when its dictators did not have nuclear weapons, but has not attacked North Korea, which does possess nuclear weapons—encouraging countries to develop nuclear weapons if they want to avoid being attacked. While the US has threatened to attack Iran for developing nuclear power, the US supports nuclear armed Pakistan, India and Israel (the most dangerous country in the Middle East).

Nuclear near misses

With the world brimming with nuclear weapons, it’s no surprise there have been near misses—which have brought the world perilously close to devastation. According to investigative journalist Eric Schlosser there were about 700 incidents and accidents involving hundreds of warheads between 1950 and 1968 alone.

A US Air Force plane broke up in mid-air in 1961 and released two operational H-bombs, which would have

detonated and killed millions had it not been for a faulty switch.

In 1962, dueling US and Russian warships nearly triggered a nuclear war, and in 1983 a satellite malfunction at a Russian tracking station made it appear the US had launched a nuclear attack--nearly triggered a real counter attack.

In recent months there has been a spate of safety failures at American nuclear facilities and sackings by the White House of high-level personal responsible for nuclear weapons safety.

Socialism or barbarism

The American and Russian governments and to a lesser extent other members of the exclusive nuclear club, still hold our lives in their hands and they are far from being safe hands. Besides the threat of accidental launches, the economic crisis is sharpening inter-imperial rivalry and pushing nuclear armed capitalist states towards military confrontation.

The combined threats of of climate catastrophe and nuclear annihilation—both just a matter of time if capitalism continues—make it clear we need a world free from economic competition that treats the planet as disposable, and military competition that promotes nuclear weapons. It’s clear the two choices Rosa Luxemburg summarized persist today: socialism or barbarism.

The real record of JFK

by PARRY SINGH MUDHAR

JOHN FITZGERALD Kennedy’s presidency was one of violence and destruction as he stumbled along his path from the Bay of Pigs fiasco, to the Cuban Missile Crisis, to the Vietnam War all the while refusing to meaningfully support Civil Rights.

As his “pop icon” image has grown to atmospheric heights it covers up the nightmare of his presidency.

State terrorism

The Cuban revolution overthrew the US-backed Batista dictatorship, and though it erected a state capitalist regime many in the region gained inspiration from the revolution.

Kennedy launched the 1962 Bay of Pigs Invasion as an attempted coup. While the Kennedy government’s abysmal attempt to gain control over the former US protectorate failed, the US has never ended its repression against the Cuban people.

Nuclear weapons

The combination of Kennedy’s terrorist plot to invade and capture Cuba and the positioning of nuclear warheads in Turkey and Italy aimed at the USSR nearly resulted in nuclear world war in 1962. The USSR, in its imperial rivalry with the US, tried to set up nuclear missiles in Cuba, its ally. Once the Kennedy government became aware of the USSR’s actions, a strict military blockade, or quarantine, was set around Cuba as the US demanded the USSR dismantle the newly delivered nuclear weapons. For 13 days, both governments were willing to go to war. Quite literally, the future of our civilization was a bargaining chip between the two imperial powers. .

War crimes

Although the US presence in Vietnam predated Kennedy, Kennedy escalated the war including starting the horrendous

chemical attacks on the civilian population. His administration began the use of Agent Orange, a chemical weapon that the Americans used against crops in the hopes that starvation would drive people out of the countryside and into the cities.

A barrier to civil rights

Although he talked of support of civil rights, direct actions of support to Civil Rights leaders and grassroots efforts were almost nonexistent. Any progress under his administration was from the mass movement that forced his hand—like when 250,000 people came to his doorstep in the March on Washington demanding jobs and freedom.

Kenney was a terrorist, war criminal and a barrier to civil rights, and we should celebrate the historic movements against him: the Vietnamese resistance, the anti-war movement including soldier revolts, the civil rights and black power movements, and other liberation movements.



# Academia rationalized: an industrial model for post-secondary education?

**Chantal Sundaram** *examines the ways in which neoliberalism and austerity are restructuring education*

The term “rationalization” is used in business to describe reductions and cutbacks. Rationalizing postsecondary education (PSE) in terms of the market is nothing new, and in fact has been a mantra of neoliberal governments across Canada since the mid 1990s. But there can be no doubt that an acceleration is underway.

## Guelph

This fall, the University of Guelph unveiled a restructuring plan based on a system called the Program Prioritization Process. The stated goal was a ranking of 492 university programs into five groups or “quintiles” (and to rank all non-academic programs and services as well). The real goal was to cut a total of \$32.4 million over three years from the university’s budget.

The claim was that there would be “No hit list and no sacred cows,” but the top quintile contained all the programs you would expect in an institution focused on the agricultural industry: Animal and Poultry Science, Food Science, Food Economics. And bringing up the rear were Languages and Literature, Philosophy, and Political Science. The Guelph administration faced tough questions about closures and layoffs, as well as angry phone calls from students and parents.

## The industrial model

The model used at Guelph, which is making the rounds, is based on US higher education consultant Robert C. Dickeson’s “Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance.” It is a treatise about accelerating the industrial model in post-secondary education to serve the needs of the market.

In Ontario, this model is connected to enforced “differentiation” in the university sector: by the spring of 2014, all postsecondary institutions will be required to sign “strategic mandate agreements” with the provincial government to focus on their “unique strengths” and “to avoid unnecessary duplication.” It’s less of a negotiation than aligning university and college mandates with government priorities.

The motivation in the Ontario government’s policy framework is clear: “The 2008 economic downturn and the ensuing precarious state of the global economy have made Ontario’s fiscal environment challenging. Substantial new investment by the government at levels comparable to the previous decade is not feasible. Measures that help to mitigate these pressures are needed in order to ensure the continued sustainability of our postsecondary education system.”

This is to be achieved, according to Wynne’s Liberals, through priorities such as vocational partnerships with employers to serve the needs of the economy and the labour market; experiential, entrepreneurial, work-integrated learning and online learning; and avoidance of program duplication across the system (neglecting to acknowledge that such duplication usually exists in order to ensure accessibility across geographical regions).

For a while now, we’ve heard arguments about the need for more vocational higher education. And who can argue? A BA is the new



high school degree, and it comes with debt and no promise of a job. But more investment in colleges, vocational programs and professionally certified degrees should not come at the expense of the public good produced by general education.

What’s not yet clear is when and how the Ontario government’s “funding levers” will be used to enforce these goals, except that they will be used in “future” and “over time.” This threat might be enough for PSE administrations to claim their hands are tied, and for many in the PSE community in Ontario to believe it.

In December 2013, the Liberals released a companion piece that does have clear funding implications, “The Major Capacity Expansion Policy Framework,” to ensure that “future large-scale capacity expansion supports institutional differentiation.” Effective immediately, institutions considering any expansion plans are asked to submit them to the Ministry for review to see if they will be subject to the new selection and approval process, and if they are, they are not to proceed unless approved. Failure to comply will mean that “new or expanded enrolment at the location of the expansion will not be recognized for funding through the college or university operating grants, and the institution will not be eligible for provincial capital funding at the location.”

## Quality cuts

The Ontario plan is surrounded by a lot of rhetoric about public accountability for tax dollars, which builds on an argument that all provincial governments are pursuing: “quality assurance” in postsecondary education. Ontario’s Drummond Report on the public service a couple of years ago went so far as to recommend campus visits by government “quality auditors.” But the same

focus on sniffing out “waste” and “duplication” – which somehow never extends to the bloat of senior administration in universities and colleges – has been used to target front-line delivery of post-secondary education across the country.

In October, Alberta’s provincial government turned down an attempt to start a new Masters program in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Alberta, citing “duplication” and “employment of graduates.” Not only is the “duplication” argument concerning, especially when selectively applied to programs like women’s studies, but so is approaching postsecondary education with a narrow focus on employability.

Passing down the effects of government cuts to vulnerable programs is not new. But the wholesale rationalization of what is taught and should be taught in universities and colleges is based on dangerous assumptions that need to be challenged. Just as the devastation of neoliberalism on all public goods is not new, the onslaught of austerity since 2008 has introduced a faster timeline and more extreme consequences. Each time the specter of public accountability is raised, it further undermines public confidence in PSE in support of the argument that it, like the rest of the public sector, is bloated at the bottom rather than the top, and needs to be rationalized.

With or without explicit political or funding pressure from government, PSE administrations are taking advantage of the opportunity to back their own arguments for how funding is allocated internally. This reflects a neoliberal model for PSE that has so far been most visible in the commercialization of university research, which continues to accelerate. But it has proceeded by stealth in the rationalization of teaching in post-sec-

ondary education, and in many of its support services, like libraries and archives.

## Teachers

All of this also has grave implications for those who teach and work in the university and college system: they face not only the prospect of layoffs, but also greater scrutiny of their work performance, a loss of control over their teaching, and the undermining of academic freedom. Even without provincial enforcement, it is a process designed to foster competition internally, to create divisions and to discipline PSE staff.

And this punishment of the frontline will be the real threat to the quality that students can expect in the classroom – especially since part of this whole agenda, which is based on measuring everything that exists, also reduces the student experience to narrow “learning outcomes” to justify public spending on education. In addition to a greater focus on evaluation than on the process of learning, the pressure to design courses to produce measurable results can only lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and its educational purpose.

## Resistance

Resistance will have to take many forms, from the bargaining table with postsecondary unions, to campus Town Halls, to building coalitions between students and PSE workers.

And the courage to resist starts with pushing back the logic of rationalization, but also with defending a vision of education that really serves our needs – the needs of students and workers. And that vision includes employment as well as critical, well-rounded thinking that helps us to challenge and shape what should be the real priorities for education and how it truly could benefit the public good.

**‘Passing down the effects of government cuts to vulnerable programs is not new. But the wholesale rationalization of what is taught and should be taught in universities and colleges is based on dangerous assumptions that need to be challenged.’**



# Mandela and anti-apartheid struggles

**Ameth Lo** from *GRILA (Group for Research and Initiatives for the Liberation of Africa)* looks at the broader context for the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, while **Jesse McLaren** exposes the hypocrisies of Canadian politicians who use support for Mandela to hide Canada’s colonial legacy

**MANDELA WAS part of a large number of African militants (some of whom preceded him), who in the face of the inhumane and unjust reality of apartheid, decided to take the bull by the horns and unleashed a long struggle.**

It lasted close to a century—from the time the ANC was created to the time the apartheid system was officially brought down—in a process that culminated with the first multi-racial election in 1994. During that extended period, thousands of people gave their lives in an epic struggle. It eventually spilled over the borders of South Africa, with tragic consequences for what was known as the frontline states—countries such as Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## Mass struggle

Only few historical figures such as Nelson Mandela, Steven Biko (the leader and theoretician of the Black Consciousness Movement) or Winnie Mandela (the former wife of Nelson Mandela) are known to the larger public. However, hundreds of thousands of people died to bring down the apartheid system. In fact the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Committee) that Mandela established after becoming president to avoid bloodshed in the country, noted in one of its reports, that “there were more victims of the apartheid system in the surrounding countries than inside south Africa”. The decisive defeat in Angola of the racist’s armed forces of the apartheid South African state by combined Angolan and Cuban troops marked a landmark in the struggle for African independence and self-determination. That defeat led to immediate independence for Namibia and subsequently accelerated the end of racist rule in South Africa.

While the mainstream media try to focus on the surface, the person of Nelson, who of course has been a great African leader alongside other revolutionaries and African nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Eduardo Mondlane, Amílcar Cabral, Samora Machel and many others, it is important to locate Mandela’s rise as a strong African leader within a larger context. Those conditions breed resistance and bring people to the point of taking action and organizing to defeat the system that maintains them under subjugation and oppression.

## Long march

As leaders around the world pay tribute to his legacy, the African masses have to learn from the historical path undertaken by Mandela during his long march to freedom. The path leads from the inception of Umkhunto Wi sizwe, the military branch of the ANC which was absolutely necessary under the conditions under which it was created, to the Soweto uprisings in 1976 that marked a qualitatively higher level of mobilization of African masses against apartheid, and on to the official end of apartheid in 1994. During each of those periods, Mandela fought alongside his comrades in the ANC, the SACP (South African Communist Party) the civil society organizations such as the labor movement COSATU (Confederation of South African Trade Unions)—UDF (United Democratic Front), but also internationally with the active solidarity of other national liberation movements such as the MPLA in Angola, FRELIMO in Mozambique, SWAPO in Namibia. All those dynamics made possible the openings we witnessed that culminated in the 1994 election that saw the election of the first Black president is SA.

## Unresolved issues

Today despite the important changes that were made by the contributions of people like Mandela, fundamental challenges are still with us. That reality reminds us that the arrival to power of a Black president does not and did not automatically remove the centuries old mechanisms of oppression under which the Black masses had been living. Some of those



challenges are:

\*The unresolved question of access to land, which should be one of the most burning issues that needs to be tackled. This is even more critical as we witness across the continent a vast land grab that threatens to roll back the few gains that were made possible by the national liberation movements of which Mandela was a product.

\*The pattern of ownership of the resources in the country... mainly the mining resources that are still controlled by the economic forces that were at play during the apartheid era and that are still operating today.

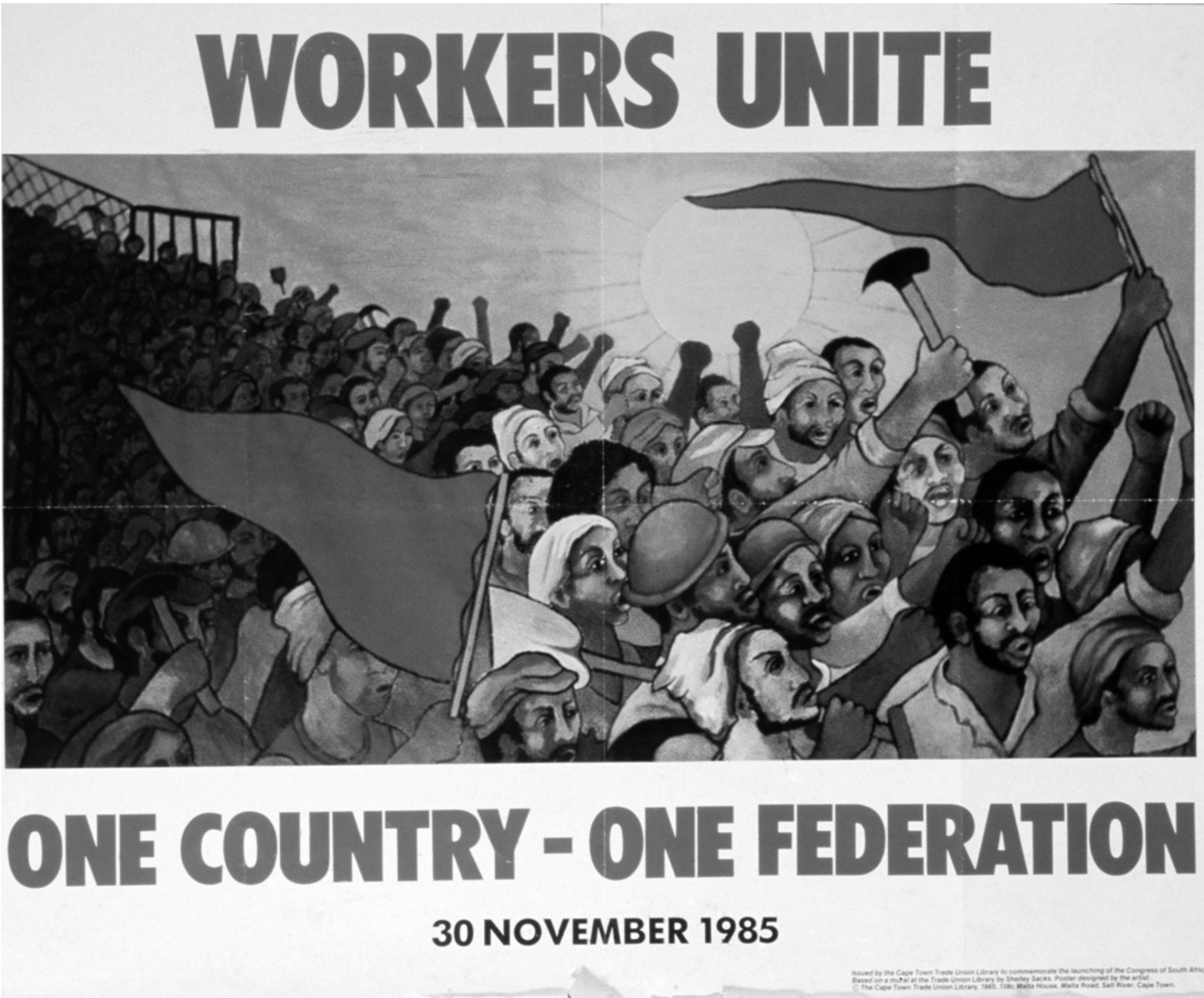
\*The lack of economic opportunity for a younger generation of South Africans, many of whom do not even realize today the sacrifices that people like Mandela and others had to make to create conditions for them to be able to move around freely across the country today. This young generation, which represents the majority of South Africans, might not have the patience, nor the wisdom of people like Mandela if their living conditions stay as they are today... I mean no future but a life of desperation and hopelessness. It would not take time for them to realize that the creation of a tiny Black bourgeoisie has never been able to alleviate the suffering of the vast majority of the people.

## The struggle continues

Today we are at a crossroads, across the continent, where African youths are showing signs of impatience and desperation in some situations. In the present context, it is up to the progressive forces favorable to radical changes within our societies to reconnect with the tradition of organizing and struggle by combining forces and by clearly stating through a clear vision where they would like to take Africa in the decades to come.

Only when we embark on that path will be able to say that the struggle waged by Mandela was not in vain and that a new generation is rising ready to use all means necessary to regain control over their destiny after centuries marked by tremendous suffering from slavery to apartheid by way of colonization. To comrade Madiba and those who gave their lives for this noble struggle, we raise our fists and send them our last salute; may their souls rest in eternal peace and may those who survive them be guided by the principles of MAAT transmitted to us from ancient Egypt, generation after generation, making us strong enough to still be here in this world where in fact we were supposed to be wiped out long ago.

A Luta continua – The struggle continues for a free and independent Africa... AMANDLA!!!!



**MILLIONS AROUND the world are mourning the loss of the symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle, Nelson Mandela. But people are mourning for different reasons.**

Most are mourning a freedom fighter who spent 27 years in jail for his opposition to colonialism and racism. Most are mourning a symbol of international solidarity, who spoke out against the Iraq War, supported people with HIV/AIDS and likened the Palestinian freedom struggle to his own. But others are using his death to hide the history of anti-colonial struggles.

## Apartheid: a Canadian tradition

According to The National Post, Conservative Prime Minister Mulroney “spearheaded Canadian push to end apartheid in South Africa and free Nelson Mandela.” Mulroney welcomed Mandela into the House of Commons on June 18, 1990, later claiming that “the very notion of South Africa’s apartheid was anathema to me...I viewed apartheid with the same degree of disgust that I attached to the Nazis...I was resolved from the moment I became prime minister that any government I headed would speak and act in the finest traditions of Canada.”

But South African apartheid was based on Canadian tradition. According to Shannon Thunderbird, a Coast Tsimshian First Nations elder, “It is ironic because the Canadian Indian Act formed much of the basis for the oppressive apartheid policies in South Africa. It’s kind of an understood custom and practice that Canada’s Indian Act came to be known as the acceptable role model for apartheid policies and there are books and websites that outline all of this. It’s actually hypocrisy for Canada to stand forward as a kind of bulwark of protest against atrocities going on in other countries while at the same time we turn a blind eye to our own people.” Mulroney welcomed Mandela while the genocidal residential school system was still operational, and two months before sending thousands of Canadian soldiers to confront the Mohawk blockade at Oka.

It is not only the Conservatives whose tributes to Mandela reveal their hypocrisy. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau and former Prime Minister Jean Chretien called Mandela’s life inspiring, but Mandela certainly did not inspire the White Paper. In 1969 -- five years into Mandela’s incarceration, when Canada still supported South African apartheid -- Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his Minister for Indian Affairs Jean Chretien proposed the White Paper to forcibly assimilate First Nations. As the Cree activist Harold Cardinal wrote in his book The Unjust Society (exposing

Trudeau’s claims of Canada’s supposed “Just Society”), “In spite of all government attempts to convince Indians to accept the white paper, their efforts will fail, because Indians understand that the path outlined by the Department of Indian Affairs through its mouthpiece, the Honourable Mr. Chrétien, leads directly to cultural genocide. We will not walk this path.”

## Anti-colonial struggles

The Red Power movement emerged to challenge Canadian colonialism and defeat the White Paper, and later solidarity with Mandela and the anti-apartheid struggle swept the country. Mandela was part of a mass movement against apartheid that included student and township uprisings, armed resistance, mass strikes, and international solidarity. South African apartheid depended on black workers for profits, so the wave of unionization -- including the founding of COSATU in 1985 -- provided a powerful weapon to organize strikes of millions against apartheid. It was South Africans themselves who spearheaded the push to end apartheid and free Nelson Mandela, not the “humanitarian intervention” myths about Mulroney.

But there was widespread solidarity against South African apartheid, which has inspired a similar movement against Israeli apartheid. Western elites are eager to detach Mandela from the struggle, counter-posing the South African freedom struggle with other anti-colonial struggles. Prime Minister Harper claims that Mandela “demonstrated that the only path forward for the nation was to reject the appeal of bitterness.” But it was the bitterness of fellow Conservative Rob Anders -- who in 2001 called Mandela a terrorist -- that best expressed how Western elites view anti-colonial struggles. That this label was imposed on South African freedom fighters should lead us to challenge the criminalization of other anti-colonial struggles -- from Palestine to Tamil Eelam to Turtle Island.

## South Africa after apartheid

Mandela’s rehabilitation in the eyes of the elites, from terrorist to inspiration, is not because of newfound solidarity with his anti-apartheid past but rather the neoliberal policies of the ANC government. Reacting to news of Mandela’s passing, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund offered their sympathies to the South African people -- sympathies that were lacking when these financial institutions imposed structural adjustment policies in the 1990s.

According to South Africa’s Anti-Privatization Forum and Coalition Against Water Privatization,

“The majority of South Africans, made up of the poor and working class, fought and died not just for political freedom from apartheid, but for socio-economic freedom and justice, for the redistribution of all ‘national wealth’ ...This popular mandate was captured in the Reconstruction & Development Programme (RDP), which formed the basis of the ‘people’s contract’ with the new democratic government. However, it did not take long for the ANC government to abandon that popular mandate by unilaterally deciding to pursue a water policy that has produced the exact opposite result... Following the neo-liberal economic advice of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and various Western governments (and heavy lobbying by private multinational water companies, such as Suez and Biwater), the South African government drastically decreased grants and subsidies to local municipalities and city councils and supported the development of financial instruments for privatised delivery. This effectively forced local government to turn towards commercialisation and privatisation of basic services as a means of generating the revenue no longer provided by the national state. Many local government structures began to privatise and/or corporatise public water utilities by entering into service and management ‘partnerships’ with multinational water corporations. The immediate result was a massive increase in the price of water that necessarily hit poor communities the hardest.

But the struggle for socio-economic freedom and justice, against the ANC government and global corporations, continues -- from the Treatment Action Campaign for people with HIV/AIDS, to the protests outside the UN climate talks at Durban, to the strikes at Marikana and beyond. As Mandela himself said in 1993, “You must support the African National Congress only so far as it delivers the goods, if the ANC government does not deliver the goods, you must do to it what you have done to the apartheid regime.”

## Marikana

The massacre of Marikana miners by the ANC government has been a turning point for workers to challenge the government. Recently the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), which represents 330,000 workers and has a history of militancy, has broken with the ANC and announced it will not be supporting it next election.

The best tribute to Mandela is to continue the finest traditions of the anti-apartheid struggle: anti-colonial resistance, protests and strikes, and international solidarity.



Toronto city council weakens Ford, preserves his agenda

TORONTO'S CITY Council stripped Mayor Rob Ford of some of his powers. But because the council's decision aimed to punish Ford individually—transferring power to his right-wing ally Norm Kelly—it does not present a solution to “save Toronto” because the council's agenda remains fiscally conservative.

The right-wing on council was divided over the motions against Ford: while Ford, his brother and staunch ally Georgia Mamolitti opposed them, opportunists like Karen Stintz and Denzel Minan-Wong supported the motions—to denounce Ford's behaviour while supporting his policies.

The left on council were also divided. Adam Vaughan supported the motoin, stating “We will shun him, curtail his power as best we can. He clearly has gone off the deep end, shot himself in outer space.” This reinforces the stigmatization of people with addictions, deflects attention from Ford's policies that deserve far more shunning from council, and ignores the majority right wing on council.

Others opposed the motions, not to draw attention to his policies but to preserve the mayoralty. Left councilor Gord Perks said in an open letter: “Anything that displaces the electorate's power to chose its government is anti-democratic... Government is the tool we built together to solve problems. Its precise function is to find alternatives that bring us to a better future.” But Ford rose to power on people's anger at the economic crisis and disillusionment with social democracy's capacity to provide an alternative—including left councilors joining the attack on city workers and supporting the police's crackdown during the G20.

Outside Council

It was pressure from outside council, through a year of mobilizing, that undermined Ford's hold on council—causing rifts in the right-wing and confidence in left councilors to speak out. Taking advantage of the current low level of struggle, the media and right-wing councilors have tried to reduce opposition to Ford to his personal behaviour, in order to preserve his austerity agenda.

“Save Toronto,” the group that organized a rally outside council and collected more than 1000 signatures calling on Ford to resign, have reflected the moralism that blames Ford for drug use but not his policies. But despite the confused messaging, much of the opposition to Ford is because of his policies.

While the council stripped Ford of his powers his agenda remains, but so does anger to it—which can be refocused by reminding people of Ford's policies, the complicity of right-wing councilors, and the mobilizations that opposed his agenda and pushed left councilors to speak out.

The power of workers

Library workers showed how to fight Ford

WHILE LEGAL and procedural means have failed to remove Ford, it is good to remember that it was the effective organizing work of the Toronto library workers two years previously that was the tipping point in the fight back against the Ford agenda.

In 2011, Ford was still walking in the glow of his election victory, he had a group of councilors he tightly controlled but as he attempted to push forward his agenda of cuts Toronto public library workers pushed back.

They threw themselves into an intensive campaign working along with community groups to fight cutbacks and preserve services. They reached out to the community—including celebrity writers like Margaret Atwood—encouraging community members to contact their councilors, attend public meetings and depute at city hall.

It was over the issue of cutbacks to libraries that councilors in his cabal first started to break ranks. In the face of intense public opposition Karen Stinz and James Pasternak came out against the library cuts. Polling showed that 70 per cent of the public opposed cuts to libraries and 79 per cent opposed closing branches. Ford's popularity dropped from a high of 60 per cent down to 42 per cent.

In 2012, the attack on libraries was followed up by an attack on library workers. In contract negotiations in the spring of 2012 library workers faced a series of major concessions however, unlike the outside workers, they went out on strike.

They were able to carry the community support they earned the previous year, Margaret Atwood and others spoke out in support of the workers, they were able to make the link with much of the public, that retaining the services they want requires workers to provide those services. A team of rank and file workers visited various workplaces building confidence among their members. Although they were not able to stop all concessions they were able to hold the line on most and even win some gains.

Library workers showed us how Ford could be pushed back through on-the-ground organizing, making links with the community, and not being afraid to take strike action.

OPINION



Typhoon Haiyan: capitalist disaster

THE DEVASTATION from the typhoon that struck the Philippines is not only a tragedy, it's a crime.

As Filipino activist Walden Bello wrote of his government's representatives at the international climate talks, “the delegation must convert tears into anger and denounce the big climate polluters for their continued refusal to take the steps needed to save the world from the destruction that their carbon-intensive economies have unleashed on us all.”

This year, for the first time in human history, carbon dioxide levels reached 400 ppm. It's in this context that we're seeing increasing climate disasters—including Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Hurricane Sandy last year, and Typhoon Haiyan this year—one of the strongest ever. Global warming is raising sea levels and also warming the oceans--both factors that contribute to greater and more destructive hurricanes/typhoons.

Runaway climate change is the inevitable result of an economic system based on incessant accumulation without regard for people and the planet.

Capitalism has concentrated economic power into massive companies where oil companies dominate--intertwined with concentrated political power of states who go to war with each other, with militaries that are the largest consumers of oil. Capitalism is driving the world to climate catastrophe.

Unnatural disasters

Capitalism causes the so-called “natural disasters” not only through global warming, but also by undermining the material basis to resist disasters. This is especially true for oppressed groups, who experience environmental racism.

Hurricane Katrina didn't harm the millionaires of New Orleans but it did devastate the 9th ward, disproportionately affecting poor and racialized people. When African-Americans tried to get food amidst the disaster, the media labelled them looters and the police repressed them.

Hurricane Sandy disproportionately affected people in Haiti, a country that has been repeatedly invaded and occupied as punishment for its successful slave revolution 200 years ago.

The impact of colonialism, imperialism and neoliberalism has undermined Haiti's capacity to resist “natural disasters,” including those non-climate related. While a 7.0 earthquake in San Francisco killed a few dozen, the same magnitude quake killed a quarter of a million in Port-au-Prince--as buildings built with inadequate supplies collapsed on overcrowded sweat shops.

Philippines

The Philippines has been devastated by Western powers for almost 500 years--Spanish colonialism from the 16th to 19th centuries, and a brutal US occupation at the start of last

century.

The country has also been hit by waves of economic crisis--in the 1980s after structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank, in the late 1990s during the Asian financial crisis, and the current economic crisis. During these local elites have imposed austerity measures that have reduced people's capacity to resist disasters.

Like Haiti, many houses are made with materials unable to withstand disasters. Like New Orleans, the government responded to people searching for food by sending in armed forces.

No tar sands, no pipelines

Harper responded by sending Canada's militarized disaster response team, DART. But Harper is complicit in climate disasters, by promoting the tar sands--Canada's fastest growing source of carbon emissions and the dirtiest energy project on the planet.

The disaster in the Philippines makes it more urgent to stop all tar sands pipelines and the tar sands themselves, and to transition to an economy of green jobs.

The growing climate justice movements across the country are in solidarity with people in the Philippines resisting their climate disaster. Together, we need to defend our climate and our communities from capitalism.

Support socialist media

THE YEAR 2013 was marked by resistance around the world. Socialist Worker newspaper and socialist.ca website has been part of this resistance, and here is a summary of the year based on the most read articles.

Socialist Worker has supported Idle No More, which emerged to lead resistance to the Harper agenda—opposing the increasingly disastrous tar sands, shining a light on residential school torture and starvation, and supporting justice for residential school survivors and missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Socialist Worker has opposed the increasing propaganda about imperialism in the lead up to the WWI centenary, highlighted Canada's record of “humanitarian intervention” in Somalia, and opposed the new resource war in Mali.

Socialist Worker has covered resistance movements elsewhere, through

their own voices—a statement from Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, an interview with an activist in Saudi Arabia, an eyewitness account from protests in Turkey, and support for anti-fascists in Greece.

Socialist Worker has opposed oppression in every form—remembering the victories of the anti-colonial Red Power movement, denouncing the rape culture that was glorified in the song Blurred Lines and that led to Rehtaeh Parsons death, opposing the racist attack on migrant workers in the wake of the RBC scandal and the police killing of Sammy Yatim, building unity between striking elevator workers and people with disabilities, and supporting Mad Pride.

Socialist Worker has generalized the new working class resistance from fast food workers in the US to Baristas in Nova Scotia, and connected online articles to campaigns against union busting at Richtree and

in support of striking Porter airline workers.

Socialist Worker has been part of debates over the NDP's BC election loss, the scandal of Rob Ford, strategies for building a fighting student movement, and Marxist theory—including radical ecology, LGBT oppression, religion, the police, and the revolutionary potential of the working class.

Moving forward in 2014

Socialist Worker is written by activists across the country, and distributed both online and in print. If you value the role of socialist media in reflecting, supporting and building resistance movements, then support socialist.ca so we can help build resistance in 2014.

Submit an article to socialist.ca, make a donation, subscribe to Socialist Worker, or join the International Socialists.



## REVIEWS



### FILM

# Whose revolution is it anyway?

#### Catching Fire

Directed by Francis Lawrence  
Reviewed by Melissa Graham

**IF THERE was any movie that started political discussion in 2013, it would be the second installment of the Hunger Games trilogy, *Catching Fire*.**

The reasons for that may seem obvious at first glance, the plot of the Hunger Games books are centered on revolution against the tyrannical, over-consuming Capitol. However, there is a larger discussion happening beyond the main plot of the trilogy. Since the debut of *Catching Fire* there has been a sharp increase in discussion of gender roles, hunger, and revolution.

As the main character in the Hunger Games trilogy, Katniss Everdeen provides some much

needed relief from the typical female leads of Hollywood. Katniss is independent, strong, and resourceful while still portrayed as a human character with flaws and fears. She is capable of love, but romance is not essential to her character, nor is she portrayed as a sexual object. The actress who plays Katniss, Jennifer Lawrence, has also spoken out against how women are portrayed in the media and held to an unnatural standard of beauty.

It is not difficult to see the comparison between the Capitol in the *Catching Fire*, and the ruling class oppression in the real world. What is surprising is the call for revolution, however short-lived, that has come out of this film. A note of caution here though, a call for revolution from elites like Donald Sutherland are unlikely to create the world

we want to see, and the film itself promotes an idea that only the elite can spark a revolution. While it is exciting to see a mainstream film that calls for revolution, it is important to remember that mainstream media is the tool of the ruling class, and *Catching Fire* is excellent tool for disguising ideas. Take for example the whole line of makeup named the Capitol Collection, a film that seems to promote feminist ideals is still telling women they need to look better.

But all is not lost. *Catching Fire* did remind people of their own oppression at least for a short while, and one group called the Harry Potter Alliance used the theme of The Hunger Games to bring attention to real hunger. Now if only we can stop looking to mainstream media for revolutionary ideas, the odds may someday be in our favour.

### BOOK

# The history of winning support for war resisters

**ON NOVEMBER 18, author and anti-war activist Jessica Squires launched her book “Building sanctuary” in Toronto, as a fundraiser for the War Resisters Support Campaign. Socialist.ca asked her a few questions.**

#### Why did you want to write this book?

Originally for my doctoral thesis I had planned on writing on a different topic. But at the time I was involved in the anti-war movement and the movement to support Iraq war resisters. I got interested in the similarities and differences between the movement then and the movement now.

#### The Immigration Canada website removed references to Vietnam War resisters. Why is this history important to study?

Some believe the reason they removed it is because they want to change the image of Canada from one of a so-called “peaceable kingdom” to one more explicitly militaristic. But actually Canada was never a peaceable kingdom—that’s a myth I’m interested in uncovering and exploring in my book. I think this history is more important because of what it tells us about how a social movement, even a very small one, can be effective and have a significant impact on public policy.

**Trudeau famously declared Canada should be a refuge from militarism. Was this always his**

#### attitude towards war resisters, and if not what did it take to change his mind?

Actually Trudeau never said that. That quote is an amalgam of two quotes, both taken from quite late in the period—and after the border was opened to US deserters, a move only taken following a coordinated campaign by the Canadian anti-draft movement. The campaign was characterized by media strategies, lobbying, letter-writing, petitions, and publicity stunts. In the context of heightened awareness about the war, the media paid attention and public opinion was swayed. The rules were changed in May of 1969. Before and after that moment, draft dodgers and deserters both experienced and continued to experience discrimination and suspicion at border points. There were built-in structural obstacles for deserters that also continued—such as the points system, which was biased against people from lower-income backgrounds.

#### The Harper government claims Iraq War resisters are different because they enlisted, whereas all Vietnam War resisters were conscripts. Can you comment on this supposed dichotomy?

Even at the beginning of the period some of the Vietnam war resisters were deserters. As the years passed the pendulum swung back the other way. By 1969 or 1970 a large proportion of the resisters were deserters, and not all of them enlisted. Many

had originally volunteered, rather than been drafted, and for much the same reasons as people sign up today: to get access to good education, health care, etc. The main difference between then and now is government policy on both sides of the border. There is no draft in the US, but there is a poverty draft. In Canada, immigration has become progressively more difficult since the early 1970s.

#### What inspiration did you learn from the previous movement that can help the current movement to support war resisters?

A small movement can make a difference! It isn’t easy or automatic, but it can be done. The movement then, as now, was made up in large part of Canadians who saw the act of war resistance as political, no matter what the motives of those who came. The individual act of coming to Canada added up to a small but important part of the broader draft resistance movement. It was, at its heart, an international solidarity movement.

#### How can people get a copy of your book?

There is a book launch event in Toronto on November 18, where I will have copies of the trade paperback edition available. I will also have copies available at the Canadian Peace Alliance convention in Toronto. You can order the hardcover from UBC press. I would also suggest requesting it at your local library! It will be available in bookstores early next year.

## LEFT JAB

John Bell

# Talkin’ about revolution

**DONALD SUTHERLAND, Russell Brand and Pope Francis walk into a bar... Well, if they did they would have something to talk about: all three have become media sensations for launching withering attacks on capitalism.**

The Pope doesn’t go as far as Sutherland and Brand, and toss around the “R” word, but his recent pronouncement has been called “pure Marxism” by no less an authority than Rush Limbaugh.

“I want Hunger Games to stir up a revolution,” veteran actor and erstwhile activist Donald Sutherland recently told the Guardian newspaper. Anyone familiar with Sutherland’s support for the Black Panthers and the anti-war movement back in the 1960s won’t be surprised. His statements are more Puckish than programmatic, but we appreciate the sentiment.

#### Russell Brand: weather vane

Until now comedian Russell Brand has not been on my radar. But a recent string of essays and interviews has made him a media sensation. As guest editor of New Statesman magazine he wrote, “Imagining the overthrow of the current political system is the only way I can be enthused about politics.” I tactically disagree with his argument on refusing to vote, but I agree with his assessment of “democracy” under capitalism: “Like most people I am utterly disenchanted by politics. Like most people I regard politicians as frauds and liars and the current political system as nothing more than a bureaucratic means for furthering the augmentation and advantages of economic elites.”

Some of what he says is total crap, like his sexist comments. Some of his statements are the product of thinking fast but not deeply, like when he says that “capitalism is not real; it is an idea.” Come on lad, how did that idea come about? After a few millennia of feudalism, did some folks philosophizing over their ale suddenly declare: “Enough of this rot, let’s have some of this capitalism I just thought of.”

But he’s far from unique falling into the trap of idealism. And Brand rightly identifies the challenges facing the left: how to change consciousness; how to convert apathy into “righteous rage”; how to reconcile individual imperatives with collective action. I think he’s dead wrong that humans are more strongly “wired” for selfishness than for altruism, but arguments about human nature are crucial.

All this ignited a grass-fire of debate on the left blogosphere, with responses ranging from uncritical anarchist group hugs to stodgy tut-tutting from the dogmatic end of the Marxism spectrum.

All, I think, miss the point, and no one, I bet, is more amused than Russell Brand. Brand did not, as the Gawker website gushed, “start a revolution”, but he is an accurate weather vane. He senses which way the wind is blowing and his words act as a fan to push it along. He’s not the only one to feel the breeze, but most of those who do are scrambling to calm it, rather than fan it into a gale.

#### The Pope’s fetters

Which brings us to the Pope. In a recent statement Pope Francis attacked “unfettered capitalism” as “a new tyranny”: “As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world’s problems or, for that matter, to any problems.”

That’s great by Pope standards and enough to send shudders through a swathe of the ruling class. But Francis is not for overturning capitalism, just for fettering the “unfettered” variety. He fears capitalism has gone too far, that the gap between rich and poor is too wide, and that the scandals revealing the true nature of system have become too frequent and too obvious.

#### The myth of reformism

In a recent essay from *The Atlantic* magazine entitled “Is Capitalism In Trouble?”, Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland, writes: “Society as a whole is realizing the capitalist system itself is quite dysfunctional. We have created an economy and corporations that in many ways have become unethical. One response is to go out on the streets, like Occupy Wall Street. Another is the B Corp movement.” This so-called “movement” consists of 830 high-minded entrepreneurs. That’s a mighty puny counterweight to Occupy.

The author isn’t completely stupid: “Most businesses are constrained by the way their competitors operate. The decisions of individual CEOs won’t stop what’s new about capitalism in the 21st century—the job-hollowing impact of technological change and globalization.” But there is nothing essentially “new” about this year’s capitalism. A cursory reading of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) proves that. Cutthroat competition, economic crisis, imperialism and war are bred in capitalism’s bone–driven by the profit imperative, growth for its own sake, the very definition of unsustainability.

Throughout capitalism’s history there have been sections of the ruling class that recognize that the essence of system breeds the “righteous rage” Russell Brand celebrates. And so they turn to the state as a supposedly neutral body and cry, “save us from ourselves.” The author writes of “new-found openness some have toward a greater role for the state. They want the government to help them—and their rivals—do the right thing, like raise wages or repatriate taxable profits.” Can the leopard legislate a change of spots? When pigs fly.

I’m reminded of a quote by revolutionary writer Leon Trotsky: “Long political experience has taught me that whenever a petty-bourgeois professor or journalist begins talking about high moral standards it is necessary to keep a firm hand on one’s pocketbook.”

Reform or revolution? Who has a firmer grasp of capitalism’s “trouble”: the blasphemous, working class comedian or the unhistorical apostle of a born-again capitalism? Give me Russell Brand every time.



## 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.

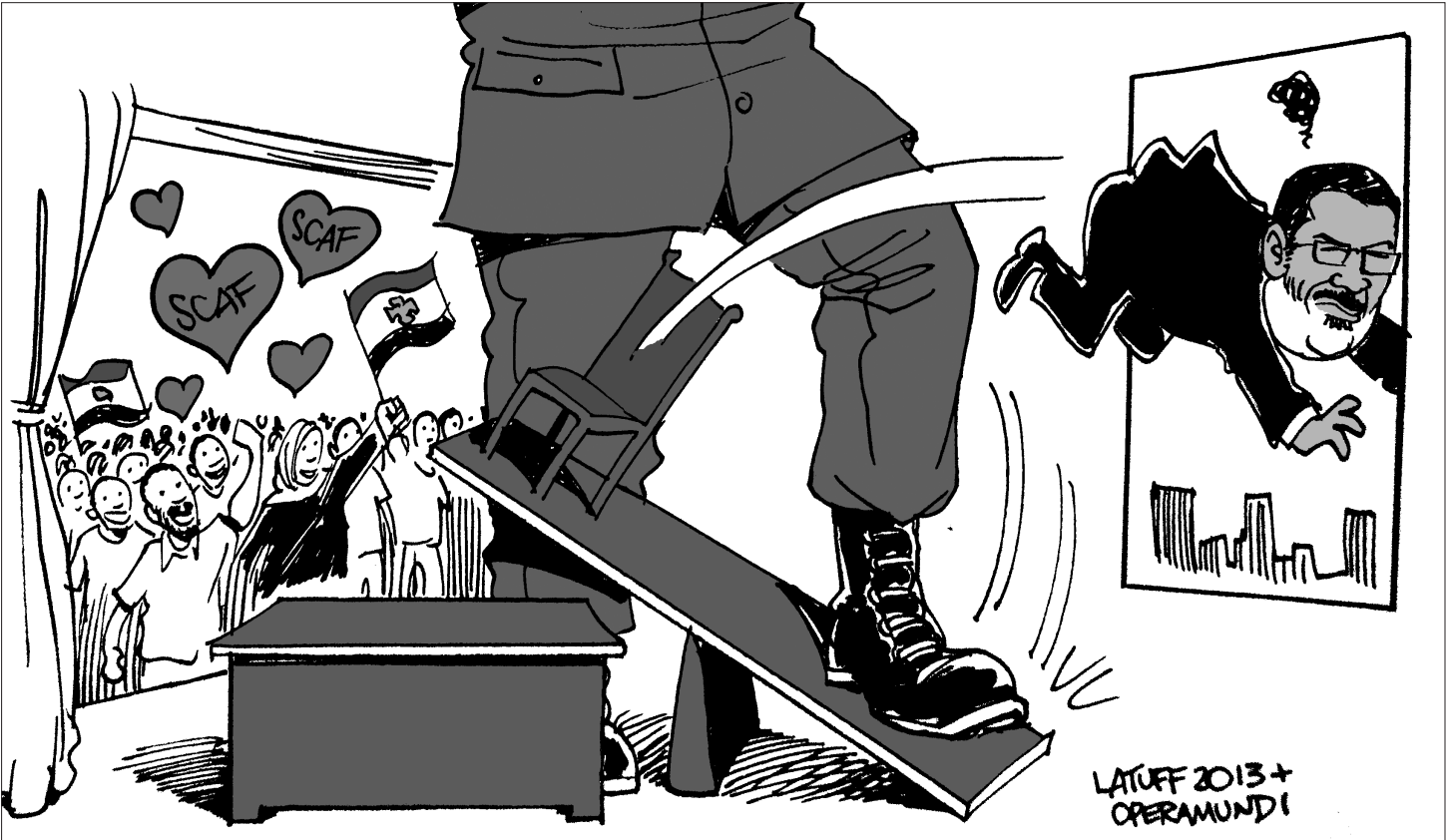
### Oppression

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.



# Egypt: revolution, coup or both?

by JAMES CLARK

**FOR THE Egyptian Revolution, 2013 has been a year of contradictions. In the first half of the year, tens of millions mobilized against President Mohamed Morsi, leading to record protests on June 30. But three days later, former defence minister General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi led a coup, hijacking the revolution. The second half of the year has been marked by bloodshed and repression, initially targeted at the Muslim Brotherhood, but now directed at all the regime's opponents.**

Without a doubt, the situation is grim: the coup represents the biggest setback for the revolution since it began. Does this mean it is over?

Far from it: revolution is a process, not an event. It develops unevenly, ebbs and flows, advances and then retreats. It is always characterized by contradictions, which continuously affect the terrain of struggle and provide opportunities for resistance, even in the most difficult circumstances.

## Pro-coup

The starting point for this discussion is the relationship between June 30 and July 3. The dominant response inside Egypt, and among a section of the international left, has been to back the coup, claiming that the military intervened to save the revolution from the Muslim Brotherhood. Most of Egypt's left shares this perspective, some of it based on Islamophobia towards Islamist organizations, some based on the military's appeal to the legacy of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers' Movement in 1952.

This perspective sees the coup as the legitimate response to Egyptians' demands for Morsi's removal, and the mobilization against Morsi in the lead-up to June 30 as a mandate for the coup. This perspective frames the current struggle in Egypt as one between liberalism and Islamism, supporting the military against Morsi.

## Anti-coup

The second response, which enjoys far less support both inside and outside Egypt, has been to oppose the coup, for contradictory reasons. The Muslim Brotherhood sees it as the overthrow by liberal elites of a democratically elected president—framing the strug-

gle as their opponents do as one between liberalism and Islamism.

Others on the left see it as a counter-revolution by the military. Some back the call for Morsi's restoration, while others continue to support the demand for his removal. Like the Brotherhood, those who back Morsi's restoration generally dismiss the June 30 protests, and the mobilization before it, as either misguided, illegitimate or a foreign conspiracy.

Those who still back Morsi's removal, while remaining opposed to the coup, see the protests as the culmination of a genuine mass mobilization that expressed a growing radicalization and a deepening of the revolution – despite the coup that followed it. June 30 and July 3 are not part of one seamless process, but competing and contradictory movements.

## June 30

In this light, June 30 represents a legitimate expression of mass anger against the crimes of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Of course, this anger does not justify the extreme repression that followed the coup, and all activists should oppose the violence directed at Brotherhood members and supporters. But the actions of Egypt's Armed Forces should not detract from the mobilization of tens of millions of Egyptians.

Furthermore, the call for Morsi's removal, at least for most Egyptians, was not an appeal to the military to lead a coup; rather, it was evidence of Egyptians' growing confidence and militancy. Indeed, a general strike was planned for the days after June 30, but was scuttled by the coup.

## July 3

The military's intervention on July 3 is not only an opportunistic response to the June 30 protests, but also the culmination of a longer-term process: the struggle by Egypt's Armed Forces to re-assert its supremacy and shift from a strategy of limited cooperation with the Brotherhood (to contain the revolution and de-mobilize its supporters) towards a strategy of co-optation and repression (to harness Egyptians' rising anger and direct it towards the Brotherhood and away from the state).

This explanation of the relationship between June 30 and July 3 has been most developed by Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists

(RS), who participated in the mass mobilization against Morsi but who have also campaigned against the coup and its repression of Brotherhood members and supporters. Taking the same position, a revolutionary front is developing that opposes the military's seizure of power, but also continues to support the demand for Morsi's removal as part of struggles of ordinary Egyptians: in their workplaces, on the campuses, and in Tahrir Square.

## Working class

This perspective restores the Egyptian working class to the heart of the discussion about the revolution's future. In its emphasis of the contradictory nature of these events, it also identifies the potential for resistance to a repressive regime. The regime's appeal to Nasser's legacy has raised expectations even higher: the reforms that Nasser achieved during the massive expansion of the Egyptian state in the 1950s and 1960s are impossible for el-Sisi in today's economic climate.

By identifying the contractions that face the regime – ongoing economic stagnation, the inability to deliver meaningful reforms, Egyptians' high expectations, their memory and experience of successful protests since 2011, and a growing anger that has not fully dissipated – this perspective also develops a more accurate reading of the regime's weaknesses, and therefore openings for resistance.

## Strikes

The return of strikes and protests in Egypt, if only on a modest level, demonstrates a growing impatience with el-Sisi, the same kind that targeted Morsi on June 30. There is nothing inevitable about its development into a genuine mass movement against the regime, but the possibility remains for the seeds of June 30 to blossom into something more powerful.

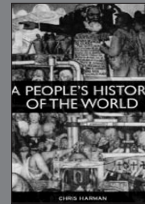
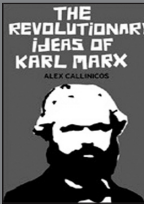
Even if they do, the revolution still faces another challenge: the absence of a mass, experienced and well-rooted revolutionary organization that can co-ordinate struggles across the country and unite Egyptians' anger into a common movement against the entire system. Such an organization cannot be built overnight, but can emerge from growing revolutionary activity.

The key is to recognize where that potential exists and to exploit all the contradictions on which the coup came to power.

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## SYRIA REPORT BACK

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

**MOTHER AGNES-Mariam shared her eyewitness experience in Syria with people in Toronto during her speaking tour.**

Mother Agnes talked about the horrific war crimes committed against civilians in Syria and urged people around the world to help Syrians by showing solidarity and contributing to the humanitarian aid, while being against military intervention.

She said that Syrian people are facing an international community of hypocrisy. When faced by political questions from the audience, Mother Agnes said: “I am not an expert on geopolitics.” She does not take any sides in the Syrian conflict and her message was about peace and reconciliation.

Mother Agnes had a great role in helping to evacuate Moadhamiya town near Damascus after courageously mediating between fighters and the Syrian government. She helped to evacuate around 700 women and children and 650 men in October.

### Conflict zones

In March 2011, protests erupted in Syria as part of the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia and Egypt. Western direct and indirect intervention turned the protests to a civil war. While the government forces shell Syrian towns and villages, rebels have recruited child soldiers, attacked religious minorities and used civilians as human shields.

The Western-backed gulf countries (GCC), mainly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, fund fundamentalist military groups in an attempt to counter the revolution and control the region. “Fundamentalism is under the supervision of United States and is funded by the GCC governments,” Mother Agnes said.

During her visit to Homs, which is under the control of the opposition military groups, Mother Agnes witnessed horrific human rights violations. “In one day we counted around 100 corpses.” Mother Agnes said that beheading is a normal act committed by fundamentalist groups that control some parts of Syria.

Mother Agnes also talked about the 13 nuns who are kidnapped by Jabhat AlNusra and its allies--funded by Western-backed Saudi Arabia and Qatar. She also talked about the attack on Northern Latakia, including crucifixions and kidnappings by Al Qaeda..

### No to intervention

Being in solidarity with people in Syria means supporting their rights to self-determination and opposing Western direct and indirect intervention. Mother Agnes called for an international inquiry commission without any political affiliation, and humanitarian aid to bring comfort to Syrians by providing them with medicine, food and items necessary for living.



## A HUNDRED CITIES RALLY TO DEFEND OUR CLIMATE

by GLENTUAX

**ANTI-PIPELINE rallies were held across the country November 16, and the movement continues to gather support from diverse parts of the population.**

One hundred and thirty communities, large and small, in all regions, saw actions, initiated through the Defend our Climate organization. In several BC coastal communities, rallies took place on ocean shores (rather than central squares) to emphasize the added danger of oil spills. In Toronto, the emphasis was on stopping Line 9.

The largest turnout was unsurprisingly in Vancouver, in a province that is facing direct attacks from the proposed Northern Gateway and Kinder Morgan pipelines. The Liberals have been paying lip service to the majority opposition to Enbridge, and now that the election is over they are revealing their true colours.

Speakers at the Vancouver rally pointed out that there are 21 Tory MPs in BC, and if the Harper administration is foolhardy enough to allow the pipeline to be thrust through the province, those Tory MPs will be looking at new career options.

Paradoxically, the civic authorities of Vancouver are completely behind the pipeline opposition—whether this is genuine concern on the part of the Vision party, or if it is the usual opportunist tactics to sway opinion is irrelevant. One governmental authority now sanctions the protest movement, and this reflects the power of the movement.

There is a coming together of different issues: besides the most obvious environmental concerns, there are issues of indigenous land rights, questions over the actual economic ripple effect that the pipeline would produce, and the continued debate regarding the time-limited oil industry.

### Indigenous sovereignty and solidarity

But it is the First Nations that are leading the way, uniting broad swathes of the population. The mainstream media’s silence about the leadership role of First Nations is perhaps the most frustrating aspect of coverage of the events. While the majority of the speakers at Vancouver’s rally were indigenous, mainstream media simply concentrated on the environmentalists—trying to shape this as another single-issue, environmentalist stunt in order to cast aside and dismiss the movement.

Taking on the combination of the grim specter of fracking, an oil industry that’s desperately clinging on to power, blatant disregard for indigenous rights, and the overwhelming arrogance of an administration beholden to the 1%, this mass movement has the potential to make history. There is no better time for a genuine united front.

Low wages affect everyone, because lower wages lead to poorer health and well-being, resulting in higher use of health and social services. It follows that a strong minimum wage will help not only the workers paid at this level, but our communities as a whole. Raising the minimum wage to \$14 an hour would stimulate Ontario’s economy by putting more than \$5 billion additional

dollars in workers’ pockets. The raise would benefit 1.4 million people, especially oppressed groups over-represented among minimum wage earners.

Across Ontario, communities are organizing actions for December 14 (and the 14th day of every month), calling for peace, prosperity, justice and a \$14 minimum wage. For more visit [www.raisetheminimumwage.ca](http://www.raisetheminimumwage.ca)

## YOU DESERVE A RAISE!

by VALERIE LANNON

**SINCE ONTARIO’S minimum wage was frozen at \$10.25 an hour three years ago, minimum wage earnings have been driven by inflation to 19 per cent below the poverty line.**

It is conservatively estimated that a minimum wage of \$14 an hour is needed right now so that earnings are above the poverty line.

## DAVENPORT RESIDENTS DEMAND NUCLEAR PLANT’S SHUTDOWN

**ON DECEMBER 10-11, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) held a special session in Davenport, in response to an outcry from residents who last year learned of the existence of GE-Hitachi’s local nuclear fuel processing plant.**

CNSC had recently renewed the plant’s operating license for another ten years in spite of the fact that one of the conditions for license renewal was maintaining a public information program for local residents.

Two public meetings were held, attended by hundreds of angry residents, as a result of which MP Andrew Cash and MPP Jonah Schein demanded the CNSC hold a special session.

The CNSC agreed to hold

a public hearing in Toronto, but refused to reopen the ten-year license renewal.

There is no valid reason why uranium needs to be trucked to the centre of Toronto to be processed for use in distant Candu reactors. The company’s position is that the nuclear industry is safe, and any relocation based on safety concerns is out of the question. To yield on this point would be to open the door to further challenges about uranium mining and nuclear energy.

There were about 45 oral presentations at the hearings--by local residents, environmental and public health organizations, and Kirstin Scansen--a Nehithaw Cree woman from the uranium-mined Key Lake region of northern Saskatchewan.

Virtually all presenters called for the Lansdowne plant to be shut down due to its location in a residential area, while many questioned the safety of the nuclear industry as such. Davenport MP Andrew Cash and Jonah Schein echoed the public concern and demanded the licensing process be reopened to allow for public participation.

In spite of the CNSC’s closed mind and GE-Hitachi’s stonewalling, the hearings were a success. They would not have happened without neighbourhood mobilization, and they are part of a learning process of how government regulators reflect industry. The people will continue on, until we have the kind of neighbourhood we want.

## STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

# Service workers strike back

**AROUND 4,500 homecare workers walked out earlier in December impacting over 45,000 families. These workers are primarily women from racialized communities and provide needed services to the elderly and others requiring services allowing them to remain in their own homes.**

The highest wage rate is \$15 an hour and they are compensated for only one third of their travel time going. This is all on behalf of a for-profit company whose CEO makes hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

These workers are typical of the low wage service industry that is booming as manufacturing jobs are being lost through layoffs and plant closures. Employers are taking advantage of their vulnerability and are trying to pit these workers against the families they serve.

### Solidarity

Rallies, including one of thousands at Queens park, have been taking place across the province. An event in support of the striking workers took place with the Ontario Health Coalition, the Toronto Health Coalition, the Good Jobs For All Coalition and the Workers Action Centre, which is spearheading the campaign for an increased minimum wage. The support from community organizations is very important for the strike to be successful.

### Unions

The fact that service workers such as these are joining the labour movement is very important and strengthens their ability to fight back against exploitation. The walkouts that we have seen in the US of unorganized fast food and Walmart workers shows that unions are providing support and confidence to this sector even when people are not officially organized.

Although workers have suffered setbacks and defeats in recent times, where given a lead many will fight. We have seen this with the library workers in Toronto, at Rio Tinto in Quebec, teachers in British

Columbia, workers at Vale Inco and US Steel. All of these battles have not been won, but it is very important that we put pressure on the leadership to fight back against concessions.

In Toronto, 130 Steelworkers at Crown have been on strike for months, against a two-tiered situation with new hires and other concessions. These workers have struck and have traveled to plants in the US, to the corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, and are connecting with fellow unionists in many other Crown workplaces trying to get support actions taking place across the chain. Workers in a newly organized facility in Turkey demonstrated in support of their Canadian fellow-workers.

This strike as well as the home care workers walk out demonstrates that workers will fight when they are given the opportunity to do so. Unions are one of the major obstacles to the austerity agenda.

Harper, Hudak and others are very clear that unions can still be an effective tool to support the needs of working people. If they didn’t think this Harper wouldn’t have enacted federal legislation against postal workers, rail workers and Air Canada workers, and Hudak wouldn’t be prioritizing anti-union legislation in his election platform.

### Rank-and-file

Trade union activists in Ontario must take advantage of the openings that have been created in our unions to fight back against the anti-worker, anti-union attacks. Almost every union has begun an internal campaign to connect with their membership.

We should be at the heart of these campaigns, connecting with the members, listening to their concerns and talking about the need for rank and file organization at the workplace. It gives us an opportunity to rebuild our unions from the bottom up. We can not only fight back against these attacks but hopefully create a new and reinvigorated labour movement with the members at the heart of it.

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# Socialist Worker

## SUPPORT POSTAL WORKERS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

by PAM JOHNSON

**SCROOGE-LIKE** Canada Post CEO, Deepak Chopra, announced the phase out of door-to-door mail delivery by 2015 just before the Christmas holidays. Then, attempting to quell the outrage this sparked, said it is a good idea because seniors will get more exercise going to the community mailbox. Facepalm.

The announcement of 8,000 job cuts and the end of home delivery is not a surprise given the Harper government's ideological attacks on public services and public sector workers. But, there is a great deal of confusing information that is spinning the message.

First, the main message is that home delivery is obsolete in the age of the internet. Yet, Canada Post has recently massively invested in a modernization project, including vans for letter carriers so that they can deliver parcels to meet the rising online shopping demand. Second, the government has raised postal rates and is claiming Canada Post is a burden on taxpayers and we can't afford it.

But the reality is that Canada Post is self-sustaining and in sixteen out of the last seventeen years it has made millions in profits. That money has gone back into government coffers--representing a net gain to taxpayers.

### Pension Shortfall

The issue that is sparking the current cutback is a pension shortfall that would require the govern-



ment to kick in to the pension fund to maintain its viability.

The 2008 economic crisis put the squeeze on investments and the fund did not perform as predicted. Although the Harper government extended billions of dollars to Canadian banks to head off the kind of meltdowns that happened in the US and it continues to give generous tax breaks to corporations, they are not willing to bail out workers.

Similar to the deal offered to Air Canada this

year, the Harper government is willing to allow Canada Post to spread out pension contribution over an extended period. But there are conditions. Just as Air Canada has hammered away at its workers to keep costs down, Canada Post must do the same. The job and service cuts are the result.

### Privatization Boondoggle

The other puzzling question is why is Canada Post investing so heavily in modernizing an "obsolete"

service? The answer is privatization. A brief look at what has been happening in the UK since the Royal Mail was privatized in the fall 2013 is enlightening.

Although the Royal Mail was valued at 10 billion pounds it was sold at the fire sale price of 3.3 billion pounds. The banks that advised the government on the sale were allotted thirteen million shares as the stock price was going through the roof. The share price went up 67 per cent in the two weeks following the sale. This was on

top of seventeen million pounds in fees the banks got for advising on the sale.

The modernization of Canada Post at the same moment as it is being called obsolete opens the door to the opportunity to sell it to corporate interests at a bargain price.

### Outrage, resistance and a militant history

In the polls, 58 per cent were outraged by the cuts announcement. Postal workers rallied at MP's

office across Canada and handed a 10,000 signature petition to Labour Minister Lisa Raitt's constituency office in Milton, Ontario. An apt cartoon, showing the politicians congratulating themselves while seniors crawled to a mailbox summed up the sentiment of many.

It was postal workers who led a strike, initiated by francophone and anglophone workers in Montreal and Vancouver, that led to the unionization of all public sector workers in Canada. They unionized and established the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) to end decades of poverty wages and poor working conditions.

In an historic 1981 strike, postal workers walked out for maternity leave and won. This victory led to maternity leave for all public sector employees.

Postal workers are organizing in response to this latest attack and with public sentiment on their side is the opportunity to once again, fight for good jobs and services.

### Join the resistance

Show your support for postal workers by putting a sign in your window and talking to your postie if you have home delivery. Sign and circulate the petition in your workplace, campus and neighbourhood. Pass resolutions in your union locals and join or start a support campaign in your area.

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## War resisters: let them stay!

by LAURA KAMINKIER

**WAR RESISTER** Kimberly Rivera has been released from military prison and has been reunited with her family, after serving 10 months of a 14-month sentence.

Rivera lived in Canada for five years, until she was forced out of the country by Stephen Harper's Conservative government. In January, people across Canada will demonstrate their support for US war resisters during Let Them Stay Week 2014, a series of actions held from January 12 to January 19.

Rivera, who grew up in Texas, joined the United States Army and was deployed to Iraq. When she saw the destruction caused by the US-led invasion and

occupation of that country, especially the trauma inflicted on children, she knew she could no longer participate. Rivera was on leave in the US when, with no legal way to leave the Army, she and her husband packed up their children and all their belongings and drove to Canada, seeking refuge.

While living in Canada, Rivera joined the peace movement. She spoke out publicly against the Iraq War and all imperialism, and became active in her community in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto. Despite widespread public support—including 20,000 signatures on a letter to then-Immigration Minister Jason Kenney over a 10-day period, and an appeal from Archbishop Desmond

Tutu—the Conservative government refused to allow Rivera to remain in Canada.

The Harper Government's opposition to allowing US Iraq War resisters to remain in Canada puts them on the wrong side of Canadian democracy and Canadian history. Parliament twice voted to allow war resisters to stay, but the Harper Government ignored the will of the people as expressed by the House of Commons.

In the 1960s and 70s, tens of thousands of US war resisters came to Canada and, after Canadians campaigned on their behalf, were allowed to stay. Contrary to what the Harper Government claims, no distinction was made between Vietnam-era war resisters who had been drafted and those who volunteered for the military.

January 2014 marks ten years since the first US Iraq War resisters arrived in Canada. To mark this anniversary, and to continue to build support for soldiers whose consciences compelled them to leave the illegal and immoral war in Iraq, the War Resisters Support Campaign will lead Let Them Stay Week 2014 from January 12-19. People across Canada will lobby their Members of Parliament, write letters, make phone calls, and organize community events, calling on the next Government to make a provision for US Iraq War resisters to stay in Canada.

Visit [resisters.ca](http://resisters.ca) or join the Campaign's Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/WarResisters> to see how you can get involved.