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STOP HARPER STOP THE PIPELINES



To the surprise of absolutely no one, Stephen Harper's Tory government has given the go-ahead to Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline plan.

Stephen Harper is pretending that the pipeline approval process was "arms length": "The fact of the matter is ... the government is acting on the advice of an independent scientific panel that thoroughly reviewed all matters." But Steve is up to his elbows in bitumen, as usual.

The real fact of the matter is that more than 300 scientists not muzzled by the terms of their employment with the government signed an open letter in May denouncing the review process and the pipeline itself.

They wrote: "We, the undersigned scholars, have concluded that the Joint Review Panel's (JRP) assessment of the Northern Gateway Project ... represents a flawed analysis of the risks and benefits to British Columbia's environment and society. Consequently, the JRP report should not serve as the basis for concluding that the Northern Gateway Project is in the best interests of Canadians. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject this report."

The scientists repeat what environmentalists and First Nations representatives warned about the review process, that the fix was in from the start. Throughout that process the corporation released false information in its propaganda and the government

attacked opponents as dangerous extremists.

Harper used the RCMP and CSIS to spy on pipeline opponents, prompting the BC Civil Liberties Association to file complaints about "intimidating and anti-democratic" practices. The spies not only reported to Ottawa, but reportedly shared information with oil industry corporations.

Resistance

News of the approval sparked renewed calls for resistance.

There was an immediate rally in Vancouver that drew thousands. In smaller cities and towns, like Kitimat, the project's port terminal, opposition is strong. Residents of Kitimat voted to reject the pipeline—despite its promise of jobs—in a plebiscite held in April.

Less helpful is a petition calling for a province-wide vote on the project. Since the majority of the pipeline route crosses unceded First Nations land it is those Nations, not the settler majority, which should have veto power.

Opposition to the Northern Gateway is strong, and a coalition of First Nations—including the Yinka Dene Alliance, the BC Assembly of First Nations, the BC Union of Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit—are moving to take Enbridge and the government to court. They have the momentum of the Supreme Court decision on the Tsilhqot'in First Nation, reaffirming indigenous rights over the land.

Behind the legal challenge is the promise to stop the project by any means necessary.

"They can go ahead and try and put their project through here," said Freda Husan, speaking for the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wet'suet'en First Nation. "They will be considered trespassers. And we'll enforce Wet'suet'en law against any trespassers. You bring any equipment on here, it's going to belong to us. You're going to be walking out."

The Unist'ot'en camp has drawn solidarity from across the country for a community that vows to stop pipelines through their territories.

No tar sands pipelines

Resistance to the Northern Gateway pipeline going west is inspiring resistance to pipelines going east.

While the National Energy Board rubber-stamped the Line 9 pipeline, the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation are appealing the decision. After the Ontario election activists are renewing their demand that the government conduct an environmental assessment of Line 9, and the Toronto municipal election gives an opportunity to raise opposition to Line 9 as an election issue.

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau has opportunistically claimed he is against Northern Gateway. But he supports the tar sands and supports other pipeline—like the Keystone XL pipeline going south, and Line 9 and Energy East

pipelines going east. As the twin party of corporate Canada the Liberals are merely trying to more effectively develop the tar sands, provoking less opposition.

Unfortunately the NDP position is hardly better. While leader Thomas Mulcair opposes the Northern Gateway and Keystone XL pipelines, he supports tar sands pipelines going east, as well as domestic refining.

But no matter where pipelines go or where the oil is refined, they expand tar sands that threaten indigenous communities and the planet—while diverting resources urgently needed for green jobs.

We need to follow the lead of the Solidarity Accord, which has united labour unions like Unifor in solidarity with First Nations resisting pipelines on their territories.

All out for the Peoples Social Forum

The Peoples Social Forum, August 21-24, will be a key opportunity to build the climate justice movement against Harper and his pipelines.

It be an opportunity to connect indigenous, environmental and labour struggles across the country. It will reflect the movements that have swept the country in the past few years—from Occupy, to the Quebec student strike and Idle No More. It will be a time to imagine a world of climate justice, and to discuss how we can build a movement of the 99% to fight for it, and to win.

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The newly minted Liberal majority government in Quebec has tabled its budget - and as expected, it's all about austerity.

Why does this not seem like news? Because in point of fact, Quebec governments have been tabling austerity (or neoliberal) budgets since the mid-1980s.

The Liberal budget continues a proud tradition of ruling class budgets, with a plan to eliminate the deficit by 2015-2016, a public spending limit of 1.8 per cent, and a public sector hiring freeze—taking a page from Stephen Harper’s playbook for the federal public service, which has endured years of spending and hiring freezes.

The notion that these cuts will not affect front-line services is nonsense. At least 15,000 public sector jobs are expected to be affected; though many may be retirements, the plan is not to re-hire.

Much has been made of the Liberals’ reduction of corporate tax credits by 20 per cent. Less talked about is the reduction in taxes for small- and medium-sized businesses—from 8 per cent to 6 per cent.

The Liberals have also made a pathetic attempt to look consultative by announcing two commissions—one on taxation and one on programs—ostensibly to consult on those issues, but really to co-opt voices to making a “choice” about where to cut. In reality, the cuts are a fait accompli. And they’re intended to be permanent. After the deficit is gone, the Liberals intend to use future surpluses to reduce the debt and cut taxes.

Negotiations with the 430,000 – strong public service over the next year will be hot, since the Liberals signalled their intent to limit wage increases.

This is the same old neoliberal logic we’ve been facing for decades. Three billion dollars in deficit-cutting—on the backs of women, the poor and workers—still reigns supreme. The spending announced for public programs falls fall short of Liberal promises from the election campaign.

Other gems from this document include increasing childcare fees and tuition fees ((both indexed to inflation), tax increases on alcohol and tobacco, and policies that will lead to increased Hydro prices.

Resistance

The movement against austerity in Quebec is gaining momentum. The Coalition opposée à la tarification et à la privatisation des services publics plans to mobilize around the tax commission consultations, which they argue are a sham, since the government has already announced its intention to cut taxes.

The Coalition, student groups, and left political party Québec solidaire, among many others, propose instead to find new sources of revenue, such as increasing the number of tax brackets, a tax on capital gains of the banks and financial institutions, and taxing the rich. These mobilizations will be crucial to stop austerity.



Vancouver recognizes unceded territory

by ANNA ROIK

It has been a long time coming, but Vancouver City Council now officially acknowledges that it is operating on traditional lands never ceded by the region's three First Nations: Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh.

Capping off its Year of Recognition, part of a nationwide awareness campaign of residential school history and the experiences of those who lived through them, city council unanimously approved the motion on June 25.

This will likely be nothing more than a symbolic gesture – albeit a historically important one – because actual land titles are under provincial and federal jurisdiction. Vancouver City Council is not in a legal position to negotiate land treaties.

However, council will be working with First Nations leaders to possibly rename areas of the city, and future parks and streets to better reflect the region’s First Nations history. It will also work to determine whether its current welcoming and

blessing practices align with First Nations tradition and customs.

Sto:lo Nation official and archaeologist David Schaepe has been quoted as saying that Vancouver city council is setting an example for other municipalities to acknowledge that they also lie on unceded traditional territories. Schaepe hopes that soon all municipalities in the Sto:lo territory of the Fraser Valley will follow suit.

Motion

The motion reads:

WHEREAS

1. On National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2013, the Mayor of the City of Vancouver took the extraordinary step of declaring a Year of Reconciliation, a year-long effort that seeks to heal from the past and build new relationships between Aboriginal peoples and all Vancouverites, built on a foundation of openness, dignity, understanding and hope;

2. The process of reconciliation has involved creating space for survivors of colonization to speak the truth about the harms done to themselves, their families and their nations; for the broader community to acknowledge those harms; and for us to find a new pathway forward together;

3. Underlying all other truths spoken during the Year of Reconciliation is the truth that the modern city of Vancouver was founded on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations and that these territories were never ceded through treaty, war or surrender;

4. The Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations have millennia-old protocols for welcome, blessing and acknowledgements on their territories;

5. It is essential to the process of reconciliation

that this truth is acknowledged and responded to in a form that honours tradition while understanding the ambiguity created by modern institutions that were established without respect for the people or their traditions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Vancouver formally acknowledge that the city of Vancouver is on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to invite representatives from the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations to work with the Mayor and Council and City staff to develop appropriate protocols for the City of Vancouver to use in conducting City business that respect the traditions of welcome, blessing, and acknowledgement of the territory.

Feds threaten to destroy Residential School abuse evidence

by JOHN BELL

Since when does the criminal get to decide what evidence gets destroyed? That is a question survivors of Residential School abuse are asking themselves.

The Independent Assessment Process (IAP) will go to court this month to argue that it should destroy thousands of documents and transcripts detailing abuse suffered by Indigenous people in residential schools. The IAP was created by the federal government to determine financial settlements for abuse survivors.

According to Dan Shapiro, chief adjudicator for the IAP, the destruction of evidence is intended to protect the privacy of the

victims.

But the main group representing those victims, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) will argue before the Ontario Superior Court that the records must be preserved. Acknowledging that medical and financial records of claimants should be kept private, the TRC wants the records to be housed at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba.

The federal government supports shredding the records. It argues that much of the information is already in its massive archive documenting the history of the Residential

Schools.

In fact, the TRC and abuse survivors have repeatedly taken the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to court, to force it to release promised documents in a timely manner. The government admits that only a fraction of its Residential School records have been released. Given the Tory history of cutbacks and closures of government archives, and the resulting destruction of information seen in Canada’s science libraries, government assurances are worthless.

Actual survivors are loudly protesting the proposed destruction of records. “We must save all

those statements,” said Ray Tony Charlie.

“Now further injustice is evident of this system which does not want to keep the evidence of the abuse, trauma and genocide at the hands of the government, churches and so-called school system,” Lorna Bob told APTN news service.

“To be sure that people somewhere have records or copies of records, I believe there will always be something pointing a finger at them and what they did,” Niwaabidahn Debwewin said.

These are the voices that should carry the most weight.

For 47 years, the Northern Pulp Mill has been dumping its untreated effluent into nearby Boat Harbour, in Mi’kma’Ki Territory, Nova Scotia.

The toxic industrial waste travels from the mill through a pipeline that was built over traditional burial grounds of the Pictou Landing people, and under traditional fishing grounds.

According to Idle No More/Defenders of the Land campaigner Clayton Thomas-Muller, “The Northern Pulp Mill has been operating on provincial subsidy for some time and the massive contamination of boat harbour continues uninterrupted because of a short sighted agreement the province of Nova Scotia entered introducing the by gone era of the boom of Nova Scotia’s logging sector of which they agreed to the liability of clean up in the event of mill closure. The legacy of this agreement by the province along with years of the pulp and paper mill duping billions of litres of untreated effluent into boat harbour has carried devastating ecological and human health costs burdened by the local Pictou Landing First Nations members who experience the 3rd highest cancer rates per capita in all of Canada’s hundred plus health districts. This is one of the most blatant examples of environmental racism in Canada to date.”

While documenting this pollution, Pictou Landing member Jonathan Beadle discovered on June 9, 2014, that the pipeline was not operating and that there had been a major spill on the ground. He stated, “The spill had to have been going on for some time. The clean up for the area is going to be incredibly expensive.”

The Nation’s Chief Andrea Paul contacted the provincial government to ask how the clean up would get done, but received no response. As a result, on June 11, the Chief and Council ordered a community blockade, to guarantee that clean up efforts would not disturb the burial site. The mill then closed.

A few days later, the Chief reported that a tentative agreement had been reached with the province for the clean-up. The Chief asked for community approval of the agreement; however, some members do not believe they have enough information about the agreement to make an informed decision.

For updates follow the facebook PLFN Protest Updates

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Iraq: no to ISIS, no to war

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

A month after Iraq’s elections, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) strengthened their grip on several cities in Iraq. While imperialist powers could use ISIS as an excuse to intervene, it is crucial to not dismiss the destruction caused by the group that has committed what appears to be war crimes.

The sectarian myth

While several commentators, writers and Western politicians are referring to the current conflicts in Iraq as a “civil war,” sectarianism is a myth caused and fuelled by imperialist powers to distract from imperialism. The Iraq War killed a million people, and the West tried to justify its occupation by pointing to sectarianism that the occupation itself was trying to incite--by imposing a Parliament along ethnic lines, and arming sectarian death squads.

But although ISIS is a Sunni militant group, its fundamentalist members kill Sunnis, Shias, Christians and other groups with no discrimination. The cities they have controlled are areas with Sunni majority. If the battle is between Shias and Sunnis, ISIS would not

have killed Sunnis, looted their shops, burnt their homes and raped women.

A well-known moderate Sunni cleric with high followers, Ahmed AlKubaysi, issued a verdict obliging people to resist ISIS. Another Sunni cleric Khalid Al-Mulla called on Iraqis from other cities and religious backgrounds to help people in resisting and fighting ISIS. “Sunnis (in conflict zones) are held captives by ISIS,” said Khalid Al-Mulla. Similar statements were issued by Shia clerics who following the attacks of ISIS. Following those statements, it is clear that clerics from different sects and religious groups formed a united front against extremism.

On the other hand, inciting sectarianism has been coming from different countries in the region, mainly Western-backed Saudi Arabia. For instance a pro Saudi government cleric and professor at King Saud University, Ibrahim Al Fares, labeled people who support the Iraqi army as “infidels.” He also urged fighters to demolish shrines. A fundamentalist Saudi television station, Al-Wesal, urged ISIS fighters to commit crimes and

kill people and hide the photos and videos in order to avoid exposure by other media outlets.

Resistance vs ISIS

Kidnappings, killings and rape incidents have become the norm in places where ISIS members exist in Iraq. The conflicts have claimed lives of thousands. There have been brutal individual stories shared by eyewitnesses. For instance, Imams of several Sunni mosques in Mosul were killed because they refused to pay allegiance to ISIS leaders. Four women reportedly committed suicide after being raped by ISIS fighters. Eyewitness reports say that some women in Mosul have been forced to marry foreign fighters.

Legitimate opposition to the government should not be confused with ISIS fighters. There have been several pro-democracy, anti-austerity and anti-poverty protests that have nothing to do with ISIS and its agenda. Choosing to side with ISIS militants and referring to their allies as “resistance” will counter the real progressive revolutionary movements and the working class in Iraq and the region in general.

ISIS: regional threat

ISIS fighters do not only cause a threat to Iraq and Syria, but they aspire to establish their caliphate ruling other neighbouring countries too. For instance, pro ISIS men marched in Jordan threatening the diversity of the secular Jordanian society with their hateful chants.

On the other hand, foreign fighters appeared on camera burning their passports and claiming that they would spread their radicalism in the region. Those threats should be taken seriously.

Solidarity

Begging for foreign imperialist intervention is not the solution to the problem. Decades of war, sanctions, another war and occupation have brought nothing but death and destruction to Iraq. However, being silent towards the crimes of the ISIS means ignoring the struggles of people in Iraq.

Solidarity with people in Iraq means standing with the working class against ISIS in addition to saying no to war and intervention.

Israel escalates ‘revenge attacks’ on Palestinians

by HANAN JIBRIL

Israel has escalated its violence against Palestinians. A series of deadly attacks—and the threat of all our war—have hit the city of Gaza, West Bank and Jerusalem, justified as “revenge attacks” following the death of three teenage Israeli boys.

There is no proof yet who is responsible for the death of the teenagers, but Israel’s reaction has been to increase the collective punishment against Palestinians, especially children.

Revenge against who?

Israeli settlers brutally tortured, beat and burned to death a 16-year old Palestinians, Mohammed Abu Khder, in East Jerusalem.

According to the Electronic Intifada, Palestinian Authority Attorney General Mumad Abdul Ghani al-Aweawi told the official Palestinian news agency Wafa that the preliminary autopsy report states that the remnants of a burned

substance (soot) were present in Muhammad’s respiratory passages and lungs, indicating he had inhaled the substance while being burned alive.

Last Thursday Israeli settlers tried to kidnap a seven-year-old child in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina while he was with his mother; the boy managed to escape.

According to reports, more than 200 Israeli extremists rampaged through Jerusalem, dragging people out of cars and chanting “Death to Arabs.”

Masked Israeli police also brutally beat Tariq Abukhdeir, the 15-year old Palestinian American cousin of the murdered teenager. He was visiting from Tampa, Florida and is scheduled to go back July 16. His court hearing is on July 6. As caught on video, he was arrested and assaulted without charge and denied medical treatment hours before finally being hospitalized.

In addition to attacks on children

and teenagers, Israel launched airstrikes on Gaza and has gathered tens of thousands of troops for a possible ground invasion.

Revenge for what?

This is not the first time Israel has used isolated attacks as an excuse to periodically increase collective punishment.

In 2006 Israel used the capture of one soldier to justify a war on Lebanon that killed thousands and caused a massive oil spill.

In 2009 Israel used a few home-made rocket attacks to justify a war on Gaza that killed thousands, including by white phosphorus chemical weapons.

Meanwhile Israel has continued to lay siege to Gaza, build an apartheid wall throughout Palestine and maintain its illegal occupation.

Some are wondering about a Third Palestinian Intifada (uprising), and the West is appealing for “restraint.”

Restraint for who?

But restraint is always directed at Palestinians, while the West continues to arm and support Israel.

Harper famously called Israel’s war crimes in Lebanon a “measured response”, and made Canada the first to join the siege on Gaza by cutting humanitarian aid after the people of Gaza democratically elected Hamas.

There were no calls for “restraint” when Israel launched its war on Gaza, killed humanitarian activists in international waters, or cracked down on African migrants.

No justice, no peace

Israel’s bombing of civilians and beating of children is not about securing justice or peace, but suppressing resistance movements on behalf of Western imperialism.

To win peace and justice we need to restrain Western imperialism on which Israeli apartheid and Arab dictatorships depends, and continue to build solidarity with Palestine.

Egyptian regime lifts fuel subsidies

by GIGI IBRAHIM

When Anwar El Sadat attempted to lift subsidies in 1977, Egypt witnessed a two-day uprising called “the bread intifada,” where the urban poor burnt cars and hotels as a sign of rejection of policies that would favor the rich over the already struggling poor.

Under Mubarak, policies were taken in the same direction through cutting taxes for the rich and giving tax-breaks to investors, or going to the IMF and World Bank for loans which were conditional on more neoliberal policies such as privatizing areas of the public sector. The response was a slow-burning revolution which erupted in 2011 toppling Mubarak.

Post-revolution, President Morsy, who was ousted last year, also attempted to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor; announcing a plan to lift subsidies, increase taxes, seeking IMF and World Bank loans, and privatizing more areas of the public sector. These policies were only removed a few days after Egypt witnessed one of its worst fuel shortages and power outages in 2013.

Now, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who has already imprisoned over 41,000 people in just one year following the July 3rd military coup and killed over 3000, is implementing what the three previous presidents dared not do; lifting a third of energy subsidies that make up more than 20 per cent in recent years of budget spending by reducing them to only 13 per cent of budget spending in fiscal year 2014-2015.

What is crystal clear is that this is the only route Sisi can take in order to tackle the economic crisis without sacrificing any of the interests of the ruling. But as history has shown us, austerity and repression never result in “stability” or a prosperous society. With wages untouched and the demand for 1500 EGP minimum wage still to be discussed, the Egyptian struggling working class will be pushed to fight back. One can only imagine how an average family will be able to live under such conditions where repression and the cost of living are rising without any reform in workers rights, human rights, or changes to an economic infrastructure which is currently only serving the rich.

The anticipation is building to see whether those who supported Sisi as president to “get rid of terrorism” or who dream that Sisi is capable of bringing “economic prosperity, stability and growth,” will object to those increases for which they removed Morsy just a year ago?

Amidst censored media, massive repression, and under the rule of a military state, worsening economic and political conditions don’t always result in an uprising. With Mubarak it took 30 years, decades of struggle and resistance to achieve the Jan 25th revolution. With the defeat of the first wave of the Jan 25th revolution, another wave will only depend on the left’s capability to agitate and organize the disillusioned masses into a force capable of providing a viable alternative to power.

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The state and revolution

In the midst of the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin wrote a little book called *State and Revolution*, to clarify the role of the state in capitalist and pre-capitalist societies.

It attempts to answer questions such as whether the state is neutral and how we can achieve a socialist and more just society. Can this be done by taking hold of the currently existing state and modifying it gradually until it becomes an entirely different kind of society, or do we need a thoroughgoing revolution which will smash the existing state and replace it with workers’ power?

To answer this question Lenin looked to the writings of Marx and Engels themselves, as well as to his own experience with the Tsarist state in Russia.

Origin of the state

Friedrich Engels, in his ground-breaking work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, argued that in pre-class societies (mostly hunter-gatherer societies) the state did not exist. There was no need for a body to sit at the top of society and mediate between different classes since these were societies of scarcity that shared whatever resources they had equally.

With the development of agriculture it became possible for people to produce more than they needed for survival. It’s in this context that a small group of people came to own and control wealth—becoming separated into a different class with different interests than the majority. With the development of private property and ownership of wealth it became important to be able to pass this wealth on to your offspring, which also meant the end of the collective practice of child-rearing, and the “world historic defeat of the female sex.”

The state developed at the same time as private property and the division of society into classes, essentially to protect the wealth of the new ruling class. But in order for the rest of society to accept this structure it was necessary that the state appear to be neutral.

An organization of violence

In modern society it can appear that the state is indeed neutral, representing the interests of all citizens, or at least this is the ideology of the bourgeois state. However, whenever the interests of the ruling class are threatened, it becomes apparent that this neutrality is a sham. The use of the police to break up the Occupy encampments, to tear gas Quebec students or the attack the Elsipogtog blockade makes this clear.

The army and the police, the two institutions of force that “serve and protect” the interests of the ruling class and their corporate buddies, cannot be underestimated or easily turned to serve the interests of other classes.

Lenin also looked to the writings of Karl Marx on the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871—when ordinary working people took over the running of the city, including their own militia, but were brutally put down by the French state.

Lenin’s definition of the state came from this understanding of its class nature: “The State is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class.” With Marx, Lenin recognized the impossibility of voting socialism into power: “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.”

No Parliamentary road to socialism

And, in fact, the development of social democracy came out of the attempt to argue that it was possible to gradually reform capitalism, that revolution was not necessary. However, the capitalist state has proved to be far more intractable than social democrats could ever imagine. And there have been innumerable examples of social democratic governments in power, turning their backs on the workers and oppressed who elected them.

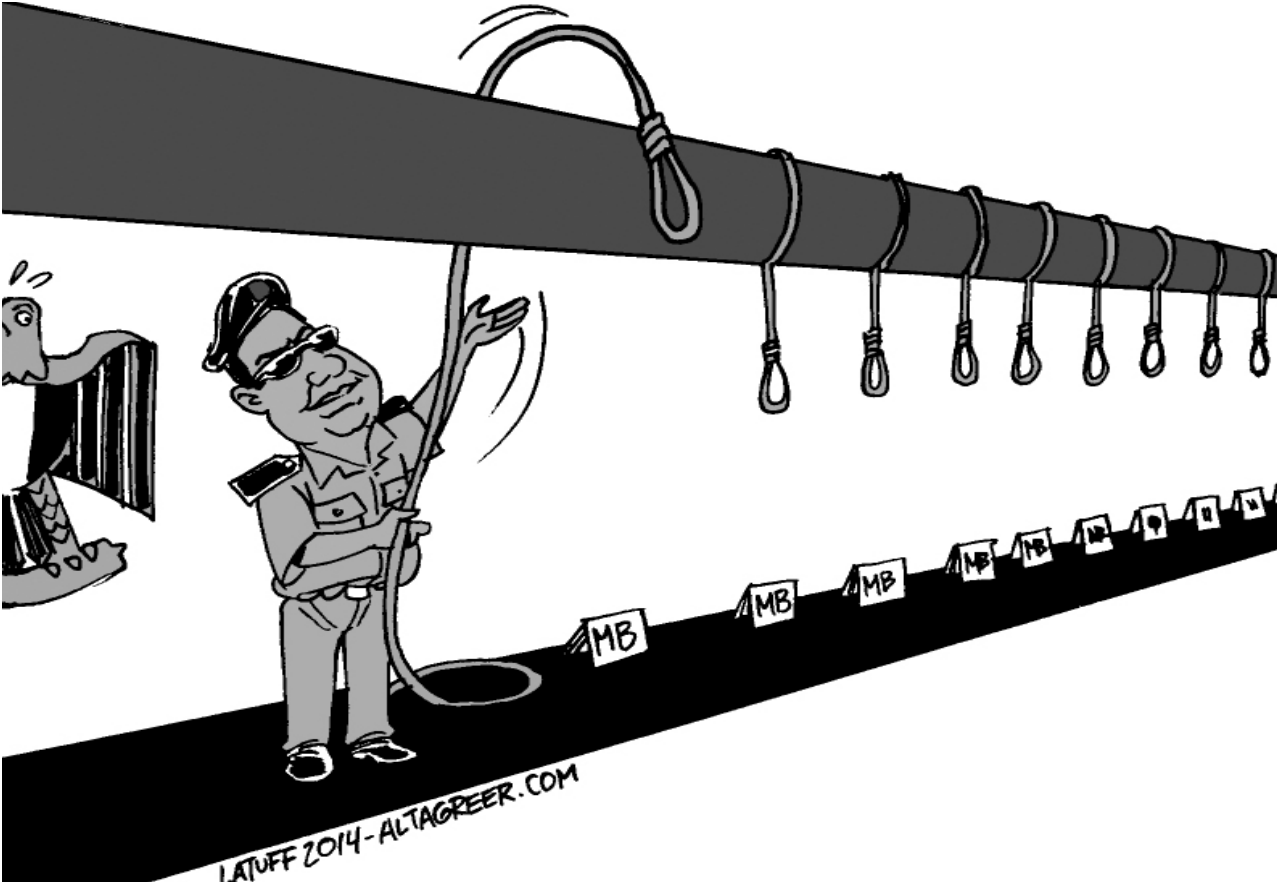
This is because the real power under capitalism does not lie in Parliament but in the corporate boardrooms. They are the ones who set the agenda and the existing government works with them in their interests, not in the interests of the majority.

This means that even well-meaning politicians, who get elected on the basis of wanting to reform capitalism to make it better for the majority, end up betraying these very same people. As Rosa Luxemburg noted in *Reform or Revolution*: “He who pronounces himself in favour of legal reforms in place of and as opposed to the conquest of political power and social revolution does not really choose a more tranquil, surer and slower road to the same goal. He chooses a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new social order, he takes a stand for surface modifications of the old order.”

This does not mean that socialists stand by on the sidelines and wait for revolution. It means that in every struggle for reforms it is necessary to use revolutionary means that amplify the power of ordinary people to push on unwilling governments and states to give us reforms that can make a real difference in our lives—like the Supreme Court of Canada ruling giving First Nations “the exclusive right to decide how the land is used, and the right to benefit from those uses.”

These decisions are not the result of an enlightened judiciary, however, but of years of mobilizing by ordinary people. What we learn from Lenin and from *State and Revolution* is that we can never count on the capitalist state to grant us anything without a fight and that ultimately we need to get rid of the capitalist state in order to achieve socialism.

INTERNATIONAL



Inside Egypt’s counter-revolution

by SAMEH NAGUIB, EGYPTIAN REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST

There can be no doubt that we are witnessing a clear victory for the counter-revolution and confirmation of the end of the first wave of the Egyptian revolution.

The coronation of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as president of Egypt has taken place over the corpses of the revolution’s martyrs and with the largest wave of detentions in Egypt’s modern history. He has received unprecedented support from big business, from all the security, judicial and religious institutions of the state and from massive privately-owned and state media institutions which are under the direct control of the secret police.

He has brought in repressive laws which have not only hugely restricted the space for political action, but have even clamped down social and economic demands under the cover of the “war on terrorism” and the need to save the state from the effect of the cracks which the revolution of 2011 opened within it.

Contradictions

Despite the victory of counter-revolution, the military dictatorship still faces crises and severe challenges.

There is a clear contradiction between the ideological and populist content of the new regime and the lack of any real possibility of genuine economic growth which will allow stability.

The second contradiction which the economy of the counter-revolution is suffering from is the huge gap between the enormous expectations among wide sections of the middle class in particular, whipped up by the private and state media machine, that they will see a tangible change for the better in their living conditions.

These expectations will quickly run up against the regime’s right-wing, austerity policies. And any serious attempt by el-Sisi to adopt populist policies, even on a temporary basis, will run into that other impregnable wall: the interests of big business and the Gulf investors.

This does not mean that the regime is about to collapse, as the Brotherhood are endlessly repeating, nor does it mean that a second revolution is at the gates. Economic crises do not in themselves lead to collapse or revolution. For the essence of el-Sisi’s popularity lies in a mixture of expectations and fear. Fear of the collapse of the state, fear of chaos, civil war, terrorism and the collapse of security. Fear that the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria is the future. There is a strong desire for stability at any price among large sections of the middle class, and significant sections of the working class and poor.

The January Revolution created

unprecedented fissures in this edifice, even shaking the pillars on which it balanced. The collapse of the police and State Security, and even embryonic rebellions in the ranks of the army, the collapse of the venerable institution of the presidency.

Perhaps the principal role which el-Sisi has played, and which has propelled him into presidential office, has been to save this system from fracture and collapse. Yet the Egyptian state remains severely fractured across all its institutions. El-Sisi’s moment as the leader who is the savior and unifier will not last long.

Perhaps the fatal weakness in El-Sisi’s regime (god willing) is his lack of genuine political party. The current harmony and unity within El-Sisi’s camp essentially rests on a negative, temporary basis: the eradication of all traces of the revolution, and even the complete elimination of the only mass reformist party in the country, the Muslim Brotherhood. The more that the impossibility of these tasks is revealed, the greater contradictions and splits appear among the dictator’s allies.

Crisis of the opposition and revolutionary forces

It has been the lot of the Egyptian Revolution to suffer a double betrayal. The first time it was betrayed by the Muslim Brotherhood who arrived in power on the back of the revolution and then delivered it to its enemies and, with exceptional stupidity, paved the way for the counter revolution which overthrew both them and the revolution itself.

But the final preparation for the counter revolution came at the hands of the liberals, the left and the nationalists who created the National Salvation Front with Mubarak’s supporters and the secret police, and afterwards the Tamarod movement and the coordination for 30 June.

These forces played a fundamental role in the transformation of what began as a new revolutionary wave against the Muslim Brotherhood’s betrayal of the demands and principles of the revolution, their complacency over the Interior Ministry and the Army, against their policies discriminating against women and Coptic Christians, their failure to address workers demands. Under the leadership of these forces, this revolutionary momentum transformed into the rise of popular support for the counter revolution.

Here, the bourgeois media and naturally behind the scenes, the security services, played a pivotal role in focussing the entire attack on the Brotherhood alone. The “secular” reformist leaders justified this in a classically opportunist manner.

Thus the slogan calling for the overthrow of the Brotherhood in order to correct the path of the revolution, became a cover for a project the essence of which was to claim that it was the revolution itself which brought the Brotherhood to power, and threatened “the state” with collapse and civil war. Thus the fall of the Brotherhood and rebuilding of “the state” was the only safe way out of the crisis.

Thus 30 June did not come as the crest of a revolutionary wave travelling in the same direction as the wave of January 2011 but in reality to pave the way and to provide a popular mandate for counter revolution with a military coup with its massacres and arrests.

For despite having the appearance of a million-strong demonstration and despite the chants of “the people want the downfall of the regime” the social and political content of this mobilisation and these slogans had been transformed into the opposite of the previous waves of the revolution. For the most influential mass element in the protests and the one which dominated was the secular middle class – Muslim and Christian, men and women – who were dominated by a state of hysterical hostility towards the Brotherhood, mixed with hysterical adulation and celebration of the army, and even the police.

Muslim Brotherhood

The positions of the left oscillated between open support for Mubarak’s regime as it confronted “religious fascism” to the need to defend the “secular state”, or saying that the fascism of the Brotherhood was much worse than Mubarak’s tyranny.

The analysis by the Revolutionary Socialists of the Islamist movements led to the opposite conclusion: “always against the state, sometimes with the Islamists”. What we must emphasize here is our description of the Muslim Brotherhood as a reformist movement, carrying within it class contradictions and with a socially conservative outlook. The position that is not a fascist movement and has no link with fascism, has been proved completely correct as the Brotherhood have moved from opposition to power and then to prison.

The army, with the support of the secular reformist forces, used 30 June, as the cover for a military coup and for the transformation of the anger against the Brotherhood into a bloody mandate not only to eliminate the Brotherhood, but to wipe out the 25 January Revolution.

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Capitalism and environmental racism

Anton Cu Unjieng examines how the development of capitalism has been built on racism, and is pushing us to a choice: either socialism or extinction

Environmental destruction is likely to displace between 50 to 200 million people by 2050. A considerable number of these will be due to the effects of climate change on poor countries.

Last year, the strongest typhoon ever to hit land devastated the Philippines. More than 6000 people were killed. Literally millions were displace, homes were destroyed, livelihoods lost.

All 1,200 islands of the Maldives are likely to sink beneath the ocean – displacing its entire population. This is the destruction of an entire nation: genocide by climate change.

The entire and continuing history of colonialism and imperialism has meant that the countries least responsible for global warming are also the countries who will be least capable of dealing with its affects. At the same time as capitalism creates climate refugees it is whipping up anti-migrant racism.

Capitalism

Imperialism has always had an ecological aspect. The spread of capitalism has also been the spread of a particular kind of human ecology—a particular way of relating to each other and the earth. We can think of this spread as a kind of “biological expansion of Europe”: and much like Europe itself, this expansion has been uneven, divided and subdivided into core and periphery.

When capitalism first began to spread, it treated the periphery as a source of raw materials: of lumber, produce, rubber, fertilizer, and slave labour.

The Second World War changed that relationship. Although they continued to be dependent upon the periphery for sources of oil, the developed powers grew more and more able to provide their own food, and replaced much of their imports with synthetics produced locally. In the place of colonization, the periphery was organized along informal empires that functioned as spheres of influence and buffers between the great powers. But they were generally left out of the booming development that followed World War II.

Countries like China and India have pursued a strategy of industrialization, with some success, by turning out some of the most toxic goods to produce under unimaginably horrific conditions. Some factories in China have had to install nets outside their windows to prevent suicide. In that sense they are imitating the process of industrialization taken by the West, although at a greater pace and scale. But they are doing this in combination with conditions imposed by an already developed capitalism largely controlled by the west.

The bulk of global production continues to be in the core, their immediate periphery, and China. The rest of the world has become a dumping ground for the developed world’s industrial waste.

Environmental racism reasons, racism is structurally built into the ecology of capitalism at the global scale. But it also exists at the national scale and the urban scale—these different interacting scales repeat the core-periphery at every level.

On the national scale, the relationship between race,



ecology, and capitalism could not be more evident. In Canada, as in most developed nations, the core-periphery relationship can be thought of in terms of city and country. The country is the major site of resource extraction—in terms of agriculture, wood, and most especially fossil fuels—that service the profits of capitalists who in turn find most of their final sales in the cities.

Canada is a settler colony, and the most important rivals to the ecological organization imposed by the ruling class is that of the First Nations. The struggle for Native sovereignty is also a struggle between a sustainable relation to the land, water and air and a relation that sees the country as so much space to build pipelines through or dump chemical waste.

As the great revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg wrote: “Since the associations of the natives are the strongest protection for their social organizations and for their material bases of existence, capital must begin by planning for the systematic destruction and annihilation of all non-capitalist social units which obstruct its development. Each new colonial expansion is accompanied, as a matter of course, by a relentless battle of capital against the social and economic ties of the natives.”

On the urban scale, we see much the same thing. The United Church of Christ prepared what is widely regarded as the most comprehensive report on the correlation of race and pollution in the US. According to them in the year 2000, neighbourhoods with commercial hazardous waste are 56 per cent people of colour. In comparison, communities without such facilities are only 30 per cent people of colour.

Capitalism is a ridiculously, obscenely wasteful and ecologically toxic system. For the ruling class, the problem of what to do with all that filth is not a scientific question, it is a political one.

The distribution of waste, as with the distribution of wealth is determined by the balance of power that holds between oppressor and oppressed. When the oppressed get organized they can shift the balance of power.

Global dumping

We need to understand ecological racism as a survival tactic used by the capitalists. The ruling class creates communities of people that they can dump on. They can be Indigenous people, black people—they can even be Irish people. The point is that capitalism has to dump the toxic filth it refuses to stop generating. It is easier for them to do that if a segment of the population can be rendered both hopeless and invisible.

The whole working class suffers from this arrangement. It is in all of our interests to overthrow the invisibility of the oppressed communities because this invisibility makes it easier for the capitalists to go on doing what they do. We have to name this tactic clearly and unequivocally: it is the old divide and rule. It is racism plain and simple.

Dumping on the people of the peripheries—whether it be the global South, Native American reserves, or black ghettos are short term spatial fixes for a problem that capitalism is fundamentally unable to resolve. But the sheer scale of the pollution has meant that these spatial fixes are less and less able to defray the ecological reckoning which the capitalists have wanted to put off.

This is particularly the case with climate change. The poor of the underdeveloped periphery are going to be hardest hit, but underdeveloped peripheries also exist within the global North—like the mostly poor and black people of New Orleans devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Global warming is the result of centuries of the ruling class treating the atmosphere like a communal dump for green house gasses. The West has not been shielded from the effects of pumping that much waste into the skies, but as with everything else, it will be the poorest and most oppressed that suffer the most.

The globalization of ecological disaster has also meant that struggles that had previously been fighting at relatively small local scales are more and more creating connections, linking up growing networks of resistance within communities, regions, countries, and in fact the globe.

Socialism or extinction

The struggle against the pipelines is one of the most important fights in Canada—if not the world. The sheer scale of the pipeline projects have forced alliances between First Nations peoples that are virtually unprecedented. They extend along every major pipeline route and even link up Indigenous communities across the whole of North America. Because the construction of the pipelines are intimately linked with global warming, the support for the struggle being led by First Nations people comes from all over the world.

For example, the Wet’suwet’en blockade received volunteers applications from all over the globe. But perhaps the best and most important example of the kind of broad and organized support for this fight is the Save the Fraser Declaration which has been signed by more than 130 First Nations—and the Solidarity Accord signed by Unifor, Canada’s largest labour union. Anti-pipelines rallies in BC bring thousands of people out to demonstrate against companies like Enbridge, in solidarity with indigenous communities and frequently organized with them.

This is a battle that we can win. But only if these alliances are strengthened, only if a mass movement can be built, that can continue to take its cue from the extraordinary strength and leadership provided by Indigenous activists. Canada has a recent history of such mass movements and victory: the anti-war movement here was able to keep Canada out of Iraq.

Every now and then, when the oppressed come together and fight, we score one for our side. The struggle for the environment, the struggle for our survival, is directly a struggle for environmental justice. I have tried to show how this is a struggle against the capitalist class and their system. Rosa Luxemburg, watching the rise of fascism in Germany famously warned that humanity faced a choice: socialism or barbarism. Well, we’ve gotten more than half a century of barbarism. Today, the choice is: socialism or extinction.

World Pride and LGBT liberation

Maureen Aslin looks at the contradictions of World Pride, the gains and backlash against LGBT liberation, the roots of oppression and how we can win human liberation



World Pride, from protest to product

World Pride is a festival with a social and a corporate agenda.

The primary social agenda being the celebration of gay liberation through a festival (an international celebration incorporating activism, education, and the history and culture of LGBTTIQ2SA communities) and the corporate agenda is the assimilation or co-opting the image of LGBT liberation to increase market share.

We can compare this to the Olympics or Pan-Am games and other corporate sponsored events, even art festivals like Luminato, that coattail on ideals like human artistic expression and human athletic achievement to the same end—to enhance brand identity and increase profits, but that fail to challenge the status quo.

Stonewall

Pride, and now World Pride, come out of the struggles of the gay liberation movement. This is the 45th anniversary of Stonewall, which was a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the gay community against a police raid on the Stonewall Inn—in Greenwich Village NYC, in 1969.

The Stonewall Riots are generally considered to be the single most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for gay and lesbian rights in the United States. Activists who had been part of the civil rights and anti-war movements began fighting for their own rights, and the Gay Liberation Front emerged in solidarity with the National Liberation Front in Vietnam.

Toronto bathhouse raids

World Pride is an offshoot of Pride Toronto and other Pride celebrations whose origins are also founded in similar histories of political protest. On February 5, 1981 the Toronto police raided four gay bathhouses and arrested 300 men. The following night there was a mass protest.

As participant Gerald Hannon wrote, “It is the night when 3,000 people come within minutes of breaking down the doors of the Ontario legislature. It is the night the main street of Canada’s largest city belongs to us, and nobody—not even the police—seems to be able to do anything about it. It is midnight, Feb 6—just 24 hours after the largest mass arrest since the 1970 invocation of the War Measures Act.”

These mobilizations evolved into Toronto’s current Pride Week, which is now one of the world’s largest gay pride festivals. The history of World Pride itself is relatively short, starting in Rome in 2000, and Toronto being the first North American city to host it.

Pink capitalism

As gay rights have become more mainstreamed, the potential for market opportunities has driven corporations to compete for product/brand placement within the queer community. Corporations have differentiated themselves by this gay-positive branding, sometimes with the secondary benefits of improving employees’ working conditions—for example extending benefits for partners of employees before it was mandated by law.

But it would be a mistake to characterize these changes as primarily motivated by anything other than the drive for profit, or that somehow these corporations represent a kinder, gentler capitalism.



Class society, the family and LGBT oppression

To start with we need to understand how the oppression of LGBT people is closely linked to women’s oppression and the institution of the family under capitalism. We need to look more closely at the role the family plays and how this plays out in terms of sexuality and gender and how these function as a source of fuel for capitalist economic growth.

The nuclear family is a relatively recent human development. There have been other societal models based on how people organized to meet their needs. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Friedrich Engels compared various societies, including ancient Greece and Rome as well as the Iroquois of North America, and concluded that changes in the family and sexuality were connected to the wider development of society—that social change and economic development are inextricably linked. As class society developed, inheritance through the family became more important for the men who dominated society, and determining the lineage of heirs became crucial. This resulted in the regulation of women’s sexuality and reproduction which Engels refers to as “the world historic defeat of the female sex.”

The development of class society also had consequences for anyone who wanted to live outside the “norms” of the heterosexual family. The family was the primary means to maintaining an able and abundant workforce through stability and support. In the 19th century, in many industrial nations, the concept of family was ideologically rigid and popularly idealized, and any room for difference was minimal.

The reason the family was so critical to capitalism is that it provided a situation where the labour of nurturing and supporting the next generation of workers, as well as caring for the sick and the old, was unpaid work and largely done by women. As a result gender roles become more rigidly defined and individuals who challenged these roles, LGBT people, were attacked. In other words, capitalism needed not only to reproduce goods but also to reproduce people, including workers—and the institution through which capitalism does this, the family, is central to an understanding of how it cre-

ates oppression around gender and sexuality.

As Judith Butler, in an argument from a series of articles in 1997-98 points out: “The reproduction of gendered persons, of ‘men’ and ‘women,’ depended on the social regulation of the family” and that understanding this “is dependent upon an expansion of the ‘economic’ sphere itself to include both the reproduction of goods as well as the social reproduction of persons.”

Struggle

There has been much theorizing to describe the reality of LGBT people and the dynamics and social setting of queer people and their oppression—Queer Theory, gender theory, identity politics, intersectionality—and they have all been valuable in moving forward the struggle for LGBT Liberation. Marxism unites the fight against all forms of oppression to working class resistance that has the potential to overthrow capitalism—the system that maintains oppression.

In a time where economic crisis and austerity politics are used to attack working people, it is essential to understand that all these fights are one fight, the fight for working class people, the 99%, and that by building solidarity across identities in these battles for economic and social justice, these fights can be won.

Here in Toronto many of the same people who were fighting for women’s rights and access to reproductive choice in the 1980’s, coming out for marches and demonstrations, and defending access to clinics, are the same people who were organizing resistance to the police raids on the bathhouses, and for justice for people living with HIV/AIDS. They knew that the oppression of women, LGBT people, people of colour, indigenous people were all used to create divisions that serve only the interest of the 1% and ignore and suppress the interests of the majority.

Marxists argue that LGBT oppression is rooted in capitalism and its promotion of the family, and that the working class, the 99%, is the key to ending capitalism because workers have the collective economic power to destroy it.



Gains and backlash

Since Stonewall and the Toronto Bathhouse Raids there have been major gains for LGBT people—like same sex marriage and partner benefits, or the defeat of the “Defense of Marriage Act” in the US. But with austerity there has also been a backlash.

For example, the Federal Government in Canada has taken disingenuousness to a new level. On the one hand Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird has used gay rights to criticize Iran and Russia—pinkwashing imperial conflict—while the Tories are busy scoring points domestically with their right wing base by denying Ugandan activists entry to Canada for the World Pride Human Rights Conference, and withdrawing their funding from Pride Toronto since 2010.

This is the same “give and take - divide and conquer” strategy that they are using elsewhere, creating divisions not just based on homophobia but fear of immigrants, women, people of colour, Muslims, etc.

Another example of contradiction is the St Patrick Day parades this year in the US. The organizers of the New York and Boston’s St. Patrick Day parades chose to exclude openly gay, lesbian and transgender participants, and it was only after the beer makers Guinness and Sam Adams withdrew their sponsorship that the organizers relented. So in this situation it is the companies who are looking to make money by selling their stuff to a gay audience who seek justice to keep market share that end up appearing to be progressive

social activists.

In Toronto we have our own mayoral homophobe, Rob Ford, who has steadfastly refused to attend the Pride parade, one of the largest festivals in the city, and only begrudgingly under public pressure attended the rainbow flag raising at Toronto City Hall for the first time last year.

And we are seeing a backlash internationally. The far-right in France has been mobilizing people against equal marriage, and the National Front made significant electoral gains in the recent European elections. In Russia (where homosexuality was decriminalized almost a century ago in the wake of the 1917 revolution), Putin said the country should “clean” itself of gay people because they don’t reproduce, and has drafted a law to remove children from gay parents.

In India homosexuality has been recriminalized (reverting to the British colonial law that first criminalized homosexuality), in the context of a right-wing reaction to austerity and the election of the BJP.

Why this push and pull with strides being made in LGBT rights and others emboldened in their attacks? Austerity is redirecting people’s anger to identifiable targets—racism, a war on women, disability oppression—scapegoating people for capitalism’s crisis. Homophobia and transphobia are part of the backlash, providing a scapegoat for austerity while reinforcing the nuclear family where women do unpaid labour.



Labour’s fight against austerity: lessons from Hudak’s defeat

by Pam Johnson

Although Kathleen Wynne’s Liberals won a majority in Ontario, the real story of the 2014 election is the sound defeat of Tim Hudak and his hard line platform of attacks on workers, unions and the public services.

Media analysts say this indicates no mood for Hudak ‘tea party’ politics, which was not apparent going into the election with polls showing Hudak in the lead. Hudak’s announcement of the 100,000 public sector job cut near the end of the campaign backfired miserably, and attempts to square these cuts with the creation of a million jobs was a strategic and mathematical blunder.

Trade union solidarity against Hudak

Hudak missteps were not the only reason that he went down in flames. The other critical element was the role of trade unions that carried a clear and unified Stop Hudak message. Both public and private unions poured resources into a Stop Hudak media campaign and internal messaging to their own members.

Evidence that this plan was working showed when the PCs lost a by election in February in Niagara to NDPer Wayne Gates, a trade unionist. After this defeat and following internal party strife, Hudak backed away from the “right-to-work” piece of his platform.

Workers’ rights campaign and rank-and-file organizing

This broad level of solidarity within the labour movement is unparalleled in recent decades and was key to Hudak’s defeat. But, trade union leaders needed to be pushed by pressure from below. When Hudak’s white paper announcing his intention to attack unions came out nearly two years ago labour leaders failed to respond to the threat.

But there has been growing concern about attacks on unions in Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana—as well as the palpable anger of growing layers of workers against concessions and cuts, and support for the \$14 minimum wage campaign.

When the Toronto and York Region Labour Council hosted a mass meeting to put workers’ rights on the agenda, hundreds attended. The approach was a rank and file organizing strategy to raise the issue and to boost union renewal from the bottom up. Subsequent town hall meetings organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour, other Labour Councils and some union area councils carried the Stop Hudak message and supported the building of rank and file networks.

This activity, although not massive, was building the pressure. When the election was called and leaders could see a possible Hudak victory, unions produced a flood of videos, TVads and resource, and utilized social media to amplify the message. Hudak was defeated and the effectiveness and solidarity across the labour movement as a whole was duly noted by the media and the defeated PCs.

Ndp and ‘strategic voting’

The downside was support for ‘strategic voting’ for the Liberals to ensure Hudak’s defeat. Sadly, Horwath, who had been steadily moving right and distancing herself from her trade union base, did not relate to the anger against austerity.

Horwath’s unwillingness to support the minimum wage campaign, trade unions rights—she was a no show at a 30,00 strong labour rally against Liberal Bill 115, and a populist play for small business votes made her appear to be less progressive than the Liberals. Anger at Horwath’s rightward shift and fear of Hudak pushed people to the Liberals.

Wynne’s plan: austerity for public sector workers

Despite Wynne’s tack to the left, a close look at her budget shows that it contains the same austerity measures proposed by Hudak and her predecessor Dalton McGuinty. The centre-piece is an attack on public sector workers and unions--and by extension, to public services.

In her first statements after the election she recommitted to this plan saying there is no money for public sector workers who have had wages and benefits frozen and rolled back for two years already.

Her promise to cut \$1.25 billion to balance the budget will mean the loss of 30,000 public sector jobs and the services that go with them. The “austerity speak” about balancing budget puts Wynne in lock-step with the neoliberal agenda that has been thoroughly discredited.

Keeping up the fight against austerity

But Wynne is getting no honeymoon. A protest against cuts to refugee health four days after the election called out the Liberals for not fulfilling their promise to reinstate cuts. Injured workers who are being harassed and denied benefits are planning actions across the province.

What was accomplished by rank and file organizing to revitalize union militancy, even on a small scale, in defeating Hudak must continue and developed. This will keep pressure on both the union leadership and the NDP. More importantly it builds the confidence of workers to fight for themselves and to turn their unions into a force to fight for their interests

ANALYSIS



Ontario’s austerity budget 2014

by Alex Hunsberger

During the Ontario election, the Liberals campaigned to the left, presenting themselves as the progressive alternative to the PCs hard-right austerity program, winning a majority government on that basis. Anger at the NDP’s rightward drift led some to believe the Liberal hype that their budget was a progressive alternative. But a close reading of Budget 2014 reveals that it is at its core a plan for several more years of harsh austerity across all sectors.

More austerity

As compared with 2013-14 – the fiscal year that ended April 1, 2014 – proposed program spending in 2014-15 is up \$3 billion to \$119.4 billion, an increase of about 2.5 per cent. While not a harsh contraction, this hardly constitutes a spending spree, as it means flat-lining real per capita program spending in a context where inflation is running at around 1.5 per cent and population growth at 1 per cent. In the following two years, the government proposes much harder fiscal tightening, increasing overall spending by just 0.6 per cent in 2015-16 and 0.1 per cent in 2016-17.

The government’s own estimates indicate it expects inflation to rise to 2.0 per cent after this year and for population growth to continue at 1.0 per cent due to natural increases and positive net migration. In other words, to maintain services at current levels (i.e. sustain current real per capita program spending), a 3.0 per cent annual spending increase is needed. In just three years, then, the government plans to slash real per capita program spending by 5.3 per cent from current levels.

What do these numbers mean for users of public services and the workers who provide them? The short answer: for users, poorer quality service and higher user fees; for workers, wage freezes, cuts to benefits, and higher workloads. No sector will be unaffected.

Health cuts hurt patients and workers

Health is the province’s largest expenditure by far, representing \$50.1 billion in 2014-15, or 42.0 per cent of total program spending. The biggest line item is for the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), whose main task is financing hospitals.

Hospitals have already seen a budget freeze for two years, not having received increases in their base operating funding in either 2012-13 or 2013-14. The government confirms it will continue the freeze in 2014-15, and based on flat-lined overall program spending over the next two years it is safe to assume the freeze will continue for two additional years.

This means five consecutive years of 0 per cent increases for hospitals, and amounts to a massive austerity program. Not only do hospitals face the general 3 per cent annual cost increase due to inflation and population growth, but they also must

contend with a range of other pressures related to the aging population and technological advances. New cancer treatments and diagnostic tools like MRIs offer benefits to patients but do not come cheap.

Austerity for hospitals has already meant cuts – for instance, the Ottawa Hospital has laid off hundreds of nurses and allied health professionals and administrative staff in the past two years—and these can be expected to continue for three more years. There is no way such cuts can go forward without affecting the quality of patient care and working conditions. In the event of an unforeseen disruption like a major influenza outbreak or a mass casualty incident, hospitals already running on empty could be pushed over the edge.

Attacks on higher education

The Ontario Liberals have consistently billed themselves as the defenders of a strong post-secondary education system. But after a modest \$200 million increase in funding this year, Budget 2014 proposes freezing spending for the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities at \$7.8 billion in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

In a context of rapid enrolment growth due to population increases and higher post-secondary participation rates, this means students and workers will have to absorb the costs of the funding freeze. Ontario will likely keep the dubious honour of having the highest tuition fees in the country, while class sizes will keep growing as universities try to educate more students with fewer resources.

The continuing assault on free collective bargaining

Trade unionists in the public sector know that the bargaining climate in the past couple years has been particularly difficult and acrimonious. In the broader public sector, unions have made major concessions, either “voluntarily” with the threat of legislative intervention looming or, for those unions that resist, through the actual imposition of special legislation.

OPSEU members in the core public service fall into the former camp, having agreed last year to a two-year wage freeze. Public school teachers are an example of the latter case, having had a contract imposed on them through Bill 115 that handed them a two-year wage freeze alongside rollbacks to sick leave benefits.

Present and future retirees are under attack across the public sector too—the government recently announced it would save \$1.2 billion over five years on the backs of retired civil servants by forcing them to pay for health benefits.

Budget 2014 explicitly plans for a concessions climate for at least three more years. The government is putting no money in the budget for negotiated compensation increases, even to allow salaries to keep up with inflation and even though the major unions have already made major concessions or had them imposed over the last several years. Since no union is likely to agree

to a five-year wage freeze, particularly on top of other concessions, Wynne’s claim to respect free collective bargaining will no doubt be revealed once again to be a charade as the government moves to impose austerity on workers by force.

Who pays for the global economic crisis?

The government’s political strategy to move forward with austerity is to pit public sector workers against private sector workers, blaming the former for the falling living standards of the latter. Any time public sector workers attempt to negotiate better working conditions—or, more commonly in the current climate, maintain what they already have—the government argues that greedy workers are to blame for the declining quality of public services. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ontario has a substantial deficit not because of profligate spending or skyrocketing public sector salaries but because the 2008 financial crisis depressed government revenues while forcing the province to increase spending to prevent complete economic collapse. Ontario boasted a budget surplus in 2007-8 before the crisis hit, with the deficit ballooning to nearly \$20 billion in 2009-10 as the crisis deepened. Yet the Ontario state remains incredibly lean compared to its counterparts across the country: the government brags in Budget 2014 that it takes in the least revenue and spends the least on programs per capita out of all ten provinces. It also advertises that it has been a tough employer at the bargaining table, with wage increases in the broader public sector averaging around 0.6 per cent per year over the past two years.

The reality is that workers in both the public and private sectors are paying for the crisis capitalists—and capitalism—caused. Corporations operating in Ontario are enjoying record-low taxes due to years of federal and provincial rate cuts, as well as lucrative subsidies, while workers are being told the cupboards are bare when it comes to important public services.

Anti-Hudak to anti-austerity

The left should be proud that it successfully contributed to preventing Tim Hudak from becoming Premier. But now we are faced with the sober reality that defeating Hudak did not defeat the austerity agenda he championed.

While claiming progressive credentials, the Liberals like the PCs are a party of a capitalist class that is fully committed to the neoliberal austerity project. Our task is to build on the momentum the fight against Hudak has generated, as well as the inevitable disappointment of those still hoping the Liberals will offer a real alternative, to make the case that we need not passively accept the austerity agenda. Campaigns on concrete issues like the demand for a \$14 an hour minimum wage are an excellent way to keep up the pressure on all the major parties.



MOVIE

The women behind the music

Movie: *20 Feet from Stardom*
Directed by Morgan Neville
Reviewed by Valerie Lannon

How can a song be familiar and not familiar at the same time? It's when you know the words and tune, but not who is singing.

Such is the fate of background singers, and the 2013 documentary by Morgan Neville sets out to tell the story of several of these incredibly talented women. The documentary is introduced by Bruce Springsteen and ends with shots from one of his recent concerts where he showcased these singers.

All African-American, these performers invariably learned to sing gospel at a young age. They took pleasure

in creating music in an ensemble and, initially at least, had no desire to have centre stage. Aside from the name of Darlene Love, you may not know the women who catapulted Phil Spector's productions to fame: Merry Clayton, Lisa Fischer, Tata Vega, and Claudia Lennear.

Initially other "girl groups" were allowed to take credit for their voices; however by the early 1970s, they came into their own as they were sought out by the likes of Joe Cocker, the Rolling Stones, Elton John and Sting. But when a few decided to try and launch solo careers, they met many obstacles. As one noted, "It was like the industry was saying there could only be one Aretha." The singer Judith Hill, whom Michael Jackson chose as his

lead back-up and who figures prominently in the documentary *This is It*, is currently trying to make it on her own as a solo artist.

The documentary is very moving and, of course, chock full of fabulous and familiar music.

In many ways this documentary is reminiscent of *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, another spectacular movie, which, in that case, focused on the background musicians for Motown hits, and how the musicians' careers virtually ended with the rise of disco.

For summer fun, great music, and a critical look at the music industry, you can't go wrong viewing either of these movies.

BOOK

So much to learn from the Black Panthers

Book: *Black Against Empire--the History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*
Written by Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin junior
Reviewed by Bradley Hughes

The biggest question for anyone who sees the need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is: why are so few people convinced of that need and willing to join a revolutionary organization? Also, what can we do to change that?

In 1966 two college students, Bobby Seal and Huey Newton took up arms and started the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Their politics of armed-self defense against American imperialism, both in the US and abroad, convinced thousands to join them and thousands more to support them against the American state. By 1970 the Black Panther Party had grown to have offices in 68 American cities, an international section in Algiers, and meetings with heads of states of sympathetic regimes around the world.

The Panthers were a black nationalist, anti-American, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist party that played a leading role in national politics in the anti-war movement and in the student movement. They also led neighbourhood politics by setting up breakfast programs for school children, free medical clinics, bus services to visit relatives in prison and intervening with land lords. They were the largest and most influential revolutionary group at that time in America, and with the possible exception of the Industrial Workers of the World in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the most successful socialist revolutionary group in American history.

This book combines biographical details of the leading members of the organization along with organizing details of many of the major campaigns of the Panthers.

It also details the scale of the repression organized by the FBI and other police organizations. The SWAT team, beloved of TV and movie writers, was first created by police in Los Angeles to attack a Black Panther office. Carrying military machine guns, riding in armoured cars and dressed all in black, the police fired more than 5,000 bullets into the LA Party office. The Panthers had prepared by lining the walls with sand bags and covering the windows with metal grills to keep out tear gas canisters. After a five hour stand off, the Panthers surrendered.

The state repression also involved provocateurs who joined the Panthers and reported to the FBI. It seems likely that when Chicago police burst into Fred Hampton's apartment at 4:30 AM to shoot him and Mark Clark while they lay in bed, that not only did an informer provide a map of the apartment, but he also managed to drug Hampton to ensure that there would be no resistance.

Despite this repression the Panthers continued to grow in size and popularity. Huey Newton was shot by police in October 1967. While defending himself against the police, one officer was shot and killed. The wounded Newton was arrested and tried for murder. Across the country the Panthers organized rallies to "Free Huey."

As their paper reported at the time, "the police of America have kept black people intimidated, . . . and paralyzed in their bid for freedom . . . They are brutal beasts who have

been gunning down black people and getting away with it. . . . We say that black people in America have the right to self defense. Huey Newton has laid his life on the line so that 20,000,000 black people can find out just where they are at and so that we can find out just where America is at." The "Free Huey" campaign mobilized thousands to support the Panthers and exposed the racist nature of the American state.

The Black Panthers became a leading force in student strikes and in the anti-war movement. They also started a wider organization that was open to anyone not only blacks. After organizing a successful conference on to develop a "united front against Fascism," the Panthers set up National Committees to Combat Fascism around the country.

Despite all this, in the first few months of 1971 the party became to come apart. A wing devoted to armed uprising against the police and the state immediately was expelled from the party and the remainder backed off from the politics of armed self-defence, and revolutionary politics instead turning to elections. At the time, the politics of armed self-defence answered the immediate need for black people to resist the racist state, and gained support of much wider sections of society. At the same time it did not grant the legitimacy to state repression that a politics of armed attacks on the state would have.

Today we must ask ourselves what actions can we organize to win legitimacy for revolutionary politics? Anyone who wants to build a revolutionary organization today should study this history of the Black Panthers.

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Has Harper turned dove?

Has Stephen Harper lost World War I? Jack Granatstein, historian and lover of all things military, sure thinks so. He accuses the Tory government of "botching" the looming centenary of the First World War. Has the Tory hawk turned dove?

Many, yours truly included, expected Harper to roll out a government propaganda offensive to rebrand history's most egregious imperialist slaughter as a "good war" in defence of democracy and western civilization.

Pro-war propaganda

In recent years the Harper Tories have announced their intention to re-examine how Canadian history is taught at schools and universities. The Commons Canadian Heritage Committee was given the goal of restoring military history to a place of pride. And since those wars were mainly in defence of empire, some of that pride would naturally rub off on the now disparaged concept of imperialism.

Harper and his crew have also attacked opposition MP's like the NDP's Alexandre Boulerice, who had the nerve to blog that WWI was "a purely capitalist war on the backs of workers and peasants." Tory spokesman Fred DeLorey announced that it was unpatriotic "to denigrate and disrespect the legacy of those who served, sacrificed and gave their lives in the defence of freedom and democracy during World War I."

Then Harper *et al* spent millions on celebrating the War of 1812. Their patriotic commemoration fizzled. Instead of a wave of "we beat the Yankees" euphoria, a serious discussion ensued, focused on the national ambiguity of that war; on how settlers along both sides of a tenuous border would have preferred peace and trade with their neighbours; and on how England's little imperial outpost relied on First Nations allies to defend it, allies who were subsequently belittled and betrayed.

Which brings us up to date. In spite of the general trend toward militarism that has marked the Harper regime, we hear hardly a whisper coming from the PMO about WWI.

Losing the war for public opinion

No wonder Jack Granatstein is upset. As he wrote for *The Globe and Mail* in April: "The government has a long list of events and commemorations, to be sure. But there is no new money behind this string of events—government departments, agencies and Crown corporations have been ordered to finance the commemoration costs out of existing budgets."

No new money? An outrage. Britain's Tory government will spend more than 50 million pounds to whoop it up. Even poor little Belgium is spending 55 million euros to celebrate the war that put it in the spotlight.

"What's going on here?" Granatstein complains. "We all know that burying the deficit remains the Conservative government's primary target as it looks toward the next election. We know that the War of 1812 bicentennial, for which Ottawa earmarked some \$28-million, was attacked as a waste of money on a forgot-

ten conflict. . . . And we know that Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a fervent supporter of the Afghan war when he took office in early 2006, lost his enthusiasm as the casualties and costs mounted and public opinion on the conflict turned tepid, then ice-cold."

Poor Jack is pissed that Harper, his ideological soulmate, is putting pragmatic politics ahead of patriotic purity.

Rest assured that Harper would dearly love to lavish our tax dollars on a four and a half year festival of misty-eyed militarism. Back in 2011, Tory advisor Tom Flanagan said this about Harper: "I remember him saying years ago that the Conservative party in any country ought to be the party of patriotism, that the Liberals in Canada had appropriated that role, and that the Conservatives had to win it back."

But Conservatives can't win anything back if they lose power. And as much as he loves war past, present and future, Stephen Harper loves power most of all. And all his attempts to turn military pride into popularity have fallen flat.

Veteran protests

Thanks to outspoken veterans groups, the hypocrisy of Harper's "Support Our Troops" mantra has been exposed. Veterans' pensions have been slashed, converted to lump-sum payments rather than life long support. Veterans' Affairs offices in many regions have been shut down. And an epidemic of suicides reveals the inadequate government support for returned warriors suffering from PTSD.

His most recent attempt to turn the tide, declaring a "National Day of Honour" in May to celebrate the end of Canada's war in Afghanistan, was a massive and expensive flop. Filling the streets of Ottawa with tanks and soldiers didn't exactly fill onlookers with pride. Most were creeped out, comparing the spectacle to something out of cold-war era Moscow. Outside Ottawa reaction ranged from a collective "Meh" to outright hostility. All of the spurious excuses that dragged Canada into the Afghan War were revisited. And with Afghanistan demonstrably worse off today than it was before the invasion and occupation began, Canadians rejected celebrating the end of a war that should never have begun. And damned if veterans didn't use the effort and expense of the "Day of Honour" as another opportunity to expose the dishonourable treatment of returned soldiers at the hands of the Harper Tories.

Small wonder that Harper has decided to tread lightly around the WWI centenary. As his party continues to slip in the polls, and his personal popularity crumbles, all his re-election hopes hinge on his economic performance—his balanced budget. Throwing a big celebration for a war that exposes the vicious inhumanity of the economic system he loves might just backfire.

Harper isn't stupid—he'll leave that for Jack Granatstein. He's willing the fly the white flag over WWI as long as that helps win the war that really counts for him: the class war.

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.

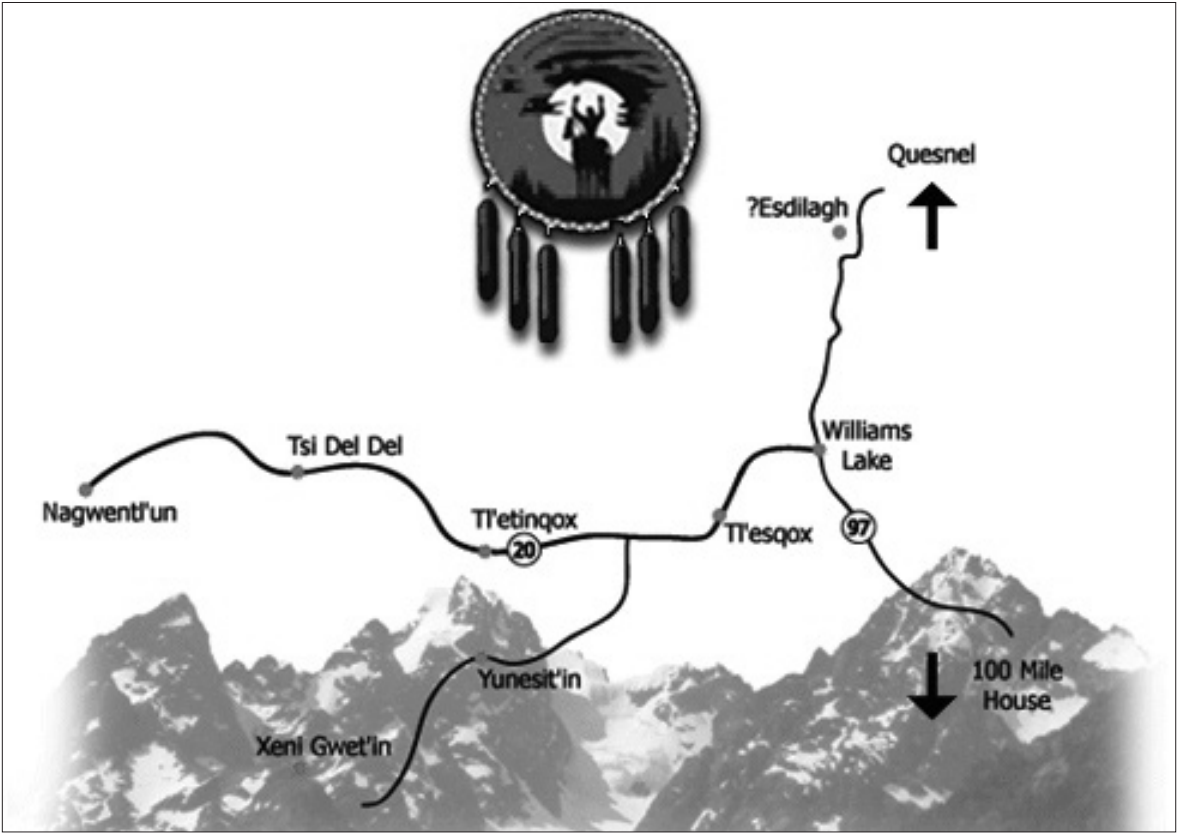
Oppression

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.



Victory for Tsilhqot’in and all First Nations

by VALERIE LANNON

After over 150 years of struggle for self-determination, plus action in the courts for the last 20 years, the Tsilhqot’in First Nation claimed victory in a June 27 Supreme Court of Canada decision.

The Nation appealed to the SCC to overturn a BC Court of Appeal ruling, which had narrowly defined “aboriginal title.” The SCC decision gives First Nations “the exclusive right to decide how the land is used, and the right to benefit from those uses.” Provincial or federal governments that want to undertake economic activity without the consent of the First Nation holding title must prove “compelling and substantial public interest.”

Background

The court action began when Tsilhqot’in sued the BC government for allowing logging operations on traditional territory without consulting the Nation (let alone obtaining consent), stating that this breached the Nation’s title to the land. At the crux of the court hearings was how to define Aboriginal title.

The BC Court of Appeal more or less decided that Tsilhqot’in had title only to those small areas where it could prove historic use: the rock one stood on to go fishing, the hunting grounds, the winter villages. The Tsilhqot’in argued, quite logically, and as agreed to by the BC Supreme Court and now the SCC, that they could not access those use spots without traversing the land and water in between and that title should, therefore, extend to the entire area, 1,750 square kilometres.

Importance of the decision

The decision is important for a number of reasons. First of all it will give confidence to other First Nations to continue declaring their rights, whether through litigation, negotiations, or assertion. And, as Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief of BC, Jody Wilson-Raybould said, “This decision... will be a game-changer in terms of the landscape in BC and throughout the rest of the country where there is unextinguished aboriginal title.”

Secondly, this is the first time there has been clarity that those who want to use the resources on territory held by aboriginal title must not only consult with the First

Nation holding title (which is the current requirement) but must obtain consent. This is a huge step forward.

Thirdly, provincial and federal governments have wanted to limit “title” to traditional uses, like hunting and fishing. The SCC decision reaffirmed its 1997 decision and opens the use of the territory to additional uses as these are identified now and in the future.

First Nations reactions

The immediate response from Tsilhqot’in and other First Nations was ecstatic. As Tsilhqot’in Chief Bernie Elkins said, “on title lands we’re going to have a veto. The days of easy infringement are gone.” Grand Chief Steward Phillip of the BC Union of Indian Chiefs echoed the sentiment: “We’re moving away from the world of mere consultation into a world of consent. And that is absolutely enormous when one considers Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline proposal... and a whole multitude of major resource projects.”

And Peter Lantin, president of the Council of the Haida Nation, one of many concerned about spills by oil tankers noted: “The entire script has been flipped today in regards to what is in the national interest.”

Government reaction

One can only imagine the disgust that the Tories have for the SCC increasing tenfold. Federal Minister Bernard Valcourt stated “the best way to resolve outstanding aboriginal rights and title claims is through negotiated settlements that balance the interests of all Canadians”. These are code words for “let’s stick with the treaty process because that allows us (government) to stall and obfuscate forever, all the while allowing our corporate buddies to log, mine, fish and pipeline their way through First Nations lands.” And the reference to “all Canadians” should make us all cringe, when what is referred to is the dismissal of “minority” rights.

The BC Minister of Justice, Suzanne Anton, stated in a similar vein that “BC is committed to continue to work together to make sure we all have healthy, thriving communities both socially and economically.” And how is that working out so far for BC’s First Nations? Obviously, not so

well or there would not be so few signed treaties, such huge protests against proposed pipelines, and the Tsilhqot’in litigation, which one can only assume will soon be replicated by other First Nations.

Business community silence

It is striking how little has been said, at least in public, by resource companies who have been making it rich off indigenous lands for years, and who planned to keep on doing so. One member of the Petroleum Association interviewed by CBC, trying to appear perky, noted that at least the decision will bring certainty and emphasizes the need for engaging Indigenous peoples. But mostly all one can hear, if listening closely, is the gnashing of corporate teeth.

What to watch for

As we have written earlier, the use of litigation is one of three strategies typically used by indigenous peoples to declare their rights. The other two are negotiation (e.g. treaties) and assertion (blockades, direct action). The SCC decision will be of great assistance in negotiations, especially in BC, which is largely unceded territory. But it will also assist First Nations’ arguments made in other parts of Canada and Quebec where treaties were vaguely defined or never honoured properly. So watch for a lot more court cases going forward, by those First Nations that can afford the legal fees.

But direct action will likely remain as a strategy, given the tendency of federal and provincial governments to support private sector resource extraction, all in the name of the public interest (all those “jobs” you know... a cover for maximizing short-term profits regardless of environmental or social costs). And corporations wanting to further exploit Alberta’s tar sands will use whatever means they have to push their agenda, and will place enormous pressure on “their” members in the provincial and federal legislatures.

That is why we must continue to actively support the assertions of Indigenous peoples to control their resources, a key component of self-determination.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST EVENTS

ISIS, Israel and instability in the Middle East
Sunday July 13, 5:30pm
Steelworkers Hall
25 Cecil St
Toronto

Radical democracy: their democracy and ours
Tuesday July 15, 7pm
OISE room 8201
252 Bloor St West
Toronto

Eduction and capitalism today
Wednesday July 19, 4pm
Langara College room A218
100 W. 49th ave
Vancouver

A history of radical newspapers
Sunday July 20, 5:30pm
Toronto West
contact torontowest.is@gmail.com for info

How do left alternatives emerge: lessons from Quebec, Greece, Ireland
Tuesday July 29, 7pm
OISE room 8201
252 Bloor St West
Toronto

70 years in the fight for public healthcare
Saturday August 12, 6pm
Toronto East
Call 416-856-5008 for info

Why do we need revolutionary organization
Tuesday August 12, 7pm
OISE room 8201
252 Bloor St West
Toronto

OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENTS

Peoples Social Forum
August 21-24
Ottawa
peoplesocialforum.ca

Mass picket to defend Canada’s postal service
Saturday September 20
1pm at 511 Lawrence ave
Toronto

People’s climate march
September 20-21
New York and globally
http://peoplesclimate.org

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REFUGEE HEALTH

by JESSE MCLAREN

More than two years of mobilizing have pushed the Federal Court to reject the Conservatives’ cuts to refugee health. This should encourage further mobilizing to reverse the cuts and challenge the broader agenda.

In April 2012 then Immigration Minister Jason Kenney announced drastic cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program.

Mobilizations

There was immediate condemnation by health providers -- including an open letter, occupation, interruptions of Tory press conferences, and demonstrations across the country. These led the government to quietly reverse some of the cuts, but this only created more confusion.

A year after the cuts there were already dozens of documented cases of refugees being denied essential medical care. Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers launched a constitutional challenge, and there was a second annual day of action across the country against the cuts.

The mobilizations pushed some provinces to say they would step in and provide care -- throwing the new Immigration Minister Chris Alexander into a temper tantrum about making Canada “a magnet for bogus asylum seekers.”

Court decision

This June was the third annual day of action against cuts to refugee health, and now the Federal Court has reflected public opinion. The ruling by Justice Anne Mactavish found that the cuts threaten the health and lives of refugees.

Furthermore, the ruling rejects the bogus rhetoric used to justify the cuts: “It puts their lives at risk, and perpetuates the stereotypical view that they are cheats, that their refugee claims are ‘bogus,’and that they have come to Canada to abuse the generosity of Canadians. It undermines their dignity and serves to perpetuate the disadvantage suffered by members of an admittedly vulnerable, poor and disadvantaged group.”

Keep fighting

Anti-migrant racism is a key component of the Conservatives’ austerity agenda: exploiting migrant workers while blaming them for jobs losses, and cutting refugee health while blaming them for healthcare cuts.

This scapegoating provides a cover for the Conservatives’ own agenda --from eliminating jobs at Canada Post to cutting \$36 billion from healthcare.

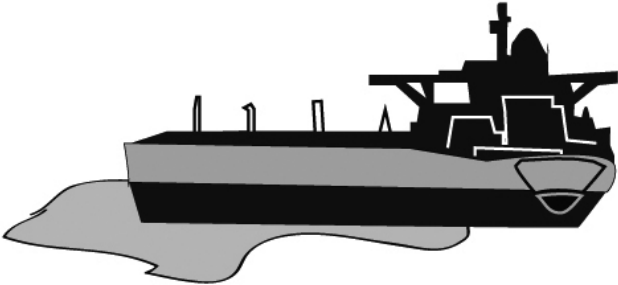
The recent Federal Court ruling reflects more than two years of mobilizing, but does not restore healthcare: the government has four months to respond, and they are planning on appealing the decision

Continued mobilizations will be necessary to reverse the cuts, and challenge the broader austerity agenda.

For information visit www.doctorsforrefugeecare.ca

BC TEACHERS: STRIKE UNTIL VICTORY

Teachers Not Tankers



by TARA EHRCKE

Weeks into a full scale strike and teachers in BC are holding the line. In fact, the resolve at the pickets is stronger than ever. Teachers know that after 12 years, we cannot return to a contract that doesn’t address class size and class composition—meaning also teachers’ working conditions.

Teachers are also increasingly frustrated with the blatant hypocrisy of the government.

Government

First, it went to the Labour Relations Board to have the marking of Grade 12 exams deemed an essential service. It was successful with this application. Secondary teachers are required to try and produce marks despite the disruption caused by the lockout and strike. Many teachers are angered that they did not have sufficient time to properly mark and assess student work.

Next, the government went back to the LRB to seek a declaration that grade 10 and 11 marks are essential. What they got was an order that school administrators would produce these marks and teachers would have 48 hours to “verify” them. The government also announced that the English 10 and Social Studies 11 provincial exams would be modified to remove most of the written answers. This was done to appease the administrators who have been called in to mark the exams in place of striking teachers. Secondary teachers were rightly angered at a government that made such a mockery of assessing student performance and would hence undermine the credibility of our education system.

While the government pushed the LRB to deem more and more work as essential, it took out full page ads in a Vancouver newspaper misrepresenting teacher wage and benefit demands. The graphic showed the government offer in the “zone of affordability” and the teacher proposal in the “stratosphere”. The ad was also placed front and centre on the government website for curriculum change.

Teachers

Teachers and the public responded with a firestorm of counter memes and a funny video explaining the math to

the government.

All of these actions have exposed a government that cares little to protect, defend or improve a quality public education system. Teachers see the endless trips to the LRB as thinly-veiled attacks on our right to strike. Many teachers also learned a lesson when they saw the government use the curriculum change forum to advocate their bargaining position in public.

Discussion on the picket lines is also focused on strategy. On the weekend prior to the strike, the BC Teachers Federation and government huddled in a hotel room out of view of the media.

On Monday, June 16, the first day of the full strike, teachers learned that the BCTF had modified the bargaining package to five components, including a significant reduction in the wage proposal. Class size would be left to the courts with an interim resolution of \$225 million to hire new teachers, rather than firm limits. Government did not respond to the BCTF’s new package until six days later, and provocatively reduced its wage offer. At the mass meeting I attended in Victoria to discuss these developments, one teacher stood up and asked the three thousand in attendance to stand if this new BCTF package was their bottom line. Practically the whole arena of teachers stood and applauded.

BCTF negotiators

Yet if this is our bottom line, and we are to stand strong to achieve it, we need to look critically at how BCTF negotiators are proceeding. The first strategy was to create deadlines. On June 13 (the Friday before the strike), the BCTF was out in the media telling government to come to the table with resources to avert a strike. The government responded by worsening its offer.

Next, the BCTF called publicly for a mediator, the experienced Vince Ready, to step in. First the government refused the BCTF proposal of a mediator. Then it accepted. Ready replied that he wasn’t available, saying he thought the two sides were too far apart. In the meantime, the facilitator who worked at the bar-

gaining table all year quit, citing a perceived lack of confidence in him from the BCTF. Through all of this, there was a focus on dates and process. What has been missing is the most critical point – a good deal.

Resolve

Given the strong resolve and the very high strike mandate received by negotiators, it is clear that teachers are willing to do what it takes to get the deal we deserve and the deal we have been deprived of for 12 years (ever since the Liberal government of the day and then-education minister Christy Clark begun attacking education services and teacher bargaining rights).

In each of the bargaining rounds since our contracts were stripped in 2003, we have returned to work without an agreement on class size. The BC Supreme Court ruled earlier this year that the government has bargained in bad faith and even illegally. The mood today is that we have waited long enough.

Mediation worries me. It was Vince Ready in 2005 who wrote the agreement that ended the strike. While we did make some gains, the critical piece missing was class size. I don’t have confidence a mediated settlement would resolve that most critical issue. I’m also concerned when it is the union seeking mediation, rather than the employer. The union should be prepared to continue the strike to get a negotiated deal at the bargaining table.

BC teachers are resolved. That resolve needs to be harnessed into actions that will secure a good deal that addresses class size and composition. Teachers need to let their leadership know that what matters is not when or how, but what.

As we head into summer, and will be picketing summer school, the motto should be as long as it takes. And if the leadership brings back a deal below our bottom line, we need to be prepared to vote no.

Not in 12 years has there been this much public support and this much teacher resolve. Now is the time to ensure that translates into the deal that teachers and students deserve.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Solidarity against repression in Egypt

One of the highlights of the International Women’s Day rally in 2012 in Toronto was a speech given by Yara Sallam. She is an Egyptian feminist and human rights activist who was projected by skype from Cairo onto a huge screen, and her words electrified the crowd.

She spoke of the victory of the people in Tahrir Square over the despot Mubarek and the fact that ordinary people through their collective strength can topple dictatorships.

As a woman leader in the events that unfolded in Egypt she broke through the Islamaphobia and anti-woman stereotypes that are perpetuated about Muslim societies in the Western media.

Her lived reality in the previous months came through as she outlined the role of women in the events that led to the overturning of the dictatorship.

Her words gave hope to everyone in the crowd that change was possible. She was exuberant about the victory but also very realistic about the road ahead, and what would be required to bring democratic change that would benefit all the people of Egypt.

Counter-revolution

We have seen that the revolution has not been easy and the military is now back in control.

Over 16,000 have been arrested including activists in the Muslim Brotherhood, trade unionists, secularists, journalists and socialists.

The New York Times recently had an editorial denouncing the lack of democratic rights. Yara is well known and has received a number of international awards because of her human rights activism. She spoke out against the repression knowing full well that she might also feel its effects.

John Greyson and Tarek Lubani were detained in 2013 by the Egyptian authorities on their way through Cairo to the Gaza Strip. They innocently witnessed huge demonstrations in the streets and the violent response by the police and the military.

After months on incarceration they were released only through the efforts

of a broad international campaign.

Three Al Jazeera journalists, one a Canadian citizenship (Mohamed Fahmy), were recently sentenced to long prison terms on non-existent evidence. The Canadian government has been very muted in its response saying that it does not want to be involved in “bullhorn politics.”

In the meantime the journalists are jailed under very harsh conditions with little hope of reprieve. The Egyptian government has said that it is not intending to intervene in the courts.

Mahienour El-Masry, a comrade of ours in the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists, has also been arrested and jailed for participating in a protest against anti-protest laws.

The American and Canadian governments provide billions of dollars in aid to the Egyptian government but are choosing not to use this to leverage the rights of the detainees.

Solidarity

This is unacceptable and pressures must be placed on both governments to demand the return of democratic rights and the release of political prisoners.

Trade unionists have also taken the brunt of these attacks and it is the responsibility of labour activists in Canada to have resolutions passed in our locals and labour councils.

We must demand that all charges be dropped against those imprisoned for breaking this anti-democratic law and ensure that people be allowed to engage in democratic protest.

Activists should be able to be free from arbitrary arrest, physical violence and judicial harassment.

We have seen where international solidarity has worked in the freeing of John Greyson and Tarek Lubani.

People’s freedom and sometimes lives are at stake and as trade unionists it is crucial that we do all that we can to support those imprisoned for expressing their democratic rights.

For more information visit egyptsolidarityinitiative.org/

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Socialist Worker

The People's Social Forum: build together, win together

Socialist Worker spoke with Ana, an Indigenous organizer with the Peoples Social Forum.

What is the response like outside of the usual places (bigger cities, established activist circles etc..). What kind of response from smaller town, rural areas, marginalised communities?

The response from Indigenous communities and grassroots people has been very enthusiastic. There is definitely an interest in participating in an event so large that has intentionally made the effort to engage people who are usually excluded from these sorts of events. There is a lot of knowledge held by traditional people and community-minded people and they are very eager to contribute to the discussion in August.

The same is true for geographic areas that are also excluded: the plains, northern regions, and The North in particular. For many, the Social Forum represents the first time that Canadian society has actively encouraged and invited participation from the communities mentioned. It is exciting.

How does the forum fit into the ongoing fight against austerity, and cuts to programs?

The potential to examine during the Social Forum the neo-liberal model and its continual colonialization also draws settler society into a deeper understanding of what has been happening for hundreds of years in these territories. Participants at the PSF will make the connection between the historical struggles of Indigenous nations and



the perils that Western models have for settler society as well.

Given the concern by many activists at the rightward drift of the NDP do you see the social forum as a place to discuss the building of a new political expression for the movements? Like Québec solidaire perhaps?

As we've said, the Forum gives us the opportunity to imagine new ways of living together and building a different society. Particularly from the Original Peoples' Caucus' perspective, this excludes the model of typical Western partisan politics and calls on us to re-implement traditional political structures.

What are people hoping will emerge from the social forum?

The Original Peoples' Caucus hopes to see a renewed commitment to the Peace and Friendship Treaties, and to the spirit and intent of our ancestors to live together in a good way. This means understanding that we have Inherent Rights to all that happens in our territories, rights that supercede all colonial laws. This also means the legislative and judicial rejection of the Doctrines of Discovery and Terra Nullius.

What can people do to help build for the social forum?

Before the forum:
1. Get involved in the regional expansion commis-

sions prior to the big event, in order to assure interest and buy-in from community and local organizations. Some regional forums will take place, parallel to the Ottawa event; others may happen simultaneously and be interconnected through video conferencing or Skype. These are happening in Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Halifax, and throughout Southern Ontario. Regional groups are establishing in Thunder Bay, Sackville, Charlottetown, Victoria, Yellowknife, and elsewhere.

2. Join one of the caucuses: Organized labour, Original People, Québec, People of

Colour, Queer, (dis)Ability, Youth and Women.

3. Join one of the Committees: Communications, Logistics, Mobilization, Finance, Program, Culture

4. Prepare for the Caravans: Atlantic, Western, South-Western Ontario, Quebec, and the North are organizing caravans. They will visit communities that are facing austerity measures, plant shut-downs, privatization of public services and resisting resource extraction on their lands, etc. People would then join the caravan and make their way to the Social Forum. The notion is to link struggles and communities that are facing similar struggles, to involve communities

that are normally out of reach and to bring messages from those communities, unions, and Indigenous Peoples to the Ottawa march. Independent journalists and bloggers will ride in the caravans collecting peoples' stories on the way.
5. Build a Movement Assembly: Movement Assemblies are community gatherings, held during the Peoples' Social Forum, designed for groups from across the country to develop collective political agreements, and actions. People make action plans in order to work together across issues on local, regional, and national fronts.

At the forum:

1. August 21st March on Parliament Hill: Caravans coming from across the country will meet up for the opening gathering on August 21, beginning at 3:00pm on Victoria Island, followed by a march to Parliament Hill to end in a beautiful participatory cultural presentation with music, dance, colour and thousands of people.

2. Two days of Workshops: At the University of Ottawa, and surrounding venues on several broad themes including: Indigenous Peoples' rights; social/economic rights poverty; difficulty of organizing; defending public services; water and land; governance and democracy; women's rights; racism, homophobia; etc.

3. Movement Assemblies: Movement Assemblies are community gatherings, held during the Peoples' Social Forum, designed for groups to develop collective political agreements, and actions. People make action plans in order to work together across issues on local, regional, and national fronts.

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Organize to Save Canada Post

by PAM JOHNSON

The plan to end door-to-door postal delivery has been massively unpopular from the moment it was announced by Canada Post in December 2013.

Canada Post's plan will cut 8,000 jobs and have a huge impact on seniors, anyone with mobility issues and people with disabilities.

Myths

Canada Post claims that home delivery is obsolete in the age of the internet. Yet, it has recently massively invested in a modernization project, including vans for letter carriers so that they can deliver parcels to meet the rising on-line shopping demand.

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.

Why is Canada Post investing so heavily in modernizing an "obsolete" service? The answer is privatization, as can be seen from the UK. Although the Royal Mail was valued at 10 billion pounds it was sold at the fire sale price of 3.3 billion pounds. 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.

Save public postal service, stop Harper

Sixty per cent of people across Canada recently surveyed are opposed to the plan. "The public outcry began the moment these cuts were announced by Canada Post and approved by the Conservatives," said Denis Lemelin, National President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). "Lawn signs are going up all across the country. People are organizing. Municipalities are taking action."

The Save Canada Post campaign launched by CUPW has initiated actions in communities large and small across Canada and Quebec.

To date, seventy municipalities have passed resolutions in support of postal workers and continuing door-to-door delivery, in-

cluding Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Medicine Hat, Hamilton and Oakville.

Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) locals have organized door-to-door canvassing in London, Ontario and Charlottetown. The Peterborough local organized a "I'm walking with my letter carrier" event. In Edmonton and Toronto, CUPW participated in Pride parades. Town hall meetings hosted by CUPW and NDP MPs have been held Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Sherbooke and other cities.

A united campaign with the same sort of labour solidarity that defeated Hudak could turn the tide on this campaign, push back on the Harper austerity agenda and build the confidence and capacity of the labour movement.

For more visit www.cupw.ca