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MISSING & MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN

IRAQ WAR

ISLAMOPHOBIA

GUTTING
HEALTH
CARE

SPYING

TERRORIST

ARMING
SAUDI
ARABIA

JOB
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‘Anti-terror’ law could target activists

by ALLAN WOOD

The Anti-terrorism Act 2015 (Bill C-51) will expand the mandate of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) allowing the state to increase its crack-down on dissent.

The legislation would relax privacy restrictions, lower the legal threshold for police to obtain a warrant, and allow Canadian authorities to hold suspects without charges for as long as one year. The Toronto Star reported the bill would give 17 security agencies “access to any information in any government department on any Canadian.”

Surveillance
The introduction of C-51 comes on the heels of news that the Communications Security Establishment, Canada’s spy agency, is operating a covert, mass surveillance program that monitors the online activities of millions of Internet users around the world. Ron Deibert, a professor at the University of Toronto,

likened the CSE program to a “giant X-ray machine over all our digital lives. . . . Every single thing that you do . . . is being archived, collected and analyzed.” Stephen Harper and the Conservatives remain hostile to transparency and accountability. They eliminated CSIS’s internal watchdog in 2012 and C-51 offers little in the way of additional oversight. University of Ottawa law professor Craig Forcese says the Conservatives want to return to an era when the security services were free to engage in illegal, dirty tricks. He wrote that the bill creates a “secret jurisprudence on when CSIS can act beyond the law.”

Silencing dissent
Silencing of dissent appears to be one of the bill’s main goals. When Green Party leader Elizabeth May asked the public safety and justice ministers during question period if C-51 could be applied to non-violent civil disobedience, such as

blockading along a pipeline route, she did not receive a direct answer. Paul Champ, a civil liberties lawyer, said there are serious concerns that C-51 “is going to target not just terrorists who are involved in criminal activity, but people who are protesting against different Canadian government policies.” Indeed, an internal RCMP report from January 2014, obtained by Greenpeace, reported that the so-called “anti-petroleum” movement is a growing “security threat” to Canada.

Free speech
Harper states the bill would merely “criminalize the promotion of terrorism” and give the government the power to remove “terrorist propaganda” from the internet. Left unanswered is who defines “terrorism” and “terrorist propaganda.” The bill is written in such overly broad terms it could be applied to nearly anything the Conservative government wants to deem criminal.

Micheal Vonn, Policy Director of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, said C-51 “proposes an unprecedented expansion of powers that will . . . impose a broad chill on legitimate political speech”.

Speak out
After 9/11 it was the Liberals, with the support of the Conservatives, who brought forward “anti-terror” legislation that eroded civil liberties. Now they are trading places, with the Liberals promising to support Harper’s latest attack. May has criticized the bill, saying it would “allow the Conservatives to turn CSIS into a secret police force,” while NDP leader Tom Mulcair has warned that “we cannot protect our freedoms by sacrificing them.” We must speak out against such anti-democratic activities and put pressure on our MPs to resist these totalitarian measures.

Just transition: the new social contract

by JUSTIN ROBERTSON

“At BC’s carbon cross-roads there is a choice to be made: dig deeper into fossil fuels through LNG or reduce carbon emissions to something close to zero within a few decades.” But what does that mean for workers and their families in the coal, oil and natural gas industries?
In their recently released study *Just Transition: Creating a green social contract for BC’s resource workers*, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives takes on the “jobs vs the environment” false dichotomy, and outlines policies that can unite climate justice and the labour movement.

As they explain, “In the Canadian Labour Congress definition, just transition is ‘the fair treatment of workers and their communities when employers close facilities,’ which includes an aim of ‘continuation of employment without loss of pay, benefits or seniority,’ and where this

is not possible provision of ‘just compensation.’ This includes a vision of ‘quality employment in an economy based on sustainable production and infrastructure, . . . communities as centres of diverse, labour-intensive industries, with a strong public sector to support them and is above all, about alternative employment in a sustainable economy.” Just transition assumes a planning framework and specific programs.”
Central to this is shifting the focal-point away from short-term gains for corporate profit and into community and energy infrastructure that supports communities and respects First Nations.
The report argues for a “green social contract to ensure a smooth transition to a zero-carbon economy.” The backbone of this initiative focuses on several key issues, such as investing long-term in employees, redressing financial instability levered on families from boom-bust cycles in their respective industries,

and supporting alternative models to private ownership (including public ownership, worker ownership and new partnerships with First Nations).
Just transition offers such solutions as alternative training of employees whose current skills are downsized, bringing early-retirement incentives to pave the way for new positions, strengthening Employment Insurance, and the creation of green-jobs (in renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transit) to tackle the threat of climate-change.
This is all possible by collecting royalty payments from companies as part of a provincial plan to offer training for sustainable jobs in green-energy developments.
According to current data used in the study, investing in green-energy creates more jobs per-dollar than fossil fuels. What’s needed is to utilize the existing carbon-tax and natural-gas royalties in setting up the green-jobs that are the crux

of this transition. Such a long-term investment is not only essential for bolstering environmental sustainability, but it will also help to support workers who have become far too dependent on fluctuating commodity-markets to have any real self-determining stake in their own welfare.
This is clearly what we need to move BC’s infrastructure, environmental regulation and worker protection boldly into the 21st century, but what’s the barrier? The report harkens back to the earlier “social contract” after World War II, which emerged in the context of the post-war boom of capitalism, when profit rates could sustain broader social reforms. Neoliberalism emerged as an attempt to restore declining profit rates, and years of government austerity measures, have equally failed. To solve the climate crisis, in the midst of economic crisis, requires challenging the capitalist system that drives them both.

Support refugee health

by GURNISHAN SINGH/GURKIRAT BATH

While the Harper government increasingly uses words like “barbarism” and “terrorism” to justify its agenda, it refuses to repeal its own barbaric health cuts that terrorize refugees.

In June 2012 the Harper government imposed drastic cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program that provides basic healthcare for refugee claimants. Then in December of that year the government refused to provide services to refugees from all but 27 countries that then Immigration Minister Jason Kenney deemed “safe.” Since then limited services have only been available to limited claimants, depending on where they came from and if they had what the government considered a “health emergency.”
The racist cuts triggered two years of broad opposition—including occupations, demonstrations, and a court challenge. Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care took the government to court on the grounds that denying such services to refugees was against the Canadian charter.

Legal victory
They achieved victory in court in July 2014. Judge Mactavish found these acts were indeed unconstitutional: the cuts represented “cruel and unusual punishment” (violating section 12), and by discrimination against refugees of certain countries they violate section 15 that calls for “equal treatment before and under the law, and equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination.”
Many saw this as a victory and also an end to the cruel practices of the Canadian government. After the November 2014 deadline, some of these discriminatory restrictions were removed but many of them still existed and many of the refugee claimants are now trying to survive without health care. So this January, Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care went back to the courts to get the government to comply with the July 2014 ruling.

Scapegoat
The Harper government, in their attempts to keep these discriminatory and unconstitutional cuts in their budget, has wasted over \$1.4 million in legal fees. The cuts are not about saving money but scapegoating refugees and distracting from the \$36 billion cuts to Medicare. We need to continue demanding the government reverse all cuts to public healthcare, and defend healthcare for all.

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Free Palestine, free the world

by JESSE MCLAREN

This March is the tenth Israeli Apartheid Week and a decade of the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

Through the years Palestine solidarity has been intertwined with movements challenging war and defending free speech.

Inspiration

The second Palestinian Intifada of 2000 was an inspiration around the world, and including to the anti-globalization movement of 2011—where numerous participants began wearing the keffiyeh.

The anti-globalization movement helped fuel the historic movement against the Iraq War of 2003, which created a wide audience for Palestine solidarity. Annual conferences in Cairo brought together hundreds of activists across the Arab world, and allies from the West, to support the resistance in Iraq and Palestine and build movements against globalization, Zionism and imperialism.

In 2005, a year after the International Court of Justice declared Israel’s apartheid wall illegal, Palestinian civil society launched the BDS campaign—uniting Palestinians in Israel, the occupied territories and refugees in the diaspora. At the same time Israeli Apartheid Week was launched in Toronto.

Instead of the Iraq War paving the way for the invasion of Iran it had provoked mass resistance

around the world, including electoral gains for Hizbullah and Hamas. Frightened by the democratic aspirations of the Arab World, the US unleashed Israel to bomb Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2009. Harper joined the siege on Gaza by cutting humanitarian aid, and defended the Lebanon War as a “measured response,” but there were anti-war rallies across the country.

Criminalization

Western countries have increasingly criminalized Palestinian solidarity in an attempt to sever its support for Palestinian resistance, stop its radicalizing impact at home, and to justify attacks on civil liberties.

In 2009 the Tories and Liberals created the “Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism,” in 2010 Pride Toronto tried to ban Queers Against Israeli Apatheid, and in 2011 Rob Ford tried to use QuAIA as an excuse to cut funds to Pride, but these were resisted as part of the repolitization of Pride.

The Tories cut funding from the Canadian Arab Federation, KAIROS, UNRWA, Rights & Democracy, banned of British MP George Galloway and Dr. Moustafa Barghouthi from entering Canada, and defunded Palestine House. But these have also been challenged, including a reversal of the ban on Galloway, followed by a speaking tour across the country.

Government repression encour-

aged campuses to clamp down on student activism, including banning posters for Israeli Apartheid Week, but these failed to stop its spread to more than 50 cities around the world—along with the a dozen student unions endorsing BDS.

In 2010 and 2011 Palestine solidarity activists around the world organized humanitarian flotillas to break the siege on Gaza. While Harper was welcoming Netanyahu in Ottawa in 2010, Israeli forces stormed the flotilla and killed unarmed activists, and tasered activists the next year. But the attempt to kill Palestine solidarity failed.

Arab Spring and counter-revolution

In 2011 the Arab Spring erupted, raising the hope of toppling all the dictatorships on which Israel Apartheid depends. The Egyptian revolution followed years of inspiration from Palestinian resistance, combined with growing strike waves and struggles for civil liberties. Israel lashed out at Gaza in 2012 but were restrained by the US, anxious about the impact of war on revolutionary Egypt.

But the West intervened to stop the Arab Spring—highjacking the Libyan revolution and arming counter-revolutionary Saudi Arabia to send troops to Bahrain and to arm sectarian groups in Syria. After counter-revolution in Egypt, Israel launched another war on Gaza and the Egyptian regime blocked a humanitarian convoy. The war

killed thousands but failed to defeat the resistance, while provoking even greater solidarity demonstrations—this time in the wake growing indigenous sovereignty and solidarity movements like Idle No More.

The movement today

As the Palestinian BDS National Committee wrote, “For Palestinians and people of conscience everywhere, 2014 will be remembered as the year in which Israel carried out its bloodiest ever massacre of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza strip. 2014 was also a year of resistance that saw continued resistance and unprecedented international solidarity with Palestine and huge steps forward for the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement.”

So Western governments have again gone on the offensive. France, the so-called bastion of free speech, became the first country to ban Palestine solidarity demonstrations, while Canada has passed laws against “the promotion of terrorism in general” that will target indigenous resistance from Turtle Island to Palestine.

Ten years after the launch of BDS and IAW, Palestinian solidarity continues to grow—exposing the complicity of states and corporations on which Israeli Apartheid depends, as well as the potential for building movements of peace and justice to free Palestine, and free the world.

50 years since Malcolm’s death

by PARRY SINGH MUDHAR

This February 21 marked the 50th year since Malcolm X’s passing. Although there are many who choose to ignore his place in history and recall his influence only in the most vile regards, we need only to look to the communities in which his words and actions of self determination and cultural pride helped uplift.

With national school, streets, and libraries named in his honor, when one looks outside our window into the international setting into Latin America, Asia, and Africa where communities gathered to hear his words, it is impossible not to hear his voice in the struggles these countries face today.

Anti-racist

One of the most sincere aspects of Malcolm’s life was the ability to reinvent his frame of mind and evolve his way of thinking while admitting the flaws in his past views. Who would have thought that the incarcerated drug dealer and thief would become a major leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI), condemning America and Europe for its sub human treatment of the African Diaspora while preaching the Nation’s views of Black supremacy, trying to uplift the lives of those who were told that their lives were worth less than the dirt underfoot.

As he said “Being here in America doesn’t make you an American.... No I’m not an American, I’m one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy.... I’m speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of a victim. I don’t see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.”

Revolutionary

Who would have thought that this outspoken NOI leader who yearned for complete segregation of Black and White America would then travel the world, see the unity of race during his pilgrimage to Mecca and return with a revolutionary perspective to say, “It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a radical conflict of black against white or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter.” As he said, “I for one, will join in with anyone—I don’t care what color you are—as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.”

It is a hard fact that the United States Government and the Nation of Islam kept a close watch on Malcolm, and as death threats turned to mysterious house fires Malcolm persevered with his message of unity of the masses and strength to overthrow those who have oppressed and were unwilling to change their actions against their fellow Americans.

He was a true leaders, who brought about change “by any means necessary.”

American Sniper: rewriting the Iraq War

by MICHAEL T FENN

There is little doubt that American Sniper will go down as one of the most effective pieces of propaganda—justifying America’s wars—ever to come down the Hollywood pike.

It has been a huge box office success, grossing close to \$200 million and achieving the second most successful R rated opening since the The Matrix. This popularity seems unfathomable (and disconcerting) given the odious justifications for the 2003 Iraq War have long been proven false, and despite the disaster the “war on terror” has been.

Its timing seems suspicious, given the new terror threat that has surfaced in Iraq (ISIS), in which

American leaders are once again clamouring for more war and intervention in the Middle East.

Hero worship

It is pure hero worship—in which manly virtues (“gifts” for violence and bravery) are valorized. The only problem is that to make this hero worship effective—as propaganda, or as an art form that might actually make some money at the box office—its makers must distort both the war and the nature of the insurgency.

Otherwise our hero, and his fellow heroes (US soldiers) who shared these attitudes and beliefs, no longer seem “heroic” but rather as tragic victims of their own ignorance and prejudice—which was of

course spoon fed to them by both the military and the media, including Hollywood. In this context our hero/heroes appear more like sheep, who tragically were unable to discern real evil when it did happen to darken their doorsteps.

War crimes and resistance

Such distortion is set from the very first scene, which, ironically, depicts the second siege of Fallujah. The real life scene of one of the most notorious crimes committed by the US occupation. Despite the inhabitants’ desire to negotiate a cease fire, American military leaders simply ignored it, and then proceeded to blanket the city with poisonous phosphorus (an

illegal weapon of mass destruction) killing 4000 to 6000 civilians, and displacing 200,000.

The film also claims that extremist groups were the cause—rather than the consequence—of the Iraq War. It also justifies the murder of Iraqis, while dismissing that they had any reason for armed resistance against the US, which had invaded their country and brought untold misery and death.

The Iraq War and occupation killed a million people, stole billions in Iraqi oil money, gutted public sector jobs, created an unemployment rate of 70 per cent, and allied with a sectarian government that fomented civil war. It was the Iraq War, not resistance to it, that led to ISIS.

Capitalism and the family

The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day March and Rally in Toronto is “Our Bodies. Our Territories. Our Communities.” This is a great banner that brings together the question of control and the lack of control women have over our bodies, linked to a similar lack of control indigenous women and men have over their land, wedded to the lack of control we all feel in terms of how we live our lives.

Since the early days of the Second Wave Women’s Movement (of the 1960s and 1970s) and long before, the question of control over our bodies has been a fundamental question for women seeking liberation. This has to do with the role of women inside the nuclear family under capitalism, which tends to enforce and reinforce the idea that women’s fundamental role in society is that of mother and caregiver to the next generation of workers. And, in spite of all the advances that women have made through our own struggles, often allied with our brothers in the union movement, the family continues to be the dominant ideology peddled by right-wing governments and media alike.

Of course, it is true that there have been major advances for women in the arenas of education, entry into non-traditional jobs and most importantly around the question of access to contraception and abortion. If a woman has no control over her reproductive life, over decisions about when and with whom to have children, she can have little control over other aspects of her life. Over the last few years, though, it’s become clear that any gains we have made are also under constant threat because of the economic system we live under—capitalism. The modern nuclear family as we know it today was solidified as an institution of use to capital during the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century.

The nuclear family

At the time, the growth of industrial capitalism was actually killing working class family life, since it was pulling all family members (including pregnant women and children) in to the factories and mines. Women were dying in childbirth and children were subject to long working hours and horrendous conditions, as of course were men and women as well. There was no real family life.

This frightened some capitalists, who realized that if there was no stable family life, no ability for people to regenerate and rest for the next working day, they were going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg of profits. Their fears came together with the desires of working class people who fought for some protections for women and children (and men), so that they would stop dying in the workplace. Working class people wanted to live lives with some joy, some possibility of sharing their lives with the people they loved, some respite from the inhumane round of work, eat, sleep.

As Marx said, “Human beings make history, but not in conditions of their own choosing.” So it was that workers won struggles around advances such as a shorter working day and instituting child labour laws. However, at the same time, the nuclear family, with father as the head of the household and mother at home caring for children, became the norm and served to imprison women inside the family hearth.

This was so even if the so-called family wage—supposedly paid to men so that women could stay at home and look after children—was never a reality for working class families. Working class women have always had to seek employment outside the home, usually in low-paid, ghettoized jobs, in order for the family to survive. On top of this work outside the home, capitalism constantly pushes the idea that women—whether they work for pay or not—are the ones who are and should be overwhelmingly responsible for housework and childcare.

This does a great service to the bosses, since they profit from the surplus value they extract from women’s wages at work and also from all the unpaid labour it requires to bring up the next generation of workers. This ideology is especially useful in periods of economic crisis, as we are living through today, when governments are removing more and more work from the public sphere (cuts to healthcare, services for kids and families, services for the elderly, etc.) and foisting it onto individual families—and disproportionately onto individual women in those families.

It is no wonder the family—which we are led to believe should be the one place where we can expect to find love and caring—is often a cauldron of abuse and unhappiness. The pressures on the family to provide a humane oasis in a society based on greed, profit for the few and destruction of the very environment we depend on to survive, are enormous.

Alternatives

But things don’t have to be this way. It is neither fair nor necessary that we continue to accept the way things are under capitalism. Just as indigenous people across Canada are resisting the Harper government and the priorities of that government (creating the sink hole of the Tar Sands, which is destroying indigenous families, their land, their livelihood at the same time it is polluting the planet) we can join together on this IWD to pledge together to build the new society and new families we need to survive. In order to do that, though, we will ultimately need to get rid of a system whose priorities have nothing to do with real choices for women or for any of us.

INTERNATIONAL



No to SYRIZA’s retreat

The joint statement by the Eurogroup, which the SYRIZA ANEL(Independant Greeks) agreed to, is an unacceptable subordination to the demands of creditors. It comes in direct conflict with the desire, the expectations and demands of the labor movement and the people to end the austerity and exit the catastrophic memoranda and the humiliating control. Rupture and not compromise with the interests of bankers to take back what was stolen from us and to win what we deserve.

This completes the first phase cycle of setbacks after the abandonment of debt cancellation, is a retreat past the the “red lines” that the government had set as the lines not to be crossed.

Agreement

Specifically with yesterday’s agreement:

- The loan agreement is extended with the commitments attached to it, thus real end in memoranda will not come. The myth that the loan agreement is not a new memoranda also collapses.
- Austerity does not end because the requirement for primary surplus remains, the same time that the “institutions” will constantly monitor the implementation of the Agreement in order to complete the assessment of the current agreement.
- The Greek government pledged to submit for approval and evaluation of

the entire program of its own reforms. Has committed not to proceed with the cancellation of measures and policy changes that will be instead judged and decided by the “institutions” (ie the Troika) in economic recovery and financial stability. This means that the bulk of the memoranda and restructuring measures will remain in place.

– The Greek government has committed itself to the recognition of the debt and the full repayment of its obligations.

The result of yesterday’s Eurogroup meeting gives us a taste of what things will be like in the four-month “deal” with lenders: a permanent blackmail and a demand on their part not only for retreats but for full compliance with the requirements of bankers and euromanagement.

It has become clear to anymore where this logic leads of negotiations in the euro and inside the European institutions. It proved how dangerous was the line “Neither rupture(Grexit), neither subordination” put forward by SYRIZA-ANEL government.

Rupture or retreat

The real dilemma is still between the rupture with the Euro, cancellation of the debt OR retreat and subordination. Only the immediate cessation of payments and the removal of predatory debt, the exit from the euro , in defiance of the Euro-conditions of the European Treaty and the exit from ” pit of lions “of the EU, the nationalization of banks and large companies

with workers control, can be the best answer to blackmail and to pave the way for pro-people policy out of the crisis.

The fighting forces of the Left and the movement should coordinate their forces and to invite workers, the people and youth and put up a large movement against the agreement, the EU’s blackmail and the ECB and the government policy of compromise leading into submission. To impose “unilateral” here and now the objectives of labor and popular movement.

-To say no to this unacceptable and humiliating “agreement.”

-To fill the streets and squares demanding all for what we fought for in all these years namely the complete overthrow of memoranda policies, the end of the subordination to the Euro-management and debt cancellation.

– To step up the fight for our rights and needs, to restore all labor rights, for the rehiring of all those fired under the memoranda (ERT, cleaners, school guards, etc.), for the annulment of privatizations, for the overthrow of anti-education measures, for the restoration of wages and pensions.

– To choose and impose with our struggles another way, the way of breaking with the euro the the EU, and Capital’s policies, the way of hope and the anti-capitalist overthrow.

All out to the squares and the rallies!

This is republished from ANTARSYA, <http://antarsya.gr>

Egypt: sectarianism and counter-revolution

by HAITHAM MOHAMEDAIN, CAIRO

Sectarianism is the way of counter-revolution. The unity of the masses in the squares fragmented and confusion replaced their consciousness in face of a number of tactics adopted by the regime in order to liquidate the January revolution.

The first tactic was to agree to Mubarak’s departure and the announcement of a Military Council with the aim of deceiving the revolution. Meanwhile, the sit-ins in the squares broke up because of the absence of a mass revolutionary party capable of exposing this deception and playing a role in convincing the masses of the necessity of staying in the streets until the complete overthrow of Mubarak’s regime.

In absence of political forces embedded within the workers’ movement, which was raising demands to purge Mubarak’s men and their cronies from industrial institutions and services and realise the demand of the revolution for social justice, Tantawi’s Military Council was able to smear the workers’ movement, before moving on to a phase of direct repression through issuing the first legal ruling banning strikes and considering them to be a crime punishable by jail terms handed down by military judges.

The second tactic adopted by the military council was to fragment the

mass movement by dividing the poor and oppressed on the basis of religion and sect. It was aided in this by the forces of Political Islam of every stripe, and at the head of them the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Coptic Christian masses suffered from poverty side by side with the Muslim poor for decades, but in addition they had to swallow religious oppression, the oppression of the state which treated them as second class citizens, and the oppression of society which reflected the state’s oppression in addition to the spread of reactionary religious ideas.

This section of the masses isolated themselves in the churches, and did not participate in political and social protests except a little, and then only under the pressure of great fear. It was the prisoner of religious leaders in the church and prisoners of the state which oppressed them but which offered them “protection” from the tyranny of the “Muslims”.

But during the last years of Mubarak and number of sectarian incidents occurred where the role of the state was clear.

When the Copts went out, the final elements of the revolution against Mubarak’s regime fell into place. First the students had taken up the nationalist cause, then the workers went out to demand social justice, and the political

forces protested against the tyranny of Mubarak’s regime. All of these forces of the poor and oppressed gathered together in the January Revolution: the students and the workers, the Copts and the women, raising the demands of all Egyptians for freedom, social justice and human dignity.

The constitutional referendum of 19 March 2011 came as a blow to this unity, and the Military Council, in alliance with the Islamists was successful in achieving its aim.

This was the beginning of a series of attacks and burning of churches, some carried out by the regime itself and the majority with the support of some of the Islamist forces.

The Copts, trapped between the state which was crushing them and the Islamists who cheered on the massacre, huddled once again in the church, raising religious slogans in response.

The Coptic masses will remain trapped in the embrace of the state – which is a gain for the counter-revolution – as long as the political scene is dominated by sectarian organisations or sectarian slogans.

This is republished from the Revolutionary Socialists, global.revsoc.me

A people’s history of beer

Bradley Hughes charts the development of beer brewing (a women’s profession for most of human history), and raises a glass to a classless society free from oppression

To paraphrase the great dialectical philosopher, Homer J. Simpson, beer is the cause of, and the solution to, all of life’s problems.

The human species arose between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago. Up until around 10,000 years ago we all lived in small bands of hunters and gatherers. Many people continued in this sort of society up until very recent times.

Pre-class society

The life of foraging societies was very different from our own. Enough food could usually be gathered within two to three hours per day. Even this work would be very different from our own conception of work: the methods, timing and organization would all be decided on by the participants, no one was forced to get out of bed in the dark to commute in the rain to a job that existed only to create wealth for our bosses.

Since foraging societies moved frequently, personal wealth would be limited to what one could carry. There was no possibility of a small number of people controlling the wealth of society for their own ends. As Engels writes, without a ruling class and a state to protect its interests there were “No soldiers, no gendarmes or police, no nobles, kings, regents, prefects, or judges, no prisons, no lawsuits—and everything takes its orderly course. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole of the community affected.” The result was a very peaceful and egalitarian society.

There was also no sexism and oppression of women as we now know it. Some tasks were typically carried out by men or by women, but there was no ranking of work, no assigning of low valued work to women and high prestige work to men. The work that in our society is given low value (that is low wages) caring for children, cleaning, cooking, would have been the major occupations of most people in a foraging society. Work and leisure would blend into each other in a way that is impossible in a society like ours that is dedicated to profit.

No sexism, no bosses, no employment, no homelessness, no war; but also, alas, no beer.

Beer and agriculture

The ability to brew beer marks the most important turning point in human history. To understand why, you need to know a little about the process of producing beer from grain and water.

If you take grain and add water, it will sprout. If, just as it starts to sprout, you roast it, all the enzymes that were about to turn the starch into sugar to feed the new plant will be preserved in place. Now you have malt. The next step is to grind up the malt and add it to warm water for an hour or so. During this time the enzymes will wake up and convert the starches in the grain into sugar. If you drain off the water, you will also get lots of sugar. This liquid is called wort. Huck some yeast into the wort and they will eat the sugar, piss out alcohol and fart carbon dioxide. This creates intoxicating, bubbly, beer.



Our foraging ancestors would only have had access to wild grains, and if they were moving often, even if they could have found enough grain to brew beer, carrying the beer or the grain around with them would have been an onerous task.

Sometime around 10,000 years ago, some of our ancestors stopped foraging and started farming. When they did this they created a much more reliable source of food, and the ability to produce more food than they needed for their immediate needs. They also created a society that required much more work from its members than the previous foraging societies.

Eventually these societies would change even further. The excess food that could be produced by agriculture meant that that people producing other things could be supported by agricultural workers. It also meant that people who produced nothing could be supported by the work of farmers. This allowed the growth of art, philosophy and science.

Class society

Ominously, it also meant that is was now possible to have a small ruling class who produced nothing themselves, but lived at the expense of the majority. The surplus food could also be stored which meant it could also be stolen, and so a need for arms and armed men arose. The combination eventually lead to kings and queens and courts and all of the hierarchy and brutality that that entails.

Settling down in houses alongside their fields also meant a drastic change in the relations between men and women. The

field, the house, and the things in the house eventually became private property. Over time, the men became the outdoor workers, in the field, and the women became confined to indoor occupations in child rearing and caring for the home. A settled society can have many more children than a foraging one, because there is more food, but also a family can have more young children then they can carry. This increases the need for child care, and increases the work necessary to look after the home. This division of labour between men and women left the men in charge and the increase in private wealth created the idea of inheritance.

Engels explains it like this: “The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male . . . together with slavery and private wealth, it opens the period that has lasted until today in which every step forward is also relatively a step backward, in which prosperity and development for some is won through the misery and frustration of others.”

What would drive foragers to the toil and drudgery required by settled agriculture? In a settled society, farmers can produce a lot of grain. Societies that farm grain can, and do, produce beer. Beer is the explanation for the change to settled agriculture. Only by planting and caring for crops could you ensure that there was enough grain to make beer.

There is plenty of evidence that beer brewing started along with agriculture and for most of

our history has been a woman’s profession. Our oldest surviving records contain references to beer and women brewers. The Code of Hammurabi, the oldest surviving code of laws from Babylon was written almost 5000 years ago. Among other things it sets the price of beer in grain and refers to beer brewers as women. Around 4000 years ago the people of Sumer wrote the The Hymn to Ninkasi which includes the instructions for how to make beer amongst its praise of Ninkasi the goddess of beer. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for food includes a pitcher of beer, and the women brewers of ancient Egypt developed a range of beer styles. The mesoamerican civilizations of the Aztecs and the Mayan drank beer brewed by aristocratic women. Up until the end of the medieval period in Britain, brewing by women was so prevalent that laws regulating the trade used the word for female brewers exclusively.

We owe the rise of class society and all the wonders and horrors it has produced to our ancestors’ thirst for good beer. Now let’s raise a glass to a future world without class and oppression, “To capitalism! And it’s hasty demise!”

This is the first in a series of articles on beer in history. Future articles will look at the way women were driven out of the profession of brewing in Britain during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and how the history of the 19th century British beer industry illustrates the laws of Marxist economics.

WOMEN’S LIBERATION

The history of International Women’s Day

For more than a century International Women’s Day has intertwined women’s liberation and working class resistance to capitalism. Emerging in the US, it was globalized by German socialists and played a key role in the Russian Revolution. Aleksandra Kollontai was a leading revolutionary in Russia, part of the struggle that brought unprecedented gains for women such as collective kitchens and childcare, and abortion on demand two generations before the rest of the West. These were all reversed with Stalin’s counter-revolution, encouraged by Western intervention. In her article below from 1920, Kollontai outlines the history of IWD, and how women’s liberation is inseparable from the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

A militant celebration

Women’s Day or Working Women’s Day is a day of international solidarity, and a day for reviewing the strength and organization of proletarian women.

But this is not a special day for women alone. The 8th of March is a historic and memorable day for the workers and peasants, for all the Russian workers and for the workers of the whole world. In 1917, on this day, the great February revolution broke out. It was the working women of Petersburg who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition to the Tsar and his associates. And so, working women’s day is a double celebration for us...

How and why was Women’s Day organized?

Not very long ago, in fact about ten years ago, the question of women’s equality, and the question of whether women could take part in government alongside men was being hotly debated. The working class in all capitalist countries struggled for the rights of working women: the bourgeoisie did not want to accept these rights. It was not in the interest of the bourgeoisie to strengthen the vote of the working class in parliament; and in every country they hindered the passing of laws that gave the right to working women.

Socialists in North America insisted upon their demands for the vote with particular persistence. On the 28th of February, 1909, the women socialists of the U.S.A. organized huge demonstrations and meetings all over the country demanding political rights for working women. This was the first “Woman’s Day.” The initiative on organizing a woman’s day thus belongs to the working women of America.

In 1910, at the Second International Conference of Working Women, Clara Zetkin brought forward the question of organizing an International Working Women’s Day. The conference decided that every year, in every country, they should celebrate on the same day a “Women’s Day” under the slogan “The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism.”

During these years, the question of making parliament more democratic, i.e., of widening the franchise and extending the vote to women, was a vital issue. Even before the first world war, the workers had the right to vote in all bourgeois countries except Russia. Only women, along with the insane, remained without these rights. Yet, at the same time, the harsh reality of capitalism demanded the participation of women in the country’s economy. Every year there was an increase in the number of women who had to work in the factories and workshops, or as servants and charwomen. Women worked alongside men and the wealth of the country was created by their hands. But women remained without the vote.

But in the last years before the war the rise in prices forced even the most peaceful housewife to take an interest in questions of politics and to protest loudly against the bourgeoisie’s economy of plunder. “Housewives uprisings” became increasingly frequent, flaring up at different times in Austria, England, France and Germany.

The working women understood that it wasn’t enough to break up the stalls at the market or threaten the odd merchant: They understood that such action doesn’t bring down the cost of living. You have to change the politics of the government. And to achieve this, the working class has to see that the franchise is widened.

It was decided to have a Women’s Day in every country as a form of struggle in getting working women to vote. This day was to be a day of international solidarity in the fight for common objectives and a day for reviewing the organized strength of working women under the banner of socialism.

The first International Women’s Day

The decision taken at the Second International Congress of Socialist Women was not left on paper. It was decided to hold the first International Women’s Day on the 19th of March, 1911.

This date was not chosen at random. Our German comrades picked the day because of its historic importance for the German proletariat. On the 19th of March in the year of 1848 revolution, the Prussian king recognized for the first time the strength of the armed people and gave way before the threat of a proletarian uprising. Among the many promise he made, which he later failed to keep, was the introduction of votes for women...

The first International Women’s Day took place in 1911. Its success succeeded all expectation. Germany and Austria on Working Women’s Day was one seething, trembling sea of women. Meetings were organized everywhere — in the small towns and even in the villages halls were packed so full that they had to ask male workers to give up their places for the women.

This was certainly the first show of militancy by the working woman. Men stayed at home with their children for a change, and their wives, the captive housewives, went to meetings. During the largest street demonstrations, in which 30,000 were taking part, the police decided to remove the demonstrators’ banners: the women workers made a stand. In the scuffle that followed, bloodshed was averted only with the help of the socialist deputies in Parliament.

In 1913 International Women’s Day was transferred to the 8th of March. This day has remained the working women’s day of militancy.

Is Women’s Day necessary?

Women’s Day in America and Europe had amazing results. It’s true that not a single bourgeois parliament thought of making concessions to the workers or of responding to the women’s demands. For at that time, the bourgeoisie was not threatened by a socialist revolution.

But Women’s Day did achieve something. It turned out above all to be an excellent method of agitation among the less political of our proletarian sisters. They could not help but turn their attention to the meetings, demonstrations, posters, pamphlets and newspapers that were devoted to Women’s Day. Even the politically backward working woman thought to herself: “This is our day, the festival for working women,” and she hurried to the meetings and demonstrations. After each Working Women’s Day, more women joined the socialist parties and the trade unions grew. Organizations improved and political consciousness developed.

Women’s Day served yet another function; it strengthened the international solidarity of the workers. The parties in different countries usually exchange speakers for this occasion: German comrades go to England, English comrades go to Holland, etc. The international cohesion of the working class has become strong and firm and this means that the fighting strength of the proletariat as a whole has grown.

These are the results of working women’s day of militancy. The day of working women’s militancy helps increase the consciousness and organization of proletarian women. And this means that its contribution is essential to the success of those fighting for a better future for the working class.

Women Workers’ Day in Russia

The Russia working woman first took part in “Working Women’s Day” in 1913. This was a time of reaction when Tsarism held the workers and peasants in its vise like a grip. There could be no thought of celebrating “Working Women’s Day” by open demonstrations. But the organized working women were able to mark their international day. Both the legal newspapers of the working class — the Bolshevik Pravda and the Menshevik Looch — carried articles about the International Women’s Day: they carried special articles, portraits of some of those taking part in the working women’s movement and greetings from comrades such as Bebel and Zetkin.

In those bleak years meetings were forbidden. But in Petrograd, at the Kalashaikovsky Exchange, those women workers who belonged to the Party organized a public forum on “The Woman Question.” Entrance was five kopecks. This was an illegal meeting but the hall was absolutely packed. Members of the Party spoke. But this animated “closed” meeting had hardly finished when the police, alarmed at such proceedings, intervened and arrested many of the speakers.

It was of great significance for the workers of the world that the women of Russia, who lived under Tsarist repression, should join in and somehow manage to acknowledge with actions International Women’s Day. This was a welcome sign that Russia was waking up and the Tsarist prisons and gallows were powerless to kill the workers’ spirit of struggle and protest.

In 1914, “Women Workers Day” in Russia was better organized. Both the workers’ newspapers concerned themselves

with the celebration. Our comrades put a lot of effort into the preparation of “Women Workers Day.” Because of police intervention, they didn’t manage to organize a demonstration. Those involved in the planning of “Women Workers Day” found themselves in the Tsarist prisons, and many were later sent to the cold north. For the slogan “for the working women’s vote” had naturally become in Russia an open call for the overthrow of Tsarist autocracy.

Then came the great, great year of 1917. Hunger, cold and trials of war broke the patience of the women workers and the peasant women of Russia. In 1917, on the 8th of March (23rd of February), on Working Women’s Day, they came out boldly in the streets of Petrograd. The women — some were workers, some were wives of soldiers — demanded “Bread for our children” and “The return of our husbands from the trenches.” At this decisive time the protests of the working women posed such a threat that even the Tsarist security forces did not dare take the usual measures against the rebels but looked on in confusion at the stormy sea of the people’s anger.

The 1917 Working Women’s Day has become memorable in history. On this day the Russian women raised the torch of proletarian revolution and set the world on fire. The February revolution marks its beginning from this day.

Our call to battle

“Working Women’s Day” was first organized ten years ago in the campaign for the political equality of women and the struggle for socialism. This aim has been achieved by the working class women in Russia. In the soviet republic the working women and peasants don’t need to fight for the franchise and for civil rights. They have already won these rights. The Russian workers and the peasant women are equal citizens — in their hands is a powerful weapon to make the struggle for a better life easier — the right to vote, to take part in the Soviets and in all collective organizations.

But rights alone are not enough. We have to learn to make use of them. The right to vote is a weapon which we have to learn to master for our own benefit, and for the good of the workers’ republic. In the two years of Soviet Power, life itself has not been absolutely changed. We are only in the process of struggling for communism and we are surrounded by the world we have inherited from the dark and repressive past.

The shackles of the family, of housework, of prostitution still weigh heavily on the working woman. Working women and peasant women can only rid themselves of this situation and achieve equality in life itself, and not just in law, if they put all their energies into making Russia a truly communist society.



Challenging sexual assault on campus

By Chantal Sundaram

There has been a series of horrific media stories about frosh or sports chants that glorify rape, with a high profile investigation into the Facebook jokes about sexual violence directed at the President of the University of Ottawa Students’ Union by male members. And most recently, the Facebook snapshots sent to the CBC showing posts by male students in Dentistry at Dalhousie joking about using chloroform to have sex with women.

This last incident has spawned a Twitter campaign called #DalhousieHatesWomen, pointing well beyond Dentistry students to the institution as a whole, including its administration, where “it’s easier to be charged with plagiarism than it is to report sexual assault.”

At the Université du Québec à Montreal, in mid-November, activists apparently part of a Facebook group called “Les Hystériques” pasted stickers on the doors of three professors at the university with the slogans “zero tolerance!” and “Politique 16,” the section of the university’s rules that deal with sexual harassment. “I think what’s happening at UQAM is that women are fed up,” said Sue Montgomery, a Montreal Gazette reporter who recently co-started the hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported and came forward as the victim of assault herself.

There is no doubt that the celebrity maelstrom around Jian Ghomeshi and Bill Cosby has shed a light on a long reality still downplayed in society at large. But what’s the solution? These are not just bad apples. There is systemic tolerance for a culture of both rape and general subordination of the role of women in society.

Individual responsibility

When I was a university student in the 90s, I knew about “rape culture,” although that’s not what we called it then. As students we were warned about rohypnol, the “date rape drug,” about self-defense, about the fact that consent matters. The message seemed to be that it was our own responsibility to protect ourselves.

And it was a world of mixed-messages. Women’s sexuality and sexual liberation were more recognized than ever before because of the “second-wave” women’s movement of the seventies. Now, in the third wave and looking beyond, were we living in a post-feminist age, when previous abuses, expectations, and objectification could be understood differently because we had the perceived social power to rise above them?

In *The Social Basis of the Woman Question*, Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai warned about claims of “free love” without challenging the capitalist system that oppressed women: “Only the fundamental transformation of all productive relations could create the social prerequisites to protect women from the negative aspects of the ‘free love’ formula.

Are we not aware of the depravity and abnormalities that in present conditions are anxious to pass themselves off under this convenient label? Consider all those gentlemen owning and administering industrial enterprises who force women

among their workforce and clerical staff to satisfy their sexual whims, using the threat of dismissal to achieve their ends.”

More recently there have been claims we live in a “post-feminist” society where women should embrace their own sexual objectification and commodification—which Ariel Levy effectively challenged in her 2005 book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*.

The state

In the 90s, debate became polarized around pornography and censorship. Those of us who were (and are) opposed to state censorship, and the hypocritical and selective way it is always used, opposed the idea that a state ban on pornography was a solution to the objectification of women and sexual assault. It wasn’t about concern that censorship is not “sex-positive,” but that giving more power to the state would not address the problem and would create others, like the censorship of LGBTQ pornography. We thought: there’s got to be a better way to directly confront the return of normalized sexual harassment and assault on university campuses.

We started a popular discussion about why it is so hard to report. A key moment was publicizing the case of Jane Doe, who spoke publicly on a number of campuses. Jane Doe sued the Toronto Police for intentionally using women, including herself, as bait to catch a so-called “balcony rapist.” She used her case to speak out and educate about systemic sexism in policing and in the entire justice system. And we mobilized young women, and some men as well, to march in Take Back the Night and International Women’s Day.

More recently the Slutwalk protests (emerging after a Toronto police officer said women could avoid sexual assault if they didn’t dress “like sluts”), the viral hashtag #beenraped-neverreported, and the campaign for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women have all exposed the state’s complicity in violence against women, and why many survivors of assault don’t report to the police.

Mobilization

In the mid 1990s the Canadian Federation of Students launched the “NO means NO” campaign on campuses across the country, to raise awareness and combat sexual assault, acquaintance rape, and dating violence. It was electric at the time: a visible and public pushback that made conversation necessary.

On the one hand, that campaign sparked more official outreach about sexual assault by university administrations. Unfortunately, it also morphed into something very different in the hand of university administrators. At the University of Toronto it became a campaign with slogans like “Sex needs consent” and “Sex should be fun,” in a bid to be more “sex positive” than the so-called negativity projected by the slogan “No Means No”—at least as perceived by administrators.

But while sex-positive messages do have a place, the fundamental message about sexual assault must be unambiguous and clear. We live in a capitalist society that warps sexual, psychological and basic human perceptions in so many ways, and a clear message is needed to cut against this. It is estimated that four out of five women who are sexually assaulted

do not report due to feelings of humiliation or the fear of being re-victimized in the legal process. A few years ago the CFS relaunched the “NO means NO” campaign on campuses in English Canada. This was indispensable to help confront the rise of “men’s rights” groups on campuses, and the increasingly open harassment of university women on social media, campus sports, and orientation events.

In late November, The Toronto Star launched an investigation into how colleges and universities across Canada are dealing with sexual assault. The Star spoke to several women who said they felt unsupported when they turned to their schools and had to fumble through a bureaucracy without a clear path. The Star found that most schools reference sexual assault once in their wider student codes of conduct—lengthy documents that also deal with plagiarism or bomb threats—or harassment policies.

University administration

Another hidden truth is that harassment policies have gone through another morph at the hand of university administrations. Rather than focusing on sexual harassment, violence, and assault, a growing number of these policies have morphed into “civility policies,” to enforce a “respectful workplace.” Don’t we all want a workplace free of “bullying,” “psychological harassment” and based on “mutual respect”? The problem is, none of these things are legally defined anywhere, whereas protected grounds against sexual harassment and discrimination are defined in Human Rights legislation, and with good reason.

Does that mean that other types of harassment and bullying that may intersect with gender and other protected grounds should not be grounds for protection in legislation and by unions? Not at all, but those terms can easily blur the lines. “Bullying,” “respect” and “civility” may have implications for systemic forms of oppression, but they can also be turned on their heads in the hands of administrators who want to quash dissent, and in universities and colleges to quash academic freedom. Many of these “harassment” policies in the university system are now a perversion of what they originally were intended to be; the same is true of student codes of conduct that treat sexual harassment on the same level as plagiarism.

Women’s liberation

We can’t rely on institutions funded by public money but which are also increasingly driven by corporate interest and corporate management models—like the CBC and universities and colleges—to defend the best interests of employees and students. They are all charged to investigate themselves and will find face-saving solutions. Legislation, the judicial system, the police, university policy—all of it can be forced to be more accountable, and should be, but not as an end in itself.

It is up to labour unions and students’ unions to actively and publicly oppose a wider culture that tolerates harassment and rape. Ultimately we need to get rid of the capitalist system that relies on sexism to pay women less at work and nothing for domestic labour, which objectifies and commodifies women’s bodies and controls women’s reproduction, and that does nothing to end the epidemic of violence against women.

The record of John Baird



Federal Conservative MP John Baird has unexpectedly left politics, perhaps for a high paying private sector job. While the media have heaped praise on Baird, this is the record of the policies he helped promote over the past 20 years.

He admitted he started politics “driven by ideology” (including naming his cat Thatcher), but this didn’t change. Whatever Ministry he presided over, he waged war against those affected—from the Mintry of Community and Social Services, to Transport and Environment Minister, and finally Minister of Foreign Affairs.

1. Welfare cuts that killed Kimberly Rogers

As Minister of Community and Social Services in the Ontario government of Mike Harris in the late 1990s, Baird presided over massive cuts to welfare, along with scapegoating policies like a welfare fraud hotline and mandatory drug testing. As a result Kimberly Rogers, who was pregnant, was confined to her cramped apartment during a heat wave, and died.

2. Corporate corruption

Baird’s campaign against welfare recipients was meant to distract from privatizing social services for corporate profits—transferring money from the poor to the super rich. The company Accenture, which donated to the Tories, billed the government hundreds of millions of dollars.

Like fellow Tory Jim Flaherty, Baird then went to join the Federal government.

3. Defunding the fight against oppression

As President of the Treasury board in 2006, Baird cut defunded the Status of Women, closing many of its offices. Baird called these and other programs like adult literacy and youth employment, “wasteful.” Baird also defunded the Court Challenges Program that promoted language and equality rights.

4. Refusing public transit funding

In 2009 Toronto asked for \$1.2 billion for 204 streetcars, which would create thousands of green jobs and reduce carbon emissions. Baird’s response, as Minister of Transport, was that Toronto was “bitching at us” and should “fuck off.”

5. Killing Kyoto

Baird applied the same vehemence to global climate treaties as Environment Minister in 2007. In order to support the tar sands that devastate Indigenous communities and destroy the climate, helping the Tories kill the Kyoto protocol—receiving the Fossil of the Day award in the process.

6. Vilifying Iran and Russia

The last four years of Baird’s career have been as Foreign Minister, justifying Canadian imperialism and its allies around the world. Baird intervened to heighten tensions in the Ukraine, comparing Russia to the Nazis, and imposed sanctions in order to promote Canadian gas companies. He has also vilified Iran, calling it “the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world,” to justify sanctions that have impoverished ordinary Iranians.

7. Defending Israeli war crimes

Meanwhile Baird has unconditionally defended Israeli war crimes—including illegal settlements and blockade, apartheid wall, attacks on humanitarian flotilla, and periodic massacres in Gaza.

8. Supporting Arab dictators

As well as supporting Israeli apartheid, Baird has joined all repressive Arab regimes complicit with it. In 2013, Baird went on an imperialist tour—including Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Jordan. These, along with Saudi Arabia and the new dictatorship in Egypt, have butchered the Arab Spring, but Baird has been silent—leaving Canadian journalist Mohamed Fahmy to languish in a Cairo jail for more than a year.

9. Bombing Libya and Iraq

As well as indirectly intervening against the Arab Spring Baird was Foreign Affairs Minister during Canada’s bombing of Libya—which hijacked and undermined the revolution—and finally getting Harper the Iraq War he always wanted, to the benefit of Canadian weapons corporations.

10. Refusing to sign Arms Trade Treaty

While Canada has sold \$15 billion in weapons to the Saudi dictatorship, which routinely beheads people, Baird made Canada the only NATO country to refuse to sign the Arms Trade Treaty that aims to reduce the flow of arms to humanitarian crises.

Unfortunately Baird left politics voluntarily, and was not driven from office for these policies. But he did get a goodbye reception in Palestine recently, where his car was pelted with eggs. Good riddance to John Baird.

ANALYSIS



Ableism, not assisted suicide, is the problem

by MELISSA GRAHAM

The Supreme Court decision on assisted suicide brings up a lot of questions for Canadian disability activists, and some fear, but I think it’s worth looking at why we still have this fear.

I’d like to position myself in this conversation by noting a few things. The first is to acknowledge that within the disability community I hold a fair bit of privilege. As a white, well-educated, employed disabled activist I am aware that other disabled people face greater barriers and oppression and will likely have more to fear from this decision than I do, and I’m not saying that fear is misplaced. I am also a person who has attempted suicide in the past, and I have the privilege to be able to say that without shame. I was young and fighting many years of unnamed depression and ableism that I have since been able to climb out from. I have also known people for whom assisted suicide may have been a compassionate end to their suffering if that choice were possible at the time.

There are many disabled people who understandably feel that they’ve been made more vulnerable by this decision. It brings up many questions about what constitutes a valuable life. What does that mean for people who require assistance with daily activities of life? Does it impact the value of a disabled person’s life in the context of a capitalist society where the ability

to produce, make and spend money, has become a mark of human value? What does it mean for mad people and psych survivors whose decisions to end their lives are often controlled by the medical community?

The reason I chose to try to end my life over a decade ago is a complicated one, but ableism, and my understanding of myself within society played a big role. This is a struggle that faces many disabled people still. The idea that we are burdens, and second-class citizen where other “experts” make choices and decisions about our lives is still as ever-present as it was then. The idea that needing help, and being anything less than 100% self-sufficient and independent makes us burdens; that we must all “overcome our disabilities” is holding us back. Yet this is the image we see presented to us not just in the media, but by the organization and presentation of some of our most cherished disability organizations. Yes, there are disability organizations in Canada promoting the oppression of other disabled people through their own internalized ableism. Their inability to recognize the privilege of their membership has silenced those who are more oppressed.

So what do we do about it? We can start with opening our doors and minds to a shift in the disability movement; one with zero tolerance for oppression within its ranks. One

where working disabled people work towards becoming allies to people on social assistance, where disabled athletes can talk openly about needing supports. Most importantly we evolve our organizing to a level where disabled people are each experts in the disability experience, and all of us are equally valuable. We can no longer tolerate a movement or organizational community that positions non-disabled people as our champions and runs rampant with classism, racism, sexism, ableism, or any other form of discrimination.

The decision made by the Supreme Court of Canada on assisted suicide is about choice, and we too have a choice. We can choose to allow this decision to divide us into “achievers” and “victims”; or we can reject that ableism. We can use our collective power as disabled people to define lives worth living in terms that include all disabled people. This does not have to conflict with the right of other people who would make that choice. We have no reason to fear assisted suicide if we can overcome ableism within society and within ourselves. We have that choice, let’s choose to start now.

This is reposted from the blog exposingableism

Lean and mean healthcare

by CATHERINE GENDRON

Saskatchewan is the first in Canada to introduce the method of “lean” to its healthcare system. Healthcare workers must be wary of this seemingly new system for more reasons than cuts, for lean has the power to fracture the most important tool for workers to gain real autonomy—solidarity.

Lean production is described as an energetic and accommodating system. It is intended to react speedily to oscillating production quotas, equipment malfunctions, shortages, and uneven workloads. This is completed by means of regular line speed alterations, overtime, and virtually continuous job rebalancing within team-based system.

Costs and cuts

The primary reasons for opposition rests on the amount of tax dollars being spent on this system: the cost rests at about \$40 million over four years for lean consultants, who fly first class and receive consulting fees of \$3400 per day. As NDP leader Cam Broten said of consultant John Black,

he “is going to be milking this cash cow for every last drop.”

Lean has severely impacted safe staffing levels—workers are forced to work in increasingly demanding environments, with fewer resources. The consultants making millions from lean take as a given the limited healthcare resources created by federal and provincial government cuts, and then impose their “efficiency” to make workers work harder—including internalizing exploitation.

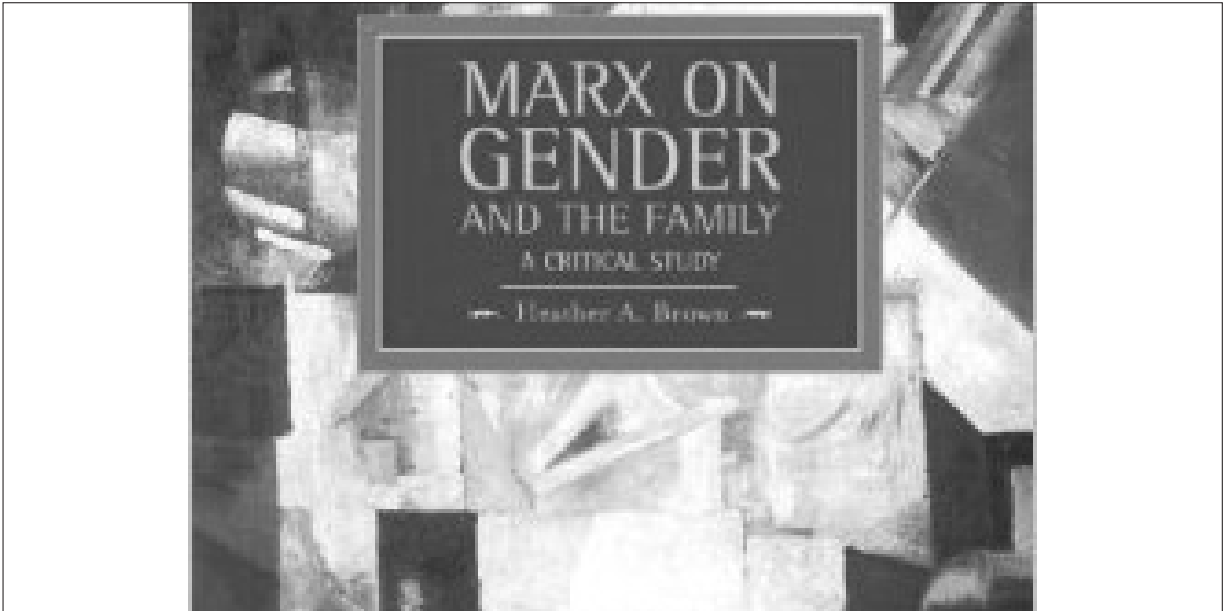
Self-exploitation

It is argued that lean production is the employer’s newest form of controlling workers, known as concertive control. Evolving from bureaucratic control, a fundamental shift is occurring whereby the manner of control has passed from management to the workers themselves who act as a team to create the means of their own control; concertive control thereby exploits workers as it compels workers to control themselves, but under their employer’s objectives.

Due to high demand and pressure, workers are encouraged to watch over

their fellow colleagues, resulting in self-discipline. This is because lean production is comprised of “fast work pace and heavy workloads”, making it necessary for all members of a team to be present and work diligently each day. Characteristically, teams are compelled to pick up the slack for any team member not pulling their weight and consequently, workers pressure one another to keep up and work hard.

Healthcare workers who work in long-term care have especially been hard-hit by increasing demands, resulting in scrutiny. For example, many healthcare providers are not able to take their negotiated breaks; the people that demand the use of their break become ostracised from their colleagues due to the general feeling of being let down and not contributing to the team effort. Employers would be delighted with such reactions as they are able to take advantage of healthcare workers’ attachment to provide care. It is also made clear that surveillance is a hidden force within lean as workers indicate the pressure they feel, stemmed from group scrutiny.



BOOK

Marx and women’s liberation

Review by Lisa Descary

Feminists have often had a strained relationship with Marxism, sometimes accusing Marx and Marxists of economic determinism and even outright sexism. This has led to some feminists rejecting Marxist ideas outright. But is it true that Marxism has nothing to contribute to the struggle against gender oppression?

In her book, *Marx On Gender and the Family*, Heather Brown shows that, while Marx did not fully develop his analysis of women’s oppression in his writings, his ideas are still both compatible with those of feminism and useful in understanding women’s oppression.

Brown thoroughly reviews all of Marx’s work on gender and the family, including some writings that had not previously been published, such as his notes on anthropology and ethnology. She argues that previ-

ous analyses of Marx’s work tended to judge his ideas on gender unfairly for two main reasons: critics did not look at all of his work, therefore missing the fact that his ideas developed and changed over time, and they conflated his arguments with those of Engels, whom Brown judges to be a bit of an economic determinist.

For example, Brown feels that while Engels idealized primitive societies, arguing that because they had no private property, there could not be oppression of women, Marx’s view was more nuanced. Marx saw the development of gender oppression as dialectical; even in communal societies, seeds of class and gender antagonisms were present, and had begun to develop.

It is not surprising that Marx’s understanding of women’s role as agents acting to counter their own oppression also developed as he observed their participation in struggles such as organizing and defending the Paris Commune of 1871, where he

noted that they were equal participants alongside men.

One of the drawbacks to Brown’s book is that because it is a scholarly work, it is not written in a particularly accessible style. However, it is still an important book for revolutionary socialists. Feminists will appreciate the fact that is an honest appraisal of Marx’s writing on gender. While Brown is not scared to point out Marx’s occasional sexist or moralistic remarks, she makes it very clear that this is “not ... a fatal flaw in his work”. Marx’s method and his theory of society give us a way to integrate feminist insights into Marxism, which Brown feels will allow us to establish a unitary theory of gender and class that does not privilege one over the other. By understanding how gender oppression is socially constructed and not ahistorical, we can better understand how best to fight it in the here and now, and better equip ourselves to build a society free of both oppression and exploitation.

BOOK

All the Prime Minister’s crimes

Book: Kill the Messengers: Stephen Harper’s War on Your right to know, by Mark Bourrie
Reviewed by John Bell

Full disclosure time: back when Mark Bourrie and I were beery, blasphemous student types together journalism was a career to be respected. Watergate was still a fresh memory, and crusading reporters had brought a corrupt and venal president to his knees.

Bourrie was bitten. He worked his way from small town papers to the Parliament Hill press corps. And along the way an odd thing happened: he kept his principles and his journalistic integrity, even while the media corporations were dropping both as unaffordable luxuries. Rather than toe the line of the major media conglomerates Bourrie freelanced and wrote for smaller but respected outlets like the Hill Times and Blacklock’s Reporter, a blog specializing in parliamentary coverage. So good was the latter at covering the misdeeds on the Hill that the Harper government ordered it to be blocked from all civil servant computers.

This small example of censorship and fear of exposure fits perfectly with the theme of Bourrie’s new book, *Kill the Messengers: Stephen Harper’s Assault on Your Right to Know*. This is a thorough indictment of the Stephen Harper regime, and its mostly successful attack on the “watchdogs” of parliamentary democracy: the press, the courts, the public service and parliament itself.

To his credit, Bourrie is not just a partisan Tory-basher. He lays out how Harper has taken full advantage of ground prepared by a greedy and spineless corporate media; by previous governments that have under-

mined parliament as a public forum for debate on policy; and by MPs of all stripes who drop all pretense of representing their constituents and act only as PR shills for their parties.

That said, *Kill the Messengers* describes a Prime Minister with a particular contempt for democracy. During the Chretien/Martin years reporters saw their access to political leaders curtailed. Harper has eliminated it entirely. He picks the media he wants to talk to, whether it be his annual rub and tug with Peter Mansbridge, or a softball session with some star-struck small town reporter.

More likely, as with his recent responses to Charlie Hebdo, or to expanding Canada’s role in a ground war in Iraq, he has eliminated the press completely. Scripted events in front of hand-picked supporters, filmed by the Conservative Party’s own media manipulators, released on the Party’s own website have become the norm. You can hear Harper’s stirring words about defending our freedoms, and hit the “donate” button in the corner of the screen.

Or you can tune in to 24/7, Harper’s personal video journal, taxpayer funded propaganda that would make Leni Riefenstahl blush.

While most of the corporate media has rolled over for Harper—after all, why spend money on a parliamentary news bureau when you can get perfectly good, HD product delivered to your door by team Harper—there remain honest reporters who ask uncomfortable questions or break embarrassing stories. “During Harper’s time in power,” Bourrie writes, “personal attacks, including campaigns to get reporters fired, have become common.”

So reporters like Glen McGregor or Stephen Maher, who have broken stories like Duffy-gate and election fraud

in the last campaign, get to join the long list of activists, judges, veterans, scientists and civil servants who have been subjected to Harper’s attacks. Using national security agencies to spy on “enemies”; unleashing the Canada Revenue Agency to bankrupt and intimidate critical organizations; wasting millions of taxpayer dollars dragging unnecessary cases through the courts; slashing budgets for science, education and archives: Harper and the ideological warriors he surrounds himself with inside the fortress PMO will stop at nothing.

Bourrie describes all this with controlled and justifiable rage. Even a Harper watcher like me will find something new and shocking here.

There are weaknesses too. Bourrie’s fondness for erstwhile Reform Party populist rhetoric blinds him to the fact that Harper’s regime represents, not a sharp break from the Reform Party, but its logical conclusion. And the book’s prescriptions, a sort of civics class 101, are inadequate. Nowhere is there an appreciation of the role of mass movements from below in not just restoring democracy to pre-Harper standards, but in extending it.

These things are peripheral to the main purpose of the book. While Bourrie is cataloguing Harper’s record, *Kill the Messengers* is relentless, well researched and brilliantly blunt. On top of that, he’s a good writer who makes the litany of crimes against democracy perversely entertaining. There is nothing of the smarty-pants pundit or dry academic here.

As we roll into an election year, *Kill the Messengers* could not be more timely. It would give me no end of pleasure to see this book help put an end to Harper. The more people who read and talk about it, the more likely that is to happen.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

The secret policeman’s bill

Okay, let’s play a game I like to call Getting Myself Arrested. The rules are simple: all you have to do is think different ideas from Stephen Harper, and say or write them clearly and directly. Here we go!

I believe that exploitation of the tar sands is incredibly destructive to the immediately surrounding environment and to the planet as a whole. I am in favour of shutting it down as quickly as possible. Furthermore I oppose building pipelines to carry this dangerous bitumen to markets, whether to the west via Northern Gateway or Kinder Morgan projects, to the south via the Keystone XL, or to the east via the retrofitted pipelines of Energy East. I am in full solidarity with First Nations people whose lives and territories are too often on the front lines of these destructive projects, and encourage, advocate and support mass civil disobedience to shut them down.

Such opinions are not uncommon among Canadians who are environmentally concerned. And according to Stephen Harper’s Bill C-51, that could make us all terrorists.

Bill C-51

This new legislation now being fast-tracked through Parliament without full debate or discussion could make writing or uttering that paragraph illegal. I say “could” because the wording of the bill is so vague that police and politicians can apply it to whom-ever they please:

“Every person who, by communicating statements, knowingly advocates or promotes the commission of terrorism offences in general—other than an offence under this section—while knowing that any of those offences will be committed or being reckless as to whether any of those offences may be committed, as a result of such communication, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than five years.”

Bill C-51 will erase your right to privacy. Think I’m exaggerating? Here is what Daniel Therrien, Tory-appointed Privacy Commissioner of Canada is worried about:

“At this early stage, I can say that I am concerned with the breadth of the new authorities to be conferred by the proposed new Security of Canada Information Sharing Act. This Act would seemingly allow departments and agencies to share the personal information of all individuals, including ordinary Canadians who may not be suspected of terrorist activities, for the purpose of detecting and identifying new security threats.”

Independent civilian oversight of CSIS, the RCMP and provincial and local police forces is already woefully inadequate.

CSIS and SIRC

Remember that CSIS was established in 1984 because of revelation about RCMP illegal activities and violation of civil rights. Its own activities were to be scrutinized by the Office of the Inspector General, part of the portfolio of the Ministry

of Public Safety. The Office of the Inspector General was disbanded by the Harper government in 2012.

Tories argue that the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC), which reports to Parliamentary committee, is sufficient. In fact SIRC is a joke, a dumping ground for patronage appointments.

Past heads of SIRC include former Reform Party/Tory MP Chuck Strahl (who resigned when it was revealed he was a lobbyist for Enbridge) Arthur Porter (who is being extradited from prison in Panama where he had fled to escape charges of fraud and money laundering while an executive of SNC- Lavalin).

Suggestions that expanding the power of secret police and intelligence forces should be accompanied by expanding independent oversight was dismissed by Harper’s minions. Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney says that SIRC is sufficient and that any other oversight would be “redundant”.

So worrisome is the lack of democratic scrutiny that five former prime ministers—four Liberals, one Tory and zero previously known civil liberty activists—have signed an open letter condemning Bill C-51’s lack of transparency.

But even with additional oversight, Bill C-51 would remain a travesty due to the vague way it defines “terrorist”.

“Terrorism”

A terrorist can be anyone who interferes with the operation of the government or the economy. That takes in a lot of territory. It is explicit in its vagueness, naming as sacrosanct “intelligence, defence, border operations, public safety, the administration of justice, diplomatic or consular relations, or the economic or financial stability of Canada.”

Which brings us back to my treasonous beginning, calling for the shut down of tar sands development. Harper says they are essential to the economy and a matter of nation building. Remember in 2012, then Minister of Natural Resources Joe Oliver called Northern Gateway opponents dangerous “radicals”, and accused us of being funded by “foreign special interest groups to undermine Canada’s national economic interest.” I’m still waiting for my cheque.

Small wonder that the secret police, as revealed in a leaked RCMP document, consider environmentalists a greater threat to Canada than terrorists. Environmentalist are re-defined as the “anti-Canada petroleum movement”.

Combine the pre-existing pro-petroleum consensus in government and secret police with a new law redefining opponents as “terrorists”. Suddenly people peacefully protesting the Kinder Morgan pipeline in BC, or blocking attempts to frack for shale gas in New Brunswick face a greater danger for doing what they know is right.

French philosopher Voltaire wrote: “It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.” If Bill C-51 passes, Canadians will discover what he meant.

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 threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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.

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 environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous 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 Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that 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.

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 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.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, 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 the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

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.



Activist calendar
movement events



For upcoming events in BC's
fight for a \$15 minimum wage visit
www.fightfor15bc.ca/calendar



International Women's Day
Saturday March 7
<http://iwdtoronto.ca>

International Socialist events



**After Syriza's election:
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Monday March 23, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St W, Toronto
Featuring Greek activist Costas Pittas,
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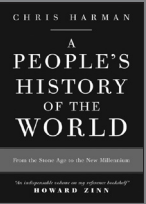
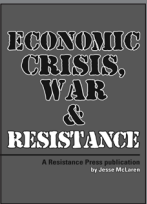
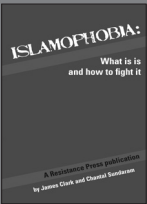
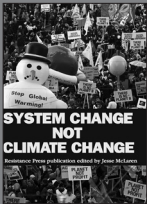
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INDIGENOUS WOMEN

by VALERIE LANNON

February 14 marked the tenth anniversary of cross-country vigils commemorating the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women. In Toronto over 400 people attended the event held in the courtyard of the downtown police station.

The MC noted that little justice has been obtained over the last ten years, citing the horrible death of teen Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, and other women in the last year. So the call remains for justice and understanding.

Ceremony

The vigil included important symbols of water and strawberries, which were distributed to participants as a way of providing strength in the struggle. Water is valued because it is the only element that gives, sustains and can take away life. Participants poured a small amount of the water into the ground, to sustain the Earth, and drank the rest. Other participants ate the strawberries, whose symbolic importance stems from the fact that although strawberries may appear to be separated while growing on the ground, they are connected by a strong root system underneath. In a similar way, we are all connected in some way to the missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Speakers criticized Harper's funding cuts to women's organizations. "He doesn't want us out protesting. But they didn't say anything about holding ceremonies", the MC noted with a smile.

A number of survivor family members spoke. One woman from the Gitksan nation in northern BC noted that the Highway of Tears remains a danger zone for Indigenous women. She also noted the tremendous brutality faced by Indigenous men at the hands of police. "We are powerful when we come together" she stated.

Another speaker was a grandmother of a victim. She pointed out that Indigenous women have been missing and murdered since the time of fur traders, who routinely kidnapped women. She said "I refuse to be called a terrorist. I'm a protester."

The vigil ended with the MC calling on all of us to send a message around the world: "No more!"

March

The participants then went on a march, stopping traffic along Yonge Street, Toronto's main thoroughfare. The group stopped twice to hold brief round dances, with drumming and singing. The mood was defiant and proud.

With the leadership of Indigenous women, the rest of the country can respond in solidarity. We need to step up the continuing support from faith groups, trade unions, women's organizations and others, so that ten years from now we are not still having to see the tragic and unfair numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

HOME CARE WORKERS STRIKE



by ELLEN BARRY

Friday February 6 marked the end of the first week on strike for nearly 3,000 Care Coordinators, members of the Ontario Nurses Association who walked out against their employer, Ontario's Community Care Access Centres (CCAC's). Care coordinators, the professionals who organize in home and long term care for patients, are fighting for wages that keep pace with inflation, and for quality care for patients and their families who depend on these supportive community-based services to live and die with dignity in their homes. This in an

environment where there is continual pressure to increase caseloads with fewer resources available

Care coordinators have been working without a contract since April 2014 and their wages have been frozen since 2012. CCAC was offering another one year wage freeze in the new contract while workers are asking for a 1.4 per cent increase this year and next year.

The CCAC's are looking to trim the earnings of these front line health care professionals while padding the salaries of their sunshine list managers and CEOs. Managers have received substantial increases

over past few years, with one CEO getting a raise of \$91,000 to join the \$200K - \$300K salary range of other CCAC CEOs.

The CCAC's are solely funded by the Province of Ontario through the area Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). This pressure on wages is congruent with the austerity agenda of Wynne's government for public sector workers.

One worker said "This is not just a healthcare issue, it's a women's issue. It's about women's wages and valuing women's work" as most care coordinator positions are held by women.

Crown workers 17 months on strike

by G. MONTEIRO

Since September of 2013, 120 steel workers from Crown Holdings local plant in Toronto have been on strike against Crown's attacks on their wages and working conditions.

Crown Holding is one of the world's largest manufacturer of food and beverage cans with a profitable income that gave its CEO an average of \$13 million/year in the past five years. Its Toronto's facility was ranked as one of the top producers in North America and received an award for their outstanding safety, productivity and budget management in 2012. Now, Crown Holding is manufacturing cans using scabs labour and ignoring the workers who made it nearly double its profits—

from \$282 million in 2011 to \$557 million in 2012.

Crown workers, members of USW local 9176, have now been on strike for 17 months, refusing to settle for rotten deals. They've produced a radio ad and internet video to make people more aware of their situation, received support from other unions around the world as IndustriALL, Unite, The International Association of Machinists, UNIA, IG Metal and others USW steelworkers from Turkey and U.S.

It's clear to these unions that what Crown Holding is doing must be condemned as an attack on its workers rights, not only in Canada, but in other locations where Crown has other plants. Demonstrations in Europe were showing

a message in favor of the steelworkers from Toronto. In Philadelphia, steelworkers from North York Plant joined a demonstration in front of Crown's headquarters together with other unionized workers.

A massive leafleting campaign across Ontario in front of Beer Stores and LCBO's has shown to people the importance of this strike, and broken through the media silence. We need to increase the boycott of Crown and solidarity for the workers.

Support their strike. Buy bottles, not cans! Donate and/or send a message of support to these workers on their web site: www.takebacksnomore.ca

Walmart workers win raise

by LAURA KAMINKER

Workers in the US have won a significant victory in their struggle for dignity and a living wage.

Walmart announced that within one year, all current Walmart employees will be paid at least \$10/hour, and that newly-hired workers will start at \$9.00/hour, with a real opportunity to earn \$10/hour with six months.

While still far below a basic living wage of \$15/hour, the increase does represent a recognizable improvement over the poverty-level \$7.25/hour

(the US federal minimum wage) that most Walmart workers now earn. And because Walmart is the largest private employer in the country - almost 1% of all employed Americans work for Walmart - the move creates pressure on McDonald's and other behemoth low-wage employers to get with the program.

Naturally, Walmart announced the wage increase as a smart business decision, never mentioning the ongoing - and growing - worker movements like OUR Walmart and Low

Pay Is Not OK. But do we imagine Walmart enacting these sweeping wage hikes without workers organizing and demanding it?

These wage increases will make a very real difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of working people. Equally important, this victory is incentive for low-wage workers to continue their fight for a living wage - and motivation for all workers to continue our struggles for dignity and respect.

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STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

World March of Women

"We, women of the Quebec co-ordination of the World March of Women, issue a call to resist the social and environmental destruction currently taking place in Quebec and Canada.

"Between the lie of austerity and the promotion of an economy based on the exploitation of people and resources, governments are contributing to an all-out attack on women, social justice and the planet as a whole.

"We call for resistance against the governments of Quebec and Canada, which defends the interests of employers and claim they have no choice but to cut public spending to 'balance the budget,' which is presented as the only possible road towards a prosperous Quebec. What kind of prosperity eliminates services, programs and jobs that provide women with greater freedom and space?"

These were the opening paragraphs of "A Call to Resist Social and Environmental Destruction" to initiate the World March of Women in Quebec and Canada in 2015. Thousands will march in Quebec joining hundreds of thousands world wide.

In Toronto the organizing committee for the International Women's Day rally and march met with women from the Quebec labour movement and the Federation Des Femmes Du Quebec (FFQ). The meetings were very productive and solidarity is being built between English Canada and Quebec. We in Toronto are organizing with the themes "Our Bodies, Our Territories, Our Communities." Other cities across Canada such as Vancouver are also taking up this focus and for the first time in decades a unified call will go out from women's organizations and unions on international women's day.

The World March of Women took place in 2000 and over 30,000 demonstrated in Ottawa. Trade unions and women's groups including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)—which was later defunded by the Harper government—organized across the country. Quebec had its own history and the FFQ has maintained connections with the international body. The World March of Women is now headquartered in Mozambique and is being led from women from the South.

Because there is no national organization of women in English Canada, that international link has been lost as well as a coordinated approach to fighting for women and their demands. This was an orchestrated policy of the Harper government to weaken any fight back against its retrogressive policies. NAC was the vic-

tim of federal government cutbacks and it was hard to maintain a pan Canadian focus without it.

There is a clear anti-austerity politic in the World March of Women call out as the statement above outlines and there is also a call for women from Quebec and English Canada to work together against the neo-liberal agenda. Women, particularly racialized and indigenous women, feel the cuts to jobs and services very keenly. It is an agenda being fostered by governments across the globe and Canada is no different.

There is no alternative being offered by politicians and corporations who are driving and agenda that puts working people and the poor at the bottom. They are trying to maximize profits at all costs and are implementing cut backs to public sector jobs and services as well as attacking unions and driving down wages in the private sector.

Women and racialized communities have always faced discrimination and racism. Today we are seeing the rise of Islamophobia. The FFQ opposed the "Charter of Values" proposed by the Parti Quebecois when it was in power, uniting with the Muslim community and others.

The gender wage gap continues as many studies have shown. 57 per cent of the working population in Toronto are immigrants, and according to the Toronto Census of the Metropolitan Area 73 per cent of the working poor are immigrants. Women have lost full time employment in many of the workplace closures and can only find precarious work. Women make up the majority of low wage workers. Two tiered wages are being implemented by employers in both private and public sector workplaces.

The World March of Women is taking on the destruction of the environment, the violence experienced by all women, particularly the systemic violence being experienced by indigenous women, the issues facing women in the workplace, women and war and the reality of the austerity agenda.

A rally and march will be taking place in Toronto on Saturday, March 7th celebrating international women's day in solidarity with the World March of Women. Trade unionists are meeting for a labour gathering before hand and will be joining with women from communities all across the city highlighting key demands and marching against the austerity agenda.

Capitalism is wreaking havoc with our lives and every mass demonstration gives hope and confidence that we can win a better world together.

SocialistWorker

STOP HARPER'S CUTS TO OUR HEALTH

By Catherine Gendron

While Canada is internationally known for its universal healthcare, our valuable public healthcare system may soon become a shadow of what it used to be.

When a mass movement won Medicare two generations ago, the federal government provided 50 per cent of the funding. But successive Liberal and Conservative governments cut healthcare—including massive cuts by the Liberals in the 1990s—to the point that the federal government only provided 10 per cent in 1998.

This artificially increased the amount provinces had to spend on healthcare to make up for the short fall, leading to claims that health spending is out of control and encouraging provincial governments to make their own cuts. The biggest increase in healthcare spending is in those areas not covered by Medicare, such as pharmaceuticals or dental care, so rather than being reduced our public healthcare system needs to be expanded to include those areas.

Health Accord

In 2004, the “10-Year Action Plan on Health,” aka the Canada Health Accord, was signed by federal and provincial governments. The Liberal Government at the time agreed to increase Canada Health Transfers by \$41 billion over the 10 year period in order to make a “quick fix” to the crisis that was triggered by their own government after hacking away at our public healthcare during the 1990s.



The Health Accord partially and temporarily increased federal funding up to 20 per cent, still far away from the original 50 per cent. It also included wait time goals that encouraged competition from privatized medicine like MRI clinics, without restoring the cuts that encouraged privatization.

Then, in 2011, the Conservative Government unilaterally announced it would not renew the Accord when it expired in 2014. Without consultations with the provinces and territories in Canada, the federal government has now made plans to reduce public healthcare spending by \$36

billion dollars over the next ten year period, which could lead federal funding to drop back down to 12 per cent. What does this mean?

A prescription for privatization

First, it is made clear that both the Liberal and Conservative governments have no problem making up for deficits with cuts to healthcare, for it was the Liberals who got us into a healthcare disaster in the early 2000's, and it is the Conservatives who are making matters worse. Secondly, it is evident that Harper and his Conservative Government are not listening to the families and front-

line workers who experience the crisis in healthcare every day.

And thirdly, in 2017 federal transfer payments will decline from six to three per cent, and be tied to economic growth. Now how is economic growth going to help wait times, you may ask? We're not sure – what we are sure about is that quality healthcare should be easily accessed to all people in need, plain and simple. Instead, the Harper Government is looking at population size instead of pertinent concerns for health such as income level, age, and demographics. With such massive cuts, inequality within Canada's

healthcare system will be exacerbated.

The Harper Government isn't naïve, they know these cuts will have significant impacts on peoples' access to quality healthcare – so what is their plan? As NDP MP Libby Davis explains, “It's a lack of planning and a lack of foresight at minimum, and at worst, it's another indication that the federal government is abandoning its role in health care.”

With the current federal government walking away from its fundamental healthcare role, it causes one to question their intent. As in Saskatchewan, where Conservative Premier Brad

Wall mused about privatizing MRI clinics due to long wait times, it is not at all presumptuous to assume the Harper Government is intentionally eroding public healthcare in order to push it into a privatized direction; this is despite overwhelming support for public healthcare.

Scapegoat

Polls in 2011 found that 94 per cent of people across Canada supported public healthcare, including Tory voters. Clearly the Tories need a major distraction to get away with gutting a public service that people fought for and that has such massive support.

This explains why the Tories are so stubborn in their cuts to refugee healthcare, including wasting more than \$1.4 million in legal fees to defend their cruel cuts. The Interim Federal Health Program that provides basic healthcare for refugees costs the federal government very little, but the Tories are scapegoating refugees—blaming them for the healthcare crisis created by government cuts. Harper is cutting millions from refugee health in order to distract from the billions he is cutting by ending the Canada Health Accord.

The Canadian Health Coalition and many labour unions are conducting research and organizing campaigns to reverse the Harper Government's plans to slash our healthcare system.

We need to defend refugee healthcare as part of defending and expanding universally accessible public healthcare.

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Money for veterans, not for war

“If you can't afford the wounded, you can't afford the war,” said David MacLeod, a 27-year veteran and organizer of last June's veteran's protest on Parliament Hill. Now the increasing costs of the Iraq War and the continued attacks on veterans are further exposing the wars Harper is waging on the back of veterans.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, the cost of bombing Iraq for six months will cost Canada \$160 million. This is \$40 million more than Defence Minister Jason Kenney recently estimated. And costs could rise to a quarter of a billion dollars if the government extends the war.

This absurd war is being waged against a product of the last war, ISIS, and will

only aggravate the misery that gave rise to it.

Meanwhile the Tories have sold billions in weapons to Saudi Arabia, the Western-backed regime that decapitates and crucifies dissidents on a regular basis.

And yet the Tories claim their war is against “barbarism,” using xenophobic language to justify war abroad and to stir up racism at home.

Support the troops

When pushed on the costs of bombing Iraqis, the Tories repeat the refrain that they “support the troops,” but war abroad accompanies austerity at home, including veterans.

According to Major Mark Campbell, who was wounded in Afghanistan, the New Veterans Charter cuts 40 per cent of veterans' income. As he explained in

2011, “This New Veteran's Charter is a grotesque travesty. It is an abject betrayal by the government of Canada to our new generation of disabled and wounded veterans. What kind of deal is that? The people of Canada should be outraged...Junk the New Veteran's Charter. It's crap.”

Since the economic crisis began, Veteran Affairs have cut 900 of 4,000 jobs, many dealing with administration of pensions and health benefits. Last month another 44 jobs were eliminated, as part of a movie to privatize. As Carl Gannon, national president of the Union of Veterans Affairs Employees, explained, “Veterans are being forced to deal with a private insurance company whose mandate is to try and deny claims.”

The cuts have forced the closure of veterans offices

across the country, but this has sparked waves of veterans protests.

As 36-year veteran Ron Clarke explained at a recent press conference, he and others will be using the upcoming federal election to rally opposition to the closure of veterans offices across the country.

“When they drop the writ, that's when I'll drop the shit on them. I will be travelling across Canada to the nine districts where the Members of Parliament voted the offices closed. And I will be rallying the troops in those places...We need a government that will look after us veterans.”

To support the troops we need to stop Harper's wars, and redirect military spending into pensions and healthcare—for veterans sent to fight, and for refugees fleeing war.