

# *Socialist*<sup>★</sup>Worker

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## STOP HARPER'S SECRET POLICE

SUPPORT LAND DEFENDERS  
STOP ISLAMOPHOBIA  
STOP THE WAR



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Percentage support for the Greek social democratic party PASOK, who collapsed after supporting austerity

**60**

Number of countries in which the abortion pill RU486 is approved. Canada not included

**70**

Number of communities that participated in the March 14 day of action against Bill C-51

**70**

Percentage of Inuit households who are food insecure

**100**

Number of actions across Quebec in the last week of February, against austerity

**4000**

Number of fascist candidates in the recent French elections

**45000**

Number of Quebec students who began striking at the end of March

**150000**

Tonnes of annual green house gas emissions that the Site C dam will produce

**3 million**

Number of workers across the US who received a minimum wage increase this year

## In their own words

**“There is the increasing possibility that the situation in Libya will transform into a long-term tribal/civil war. This is particularly probable if opposition forces received military assistance for foreign militaries.”**

2011 Canadian intelligence report warning that Western intervention will produce civil war

**“Our people have been fighting terrorism since the 1400s, ever since the Europeans came over to our land... Harper is the worst terrorist in this country.”**

As an elder from the Cowichan tribes speaking at the Victoria day of action against Bill C-51

**“They are already spying on me. So right now, without this anti-terrorism bill, my rights are already being violated.”**

Mi’kmaq activist and lawyer Pam Palmater

**“Sometimes civil disobedience is civil defense, and there’s never been more justification to show civil disobedience.”**

NDP MP Pat Martin on opposing Bill C-51

**“It doesn’t discourage me at all. To the contrary, it motivates me.”**

18-year old Quebec student Naomie Tremblay-Trudeau after being shot in the face by the police



# Bill C-51 targets First Nations

by JOHN BELL

**In the confusion immediately following the shooting on Parliament Hill in October 2014, Globe and Mail reporter Bill Curry sent the following tweet: “Eyewitnesses say suspect has long dark hair and two said he appeared to be aboriginal.”**

Aside from the racist stereotyping perpetuated by both bystanders and reporter, this speaks to the level of official animosity, suspicion and fear directed to First Nations communities and activists. This will only be heightened by “anti-terror” Bill C-51.

Pam Palmater, a Mi’kmaq activist, lawyer and professor at Toronto’s Ryerson University is unequivocal: “Any activity by anyone in Canada which relates to or poses a potential threat to things like the economy, critical infrastructure, diplomatic relations, territorial integrity and sovereignty of all things, can be on this terror list.”

That means that those defending First Nations sovereignty are automatically criminalized for refusing to recognize the supremacy of the colonial state.

## Criminalizing Indigenous dissent

Even without C-51, Palmater has been subjected to surveillance and harassment because of her support for Idle No More.

“I wrote an access to information request to CSIS (the Canadian Security Intelligence Service), National Defence, the RCMP and Indian Affairs to determine whether or not they were following (or) surveilling me in any way and three out of the group all confirmed that they were,” she told CTV news.

“They are already spying on me. So right now, without this anti-terrorism bill, my rights are already being violated.”

In her brilliant written submission to the Bill C-51 hearings, veteran Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) activist and artist Ellen Gabriel points to the same, long history of police spying and surveillance dating to her involvement in the Oka Crisis in 1990. She argues that the colonialist Canadian government has always criminalized First Nations people who defend their rights and their lands.

She writes: “The incessant criminalizing of Indigenous peoples who defend their

lands from development perpetuates the historic injustices designed to undermine and devalue the hope for a peaceful co-existence for the sake of economic and energy security.”

Legal opinion supports these voices. Michael McClurg and Senwun Luk, attorneys with Olthuis, Kleer and Townshend law firm, have analyzed C-51 and conclude it gives the government a “black cheque” to criminalize indigenous dissent.

They identify the crux of the Bill, that sets it apart from existing laws: “The proposed law takes the existing power of the government to arrest someone without a warrant if law enforcement think a terrorist act ‘will be carried out’, and gives the police to arrest someone if they think a terrorist act ‘may be carried out’.”

## Kill the Bill

The Harper Tories have announced that they will accept a number of amendments Bill C-51.

In part, this is due to a massive wave of opposition, rallies and teach-ins all across the country. Popular support for the Bill has plummeted as people have

seen how much unrestricted power it grants to domestic spy agencies.

But it also fits with tried and true Tory strategy. Time and again they have introduced sweeping legislation, faced popular outcry, granted a few cosmetic concessions, demobilized the opposition and got away with what they wanted.

We can’t let it happen again. No amendments can salvage C-51. Running through the very heart of the Bill is language defining terrorism so vaguely that the term can be applied to almost anyone who acts to oppose government policy.

In recent days we have witnessed a frightening level of police violence in Quebec, directed at peaceful protests against government austerity measures. It seems that even before it is passed, the tabling of Bill C-51 has emboldened the state and police, determined to stamp out popular opposition before it can grow.

Opposing Bill C-51 must continue, and we have to connect that fight to the ongoing opposition to austerity and war.

Harper knows these things are tied together. We can do no less.

# Stop Site-C dam

by ANNA ROIK

**In December 2014 British Columbia’s Liberal government approved the Peace River Site C hydroelectric dam project, the third dam on the Peace River.**

With a current price tag of \$8.8 billion and rising, the project is promoted as a necessary “clean, renewable, cost-effective electricity” project that will bring “benefits for communities and First Nations.” As usual with Liberals, none of their claims are true.

## First Nations

Liz Logan, Treaty 8 Chief, in a January 2014 interview said, “This project and its impacts far outweigh any benefits.” The Peace River and the dam site are on the lands of The Treaty 8 First Nations. Under Treaty 8, signed in 1899, First Nations in the area were guaranteed the right to hunt and fish “for as long as the

sun shines, the rivers flow and the grass grows.”

But the government’s own Joint Review Panel reports that there will be “significant adverse effects” on fishing, hunting, trapping and other traditional land uses.

The dam will obliterate 337 recorded archaeological sites and many unrecorded ones. This will result in untold cultural loss for the regions First Nations, hindering their cultural and traditional practices.

## Environment

Construction of the dam will result in the flooding of the river valley, creating a reservoir 83km long, and covering an area equivalent to that of the city of Ottawa. This valley is one of the last remaining “wild” sections of the Peace River, and has much land use potential.

The valley represents the best agricultural land in

northern BC. In a world facing food security concerns due to climate change, we should not destroy prime agricultural land.

The area to be flooded by the dam is 3000 hectares of wildlife habitats, significant habitat for grizzly bears, wolverine and caribou.

The old-growth boreal forest is important for not only wildlife habitat, but as a carbon sink.

Although the BC government is presenting Site C as a “clean energy project”, hydroelectricity is not clean and green. Site C will increase the province’s annual greenhouse gas emissions by about 150 000 tonnes. The increase will result from three main things: the carbon footprint of the construction process; decay of the flooded out boreal forest vegetation; and that the power will be used by fracking operations in northeast BC and by those

developing Alberta’s tar sands.

Site C is not cost efficient. There are predictions that the cost to produce electricity will be up near \$100 / MWh, while the sale price to the North American grid will be near \$35/MWh, a huge loss.

If there is a need for increased energy capacity in BC, renewable energy sources could make up the difference. Wind, solar and geothermal energy – coupled with conservation measures – are all feasible alternatives.

## Damn the dam

First Nations’ rights should not be ignored, our remaining thriving ecosystems should not be flooded, agricultural land must be protected and the climate crisis requires building truly clean energy sources. Site C must be stopped.

# #RU486 now!

by MAUREEN ASLIN

**Women’s right to an established medical treatment for reproductive health is being denied. Harper’s Tories are attempting to appease their party base by allowing Health Canada to delay the imminent approval of RU-486 until after the fall election.**

RU-486 is a pill (medical abortion) that women can take to induce a miscarriage, effectively aborting in early pregnancy. There are other similar drugs currently in use in Canada but RU-486 is significantly more effective and can be used at two weeks later in the gestation period, up to nine weeks.

*The Globe and Mail’s* op-ed favouring Health Canada approval of RU-486 states: “Mifepristone has been approved in 60 countries, including the US and most of Europe, and has been used routinely for years. Multiple studies have demonstrated that it is safe and effective. There are serious side effects and risks, including that of death, but they are extremely rare. According to one study, the risk of death is lower than that associated with many popular over-the-counter and prescription drugs, including acetaminophen and Viagra.”

RU-486 was developed in France in 1988, when surgical abortion was first decriminalized in Canada. But women in Canada have been denied access, which is especially problematic in rural areas or in PEI where there are no providers. The approval of RU-486 would provide more choice to women.

Health Canada has had the application to approve RU-486 since 2012, and while the approval process usually takes less than a year this one has been delayed.

As NDP Health Critic Libby Davies said last year, “Having this pill approved, I think is really, really important to a lot of women who need to have access to reproductive choice. There shouldn’t be any holdup as far as I’m concerned.”

Now Health Canada has requested more information from the manufacturer, thereby guaranteeing that RU-486’s inevitable approval will not tar the pre-election landscape for the Tories and their anti-choice backers.

Take action and sign Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics petition at change.org “Approve RU-486 now!” Tweet #RU486now.

*Visit <http://ocac-choice.com/> for more information and actions you can take.*

## Socialist Worker

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# Canada in Libya served as ‘Al-Qaeda’s air force’

**The Canadian military knew that bombing Libya in 2011 to oust Muammar Gaddafi would lead to chaos, destruction and civil war in that country. The revelations come from documents obtained by the Ottawa Citizen that describe Canada’s role as being part of “Al-Qaeda’s air force.”**

Unfortunately, these predictions came true. The removal of Gaddafi unleashed scores of heavily armed militias that have wreaked havoc and have spawned the first ISIS affiliate outside of Iraq and Syria.

## Hijacking revolution

The Libyan revolution began as part of the Arab Spring, based on genuine demands for social and economic change, and rapidly spread across the country. But when Gaddafi brutally repressed them (using Western weapons), the West used a “no-fly zone” that quickly morphed into a major air strike campaign that killed tens of thousands.

The reality is that NATO was, at the time, more concerned with the spread of the Arab Spring uprisings than with Gaddafi himself. They wanted to control the process of revolutions and to slow down or deflect any real change. Libya, on the

border with revolutionary Egypt, provided a good option for them to assert military control over the rebellions. It was also a concern for the west to try and gain new friends on the ground in Libya to maintain some control over the country’s oil supplies.

Reducing the revolution to a military campaign against Gaddafi allowed former regime elements to pose as alternatives: Mahmoud Jibril, the former head of economic development under Gaddafi became the head of the National Transition Council. The NTC’s head of reconstruction reassured the West that “the contracts in the oil fields are absolutely sacrosanct... There is no question of revoking any contract.” This included contracts for Canadian oil giant Suncor, which also profits from the ecocidal tar sands.

All of this is a far cry from the statements made by the Harper government at the time. They were then stressing Canada’s “responsibility to protect” the civilian population in Libya. As then foreign affairs minister John Baird said, “The one thing we can say categorically is that they couldn’t be any worse than Col. Gaddafi.” Anyone questioning that line was labeled a Gaddafi supporter. Instead,

hijacking the revolution retained many Gaddafi regime leaders, while also creating a chaotic vacuum that extremist groups have filled.

## From Libya to Iraq and Syria

History is full of these same scenarios. There is an initial public show of support for the war because all the people have seen are the well-scripted media reports which give one side of the story. It is only years later that the truth emerges from behind the fog of war.

The current Canadian campaign against ISIS in Iraq and potentially Syria is another case in point. The current air war will perhaps slow ISIS in the short term but the ongoing destruction of both countries is what created the conditions for ISIS to grow in the first place. More bombing campaigns will not change that but will, in fact, exacerbate the problem. Meanwhile, like Libya, the military intervention in Kurdistan is also designed to undermine the broader social and economic demands of the revolution in Rojava Kurdistan.

Another irony in the Libya situation is that Gaddafi was considered to be an ally in the war against extremism in the region. In the same Citizen documents, there are

repeated references to his positive role in helping to thwart alleged terror attacks. All of this was happening against a backdrop of huge investments by Canadian companies in Libya. SNC-Lavalin, the giant engineering firm had signed deals for hundreds of millions of dollars to build infrastructure projects and super prisons for the Gaddafi government. They have subsequently been charged with fraud for paying almost \$50 billion in bribes to the regime.

Again, we see a clear pattern. Canadian companies will work with anyone to make a buck, including wars that benefit Canadian weapons corporations. The Canadian government will say anything it needs, even if they know it is untrue, to maintain their interests. We must keep these facts in mind as the Harper government plans to extend its role in the war in Iraq and Syria. Do we have to wait another four years before the documents are released saying that, once again we were being lied to?

## Stop Harper’s war

Join the campaign to oppose the war mongering of the Harper Government. Visit <http://canadian-peace.org> for more information

## CSIS implicated in ISIS

by JOHN BELL

**A new scandal is implicating an operative working for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and linked to the Canadian Embassy in Jordan, with transporting young recruits from Britain to Syria to join ISIS. The trail of responsibility leads right to the Prime Minister’s Office in Ottawa.**

Is CSIS responsible for fighting a terrorist threat of fomenting one?

## CSIS and ISIS

Mohammed Mehmet Rashid has been arrested in Turkey for his role in transporting three young British women into the war zone. The recruitment of the school-aged women has made front page headlines around the world. According to the Turkish press, Rachid claims he has been an agent working with CSIS, traveling regularly to Jordan to report to the Canadian Embassy in Amman. Reports claim that Turkish officials are in possession of Rashid’s phone and computer, which he says were provided by the Canadian embassy.

The ambassador is Bruno Saccomani, a former RCMP officer who was once Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s chief bodyguard. Harper hand-picked Saccomani for the job in 2013, over loud objections about his lack of diplomatic credentials. The embassy in Jordan is also responsible for Canada’s imperialist intervention in Iraq.

To date the only word from the government is a carefully worded statement saying that Rashid “was not an employee of CSIS,” but no prominent figure has categorically denied that he is connected to the spy service. CSIS, the RCMP and the PMO have refused comment.

## Bill C-51

The timing of the revelations is bad for Harper’s rush to enact new anti-terror powers for the secret police—Bill C-51. Among other things, the new law would allow CSIS free rein to gather any information about any Canadian citizen without warrant; defines terrorist so vaguely that government can apply it to anyone who opposes its plans for economic development; allows police to detain citizens without charge for longer periods of time; and authorized the secret police to break domestic and foreign laws in the interests of “security.”

The increased powers for secret police do not come with any increase in oversight. Harper shut down the Office of the Inspector General, which was mandated to keep an eye on CSIS and the RCMP. The Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC) is a rubber-stamp board larded with Tory and Reform Party patronage appointments.

We have a right to know what the Harper government and CSIS are up to in our name. Is their job to expose terror threats or to act as agents provocateurs encouraging, recruiting and then entrapping young people? Is their role to end terrorism or to stir it up, to justify war without end?

# Yemen: Western-backed war is killing civilians

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

**While Yemen is witnessing the fourth Arab Spring anniversary, Western-backed Saudi Arabia is launching devastating military attacks on several cities. Although the coalition claims to be targeting Houthi military bases, civilians are the victims.**

Governments supporting and participating in the “Decisive Storm” coalition are: Saudi Arabia (leader), United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Sudan. Egypt is participating by sending warships to aid Saudi Arabia in its violations against Yemeni people. The Western backed National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces expressed its “full support for the

military operation” that they named as the “Storm of Resolve.”

While they condemn Assad’s attacks, they hypocritically support Saudi attacks on Yemen. Saudi Arabia is known for its counter-revolutionary intervention in Syria that has resulted in the rise of extremist groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra and ISIS. The Saudi intervention in Yemen comes after a request from the ousted Yemeni president Abed Rabbo Mansour without paying attention to the opinions of the majority of people who demand negotiations with Houthis and several other groups in order to end the conflict.

Not surprisingly, this attack and violation of the right to Yemeni self-determination is backed by the

US and other imperialist Western powers.

Although the coalition and its supporters claim that the Decisive Storm operation targets Houthi rebels, hundreds of civilians, including children, have been killed. “The high toll of civilian deaths and injuries in these attacks raises concerns about compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law,” told Said Boumedouha, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Program.

The intervention is uniting people in Yemen, who are protesting daily in the streets against the Saudi airstrikes. They demand peace. It is evident that Saudi Arabia is waging the war against Yemen in order to

instigate a war against Iran and its allies. Innocent Yemenis who have been suffering from poverty and violence for decades are paying the price. Hundreds of innocent Yemenis were killed in bomb attacks that targeted worshippers during Friday prayers one week before the Saudi-led attack. The so-called Islamic State announced its responsibility for the attacks. Increasing violence in Yemen risks threatens sectarian civil war that might spread to other Arab countries, and give a chance for more imperialist control. While it is not possible for activists around the world to take a side with one Yemeni group or the other, it is essential to demand an end to the brutal Western backed Saudi intervention and bloodshed.



# Fascism in the 1930s and now

**PEGIDA, which in German stands for Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, first appeared in October 2014. The relatively new group began in Dresden and organized several demonstrations in German cities. Sympathizers with this racist and Islamophobic group tried to hold a Pegida rally in Montreal in late March.**

PEGIDA spokesperson for the Montreal group, Jean-François Asgard, describes his ideas as very close to those of the fascist National Front in France. The rally was supposed to march through Little Mahgreb, a working class, immigrant area in north east Montreal that is predominantly North African and Muslim.

Fortunately, many individuals and organizations in Quebec denounced the racism and Islamophobia of the PEGIDA Quebec chapter, including Françoise David, MLA for Québec Solidaire, the Montreal Labour Council and even Montreal’s mayor, Denis Coderre. The PEGIDA rally was cancelled because anti-racist groups organized to hold their own counter-demonstration to show their support for the Muslim community and to say no to the xenophobia of PEGIDA.

## 1930s

It’s important in this context to understand clearly what fascism is and what it isn’t, so we can organize effectively against it. Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the 1917 Russian Revolution, wrote a series of articles throughout the 1920s and into the 30s describing the rise of fascism in Germany and also, importantly, how to stop it.

He wrote these articles after being exiled from Russia by Stalin and in a situation where he had very little contact with what was going on on the ground. In spite of these difficulties, Trotsky’s writings on *Fascism: What it is and How to Fight it*, remain invaluable today for those of us wanting to oppose the growing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment in country after country.

As Trotsky explained, fascism is the face that capitalism can adopt when the system is in serious crisis. Fascism sweeps away any notions of bourgeois democracy since it can only exist when it has created an authoritarian regime and smashed the organizations of the working class, because they are the one force that poses the most serious threat to fascist rule.

It might seem contradictory that capitalists would accept fascist rule when they often seem to be defenders of bourgeois democracy and such things as freedom of expression, at least in theory. But it was the big bankers and the capitalists who actually invited Hitler to take power, because they saw it as the only way to save their system and their profits.

Fascists in the 1930s created scapegoats in order to divide and conquer and then to take power. Racism was a critically important tool. Thus Hitler’s famous propaganda slogan in the 1930s, “three million unemployed; three million Jews.” But of course fascists targeted many other groups: people with disabilities, lesbians and gays, the Romas and of course organized labour and the trade unions.

## Today

The backdrop to the rise of the far right in today’s context is again a serious economic crisis that our rulers have no idea how to solve, other than by forcing policies of austerity on ordinary people, by taking away all that has been fought for and won by generations of workers before us: our access to health care, education, social services.

Today the overwhelming form that racism is that of Islamophobia. This has to do with the recent and continuing imperialist wars launched by the West in Iraq and Afghanistan and the continuation of bombing in Iraq and Syria against ISIS.

Ruling classes around the world are laying the ground for anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment to grow. Although they are not fascist, they are opening the door to fascists by continually scapegoating these groups, blaming them for unemployment and poor conditions, rather than the cutbacks governments are imposing on all of us.

In Canada the Tories (with support from the Liberals) have introduced Bill C-51 and claim they are doing this to keep us safe from “terrorism,” which is a code word, of course, for Islam and Muslims. Behind the overt attacks on Muslims and Islam, this legislation targets any of us who might oppose our government’s policies, from Indigenous people standing up to defend their land and resources, to environmentalists fighting to stop the Tar Sands or other destructive projects, to the anti-austerity Quebec student who was recently teargassed directly in the face.

The reason it’s important to distinguish between right-wing governments (such as here in Canada, in Britain, or elsewhere) and fascism is because, unlike fascist governments (in Germany, Italy or Spain in the 1930s and 40s) where resistance was pushed underground, in bourgeois democracies we still have the ability to organize openly to resist policies and practices we don’t agree with. And this resistance can actually have an effect, both on the fascists’ ability to organize (as in the case of PEGIDA) and on Tory attempts to curtail our rights and freedoms.

Fascism will remain a threat for as long as capitalism exists, because of capitalism’s inherent tendency towards economic crisis. Whether or not it can successfully come to power again depends on whether or not we can successfully unite against the racist scapegoating that fascism depends on to survive, and carry that struggle forward to get rid of the rotten economic system that underpins it all.



# FN building fascism in France

by DENIS GODARD, FRANCE

**Could Marine Le Pen’s fascist Front National (FN) win the next French presidential election in 2017?**

The dominant trend on the French left is to see the FN’s gains only through this prism. Seen this way, the FN had a setback in last weekend’s elections because it didn’t arrive in first place nationally—and therefore wouldn’t win the presidentials.

But such an analysis only paralyses us. These elections represent a step forward for the FN both ideologically and geographically.

Through local campaigns and with the help of its elected representatives, the FN is putting down roots. It’s building an activist machine, developing its positions in the apparatus of the state and increasing its legitimacy.

It has once again won more than 5 million votes, this time in the elections that are supposedly the most difficult for outsider parties. They concern more than 2,000 very localised areas—and until now, the FN had a representative in just one of them.

This time it won four in the first round, and will contest the second round in 1,100 more. It took first place in 43 of the 98 “departments” these localities are grouped in.

The FN stood nearly 4,000 candidates in 93 percent of localities.

## Militias

Worse, a few weeks before the elections, FN members helped farmers in the Tarn “department” organise armed militias to violently blockade an environmental protest camp opposing the construction of a dam. A few days later dockers in the CGT union joined FN members in attacking environmentalists. The FN has advanced so much in Tarn that it will contest the second round in 18 out of its 23 localities.

The main parties have responded to this in the worst possible way. On the evening of the first round of the elections, centre left prime minister Manuel Valls denounced the FN. But at the same time he said he wanted to listen to its aspirations and its voters—then went on about law and order and “secularism”, which means attacking Muslims. The campaign had been dominated by debates about banning headscarves in universities, scrapping pork-free school meals for Muslim and Jewish children, and reinforcing the government’s anti-terrorist arsenal. This came just as the government was passing new measures against workers.

Fascism begins to triumph when it takes hold of society. Elections are just one of the tools it uses to do that. The result of these elections is another step forward for fascism in France.

## Anti-fascism

The day before the elections was the international day of anti-racism on 21 March. More than 10,000 demonstrators in 20 towns and cities around France marched “together against fascism and all forms of racism” demanding “equality or nothing”. It brought together a wide range of 130 organisations. And this diversity was reflected in the march in Paris. It was noisy, working class and with many people from ethnic minorities. And while some left parties boycotted it, a high level of participation from others showed that part of the left is beginning to grasp the danger.

That this was the strongest mobilisation against racism in France for years certainly gives an idea of how much ground we have lost. But it’s by building on this base—combined with a return of struggles against attacks on workers—that the present dynamic can be reversed. There is no more time to waste.

*Denis Godard is a member of the New Anticapitalist Party in France’s anti-racism commission, and the anti-fascist coalition Conex. This is republished from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# The left needs to fight Syriza’s compromises

by PANOS GARGANAS, GREECE

**For two months now, the European Union (EU) and European Central Bank (ECB) have been piling pressure on Greece’s new Syriza-led government. A word closer to reality might even be blackmail.**

Under the “memorandum of agreement” signed by the previous Tory government, Greece was supposed to receive the final installment of its second 7.2 billion euro bailout. The money would not be used on wages or pensions, but would go straight back to Greece’s lenders.

But the “Eurogroup” of finance ministers is refusing to give the money to the new government. It’s demanding that Syriza drops its election promises and adapts its programme to the same mix of cuts and privatisation.

On top of that, the ECB has imposed a legal ban on Greek banks forbidding them from buying treasury bills—debt—from the Greek state.

They are effectively forcing the Syriza government to use funds meant for the health service, universities and local authorities to meet its IMF payments.

What is the rationale behind this? Is it because the economy is in a worse state than it was last year? The answer is no. The European institutions agree with the government that the economy is set to grow slightly this year and the budget will have a surplus of 1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Will this kind of pressure make the Greek debt sustainable? The answer is again no. Without a reduction in the debt level, the economy would have to produce very high budget surpluses for such a long time that nobody believes this is on the horizon.

## Fightback

The reasons for the EU pressure are political. The workers’ fightback against austerity in Greece has reduced the traditional ruling parties to impotence.

The Labour-type Pasok party has been in government longer than any other party since the Junta collapsed in 1974. Now it’s just close to the 3 percent threshold for entering parliament. The Tory-type New Democracy is trailing Syriza by over 20 percentage points.

The EU institutions are effectively the guardians of the system for the Greek ruling class, making sure that the left is tamed.

The Syriza leadership is adapting to this. It has dropped the demand for even a partial cancellation of the debt. It has declared that keeping Greece inside the eurozone is a top priority.

After prime minister Alexis Tsipras met German chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin, the government submitted a “list of reforms” to the Eurogroup. It’s all done in the spirit of strengthening the budget surplus through cuts and privatisation.

To prove the point, deputy prime

minister Yannis Dragasakis said last Friday that the government is selling its 67 percent share in the port of Piraeus. This breaks a pledge not to sell the port that Syriza repeated when it was first elected.

There is opposition to this adaptation. The dockers’ unions are furious at the port selloff. ERT media workers from Thessalonica are coming to Athens next week alongside other groups, such as the cement workers from Chalkida, to demand their jobs back. The anti-capitalist left coalition Antarsya supports these struggles and argues for a break with the euro and cancelling the debt.

Some commentators say that Syriza has no mandate to break with the euro. But then many of the same voices add that going back on its election promises for the sake of staying in the euro is “a reasonable compromise”. Apparently, breaking your promises does not require a special mandate, but breaking with the bankers’ Europe is a “nationalist, third-worldist” perspective.

It all goes to show that the parliamentary road to change is a one-way street to compromise. Satisfying the workers’ demands and breaking with the EU blackmail means that the left needs a revolutionary strategy away from the old parliamentary wisdom.

*Panos Garganas is a Greek socialist. This is republished from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# Legal victories for workers' rights

*Alex Kerner analyzes legal decisions, which require rank-and-file struggle to enforce.*

**The first month and a half of 2015 saw the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) come down with two decisions that will significantly change the scope of labour law in Canada.**

In both the Mounted Police Association and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour decisions, the Supreme Court has entrenched a quite robust right to collective bargaining and a right to strike within Section 2(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights of Freedom (the Charter).

## Prior decisions

In 2001 the SCC struck down an Ontario law that excluded agricultural workers from the labour relations system. In *Dunmore*, the SCC concluded that if government legislation interfered with collective activities, even those without individual expressions, it could amount to a breach of Section 2(d) of the Charter.

*Dunmore*, however, expressly rejected the idea that “collective bargaining” was a Charter associational right. Judicial movement in this regard had to wait until 2007 with the *BC Health Services* decision. The right-wing Liberal provincial government had legislatively enacted extensive changes to the collective agreements of health workers, with minimal effort to consult the bargaining agents in the sector. In striking down the BC legislation, the SCC concluded that Section 2(d) guaranteed workers a “process through which (their associational) goals are pursued,” including a right to “unite, to present demands...collectively and to engage in discussions in an attempt to achieve workplace goals.”

Many in the labour movement believed that this was a watershed moment, with collective bargaining rights achieving constitutional legitimacy. However, the SCC tempered this enthusiasm in the 2011 *Fraser* decision, which once again challenged Ontario legislation that excluded agricultural workers from the Labour Relations Act, although providing these workers minimal protections to make associations and collectively present demands to employers. In upholding the legislation, the SCC concluded that as long as laws do not make it effectively impossible for workers to achieve workplace goals through collective activity there is no breach of Section 2(d).

## Collective bargaining

With two groundbreaking decisions things have once again been turned on their head. In *Mounted Police Association*, employees of the RCMP were challenging provisions of the Public Service Labour Relations Act, which denied workers the right to form a union and instead offered “Staff Relations Representation Program” that had no authority to bargain key workplace issues (like wages) and whose independence from the employer was questionable.

In its decision, the SCC firstly concluded that the very high standard of “effective impossibility,” set out in *Fraser* to



determine whether a law was a breach of Section 2(d), had confused matters. Instead, moving forward government legislation that “substantially interfered” with workers’ abilities to pursue collective workplace goals would be deemed unconstitutional.

The Court also made important pronouncements about what kind of interference offended the Charter’s associational rights. Specifically, legislation that undermines the independence of workers to make choices about their representation in pursuing collective workplace goals could be in breach of Section 2(d): “If employees cannot choose the voice that speaks on their behalf, that voice is unlikely to speak up for their interests. It is precisely employee choice of representative that guarantees a representative voice. Similarly, if employees must ‘have confidence in their spokespersons’ ... the way to ensure such confidence is through a sufficient degree of employee choice in the selection of representatives.”

This principle could have significant impact on the Nova Scotia government’s Bill 1, which is attempting to transform the health sector’s bargaining structures by reducing the number of unions representing health care workers. If this Bill’s efforts to force is deemed to substantially interfere with workers choice of representation in such a way that undermines the independence of the representation and workers’ pursuit of workplace goals, the legislation may breach Section 2(d).

## Right to strike

Just as significant as *Mounted Police Association*, is the *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour* (SFL) decision. This

case emerged after a newly elected right-wing government in Saskatchewan introduced legislation that allowed the government to unilaterally declare workers an essential service and prohibited these designated workers from going on strike. In addition, the legislation provided no alternative mechanism to resolve bargaining impasses, such as binding arbitration.

In a 5-2 decision, the Court finally overturned the *Labour Trilogy* determining that “the right of employees to strike is vital to protecting the meaningful process of collective bargaining within s. 2(d)” and when legislation interferes with this right there must be a meaningful dispute resolution mechanism to take the place of a strike.

In one the most powerful passages of this decision, Justice Rosalie Abella (who wrote the decision for the majority) challenged the dissent’s opinion that both employee and employer goals should be considered when assigning rights under Section 2(d): “In their dissent, my colleagues suggest that s. 2 (d) should not protect strike activity as part of a right to a meaningful process of collective bargaining because ‘true workplace justice looks at the interests of all implicated parties’ (para. 125), including employers. In essentially attributing equivalence between the power of employees and employers, this reasoning, with respect, turns labour relations on its head, and ignores the fundamental power imbalance which the entire history of modern labour legislation has been scrupulously devoted to rectifying. It drives us inevitably to Anatole France’s aphoristic fallacy: ‘The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well

as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.’”

The decision also posed a warning for legislation that too quickly and too broadly define what is an essential service, whose employees could have their right to strike limited. The decision strongly suggests that essential services (at least in the context of the public sector) are those jobs that are required to prevent a “clear and imminent threat to the life, personal safety, or health of the whole or part of the population.” And even for those jobs, the SCC indicates that designating what jobs fall under this cannot be a unilateral decision of the employer and that there should be an impartial review mechanism to challenge essential service designations.

## Mobilization

While these decisions are positive and open the door for the labour movement, relying on them to protect our rights through litigation instead of mobilization should be cautioned. Even if the Conservative’s back to work legislation can be challenged and Bill 1 in Nova Scotia could be struck down, litigation takes a long time and pro-worker outcomes are never guaranteed. By the time the courts settle the issue, workers may have already accepted concessions under threat of bad legislation.

These decisions should embolden organized labour, knowing that their right to collectively bargain and to strike are constitutionally enshrined. But making these rights truly benefit employees will require unions to mobilize their members to challenge anti-union legislation. A litigation strategy can never replace a rank-and-file approach.



# CAPITALISM & THE FIGHT FOR \$15/HR



## Wages and the crisis of capitalism

By Michael T Fenn

**With significant movements getting under way across Canada to increase minimum wages, like BC's fight for \$15, it's important to consider what higher wages mean—or what it does not mean.**

There's the prevailing view that if wages at the bottom are significantly increased it will harm the economy in some way. Either prices will rise to compensate for wage gains (inflation), or there will be higher unemployment because employers will find it insufficiently remunerative to hire more workers at higher wages. It is also commonly said that small business will be especially affected by an increase in wages.

### Myth busting

The CCPA did a robust analysis that yielded no significant relationship between a rise in minimum wage in Canada and a rise in either inflation or unemployment. Nor did inflation or unemployment result when Australia sharply raised its minimum wage to a "living wage" of 15 and 16 dollars an hour.

Furthermore there is some compelling evidence to suggest that high wages and low inequality produce less unemployment. For example in Scandinavian countries, like Denmark, where unemployment is extremely low, high wages and low income inequality seems to promote high worker moral and less structural employment. Workers there don't feel compelled to seek better paying jobs, and thus retain skills and on the job experience, while saving employers considerable costs of retraining.

There's also been opposition to raising the minimum wage—including from the Ontario NDP—because of concerns for "small business." But as a previous article in [socialist.ca](http://socialist.ca) pointed out, "According to Statistics Canada's Perspectives on Labour and Income, published in 2010, the sector of the economy that had 'by far the highest incidence' of minimum wage jobs was accommodation and food services. This is a sector dominated by large corporations like McDonald's, Tim Hortons, Marriott hotels and Revera nursing and retirement homes. The retail sector, another significant employer of minimum wage workers, is increasingly dominated by large multinationals like Wal-Mart, Target and Gap. These are companies that can easily afford to pay their workers higher wages—Wal-Mart had total revenues worldwide of US\$466.1 billion in 2013; Tim Hortons, a small company by comparison, had revenues of C\$3.225 billion in the same year."

Economic competition produces the concentration and centralization of capital, where markets are increasingly dominated by larger corporations. Larger firms with market power are able to drive smaller business out of the market. Or if small business depends on larger firms for their business, either as suppliers or buyers, large firms can drive up or down the price that they buy from or sell to small business. Large corporations are the main threat to small business, and their survival should not be balanced on the back of their poverty-wage workers. But the corporate media and big business blame the economic hardship of small business on workers, rather than the 1% (big business, banks and landlords) who are the real enemy. The survival of small business thereby becomes an argument to increase the exploitation of work-

ers—which provides a cover for big business to keep wages for their own workers down, and turns the frustrations of small business against workers instead of the 1%.

### Value, price and profit

Why do higher wages not lead to higher prices? The answer, which Marx gave more than century and a half ago, and is contained in his theory of value, illuminates what the fight for higher wages is really about.

The price of any commodity is always going to fluctuate—based on supply and demand—around its true value, that is, the amount of socially necessary labour required to produce it. Marx referred to this as the Law of Value. It explains how as economic "progress" proceeds, increases in productivity actually reduce the value (price) of goods. While more goods are produced there is actually less value embodied in each, as it takes less labour as before to produce them.

Capital, which is simply money invested in machinery, factories, commodities and labour, does not actually work, and thus produces no value. The capitalist might own the machine (the product of previous workers) but only living labour creates new value. But if labour creates all value, where do profits come from? The answer is that profits simply come from the difference between what labour produces and what it is actually paid. The value that Capital receives (surplus value) must be expropriated from the workers who create it.

As Marx wrote in *Value, Price and Profit*, "Deduct from the value of a commodity the value replacing the value of the raw materials and other means of production used upon it, that is to say, deduct the value representing the past labour contained in it, and the remainder of its value will resolve into the quantity of labour added by the working man (or woman) last employed... This given value, determined by the time of his (or her) labour, is the only fund from which both he (or she) and the capitalist have to draw their respective shares or dividends, the only value to be divided into wages and profits. It is evident that this value itself will not be altered by the variable proportions in which it may be divided amongst the two parties... Since the capitalist and workman (or woman) have only to divide this limited value, that is, the value measured by the total labour of the working man (or woman), the more the one gets the less will the other get, and vice versa. Whenever a quantity is given, one part of it will increase inversely as the other decreases. If the wages change, profits will change in an opposite direction. If wages fall, profits will rise; and if wages rise, profits will fall...but all these variations will not affect the value of the commodity. A general rise of wages would, therefore, result in a fall of the general rate of profit, but not affect values."

So a higher wage will reduce profits but not affected prices. Looking at the rate of profit explains the opposition to a minimum wage increase.

### Capitalist crisis

Because capitalists are in competition with each other they are driven to invest in technology to beat their rivals; while this might temporarily an individual capitalist it puts pressure on all capitalist to do the same, so there's a tendency for investment in technology to rise faster than investment in labour (the source of profit)—leading to a falling rate of profit.

This can be offset by increasing the rate of profit (decreasing wages) or by wiping out capital itself—through economic collapse or war—to pave the way for further growth. The Depression and WWII (along with a permanent arms economy that followed) destroyed so much Capital that it returned profit margins. But only temporarily, until another profitability crisis came in the 1970's. Neoliberalism of the last 35 years, blamed for all these effects, was little more than a symptom of the disease rather than its cause. Corporate tax cuts, financial deregulation, the war on labour, were all an attempt to restore profitability—the rate at which Capital could extract enough surplus value to sustain its accustomed returns. Debt creation and financial bubbles kept not only enough demand to sustain the economy, but allowed for higher profit margins, albeit spurious ones, maintaining the circulation of capital (value), even while profit margins in productive sectors of the economy continued their secular decline.

This contradiction eventually erupted in another economic crisis, which the 1% are unable to resolve. They spent trillions bailing out the biggest corporations, which has merely prolonged the crisis, while attacking the wages of workers whose consumption of goods is necessary to stimulate the economy. But the 1% are resistant to raise wages because it eats into their already low profit rates. Because social democratic governments aim to manage the capitalist economy instead of replace it, some have been led to oppose the minimum wage increase in order to restore profitability—on the backs of workers.

### Reform and revolution

While raising the minimum wage does not end the exploitation on which wages are based, socialists campaign to raise the minimum wage because it improves the lot of workers—especially women, who are the majority of minimum wage workers. In addition the fight to increase the minimum wage can provide workers with confidence and experience to demand much more, by shedding light on the source of wages and profits and the ultimate solution to exploitation and capitalist crisis.

Capital has exclusive ownership of the "means of production." That is to say the Capital owns the very necessities form which life and work depends. It is a mere class privilege, as entrenched the unjustifiable as was the feudal rights of lords to extract rents from peasants during feudal times. In fact more so, since it was not until capitalism that workers were completely cut off from the means of subsistence and forced into labour markets from which they depended on the capitalist class for their survival—which also subordinated the planet itself to profit accumulation.

Indeed only a radical redistribution of income and wealth can make the economy sustainable in either the economic or ecological sense. Only by abolishing the profit motive as the engine of economic activity—and the exploitation of labour and the environment that it requires—and replacing it with a socialized economy in which the means of production are commonly owned, investment is publically planned and made on the basis of need rather than profit, will it be possible to create a sustainable, just, and democratic world. Socialism or barbarism are still the only two options available to the human race.

## Building working class solidarity: the fight for \$15

by Pam Frache

**Ontario's Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage and the Fight for \$15 movement in the United States have renewed the struggle for decent work by raising class demands and uniting workers across sectors in a manner unprecedented in recent decades.**

Building on gains in the US, the movement in Ontario has begun raising the minimum wage. Now there's a campaign for \$15 in Ontario, BC and Nova Scotia, raising the possibility of a pan-Canadian campaign uniting unionized and non-unionized workers around a common demand. The next global day of action for the Fight for \$15 is set for April 15, 2015 when union and non-union workers across North America—and indeed the globe—are mobilizing for decent wages and work.

### Fight for \$15

In the fall of 2012, US workers in New York City and Chicago, supported by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and other unions, launched the Fight for \$15 movement when handfulls of workers in the "virtually union-free" retail and fast food sectors walked off the job.

Within two years, the Fight for \$15 has exploded into a national movement across the US. Workers at hundreds of outlets in hundreds of cities have engaged in strikes and walkouts. Among the emerging leadership of these movements are young, racialized workers—especially women—who are reshaping the movement and, in the process, themselves.

On January 1, 2015, three million workers received a legislated wage increase as 20 states and Washington, DC raised minimum wages. Three municipalities—SeaTac and Seattle in Washington, and San Francisco in California—voted to establish a \$15 minimum wage and other improvements in working conditions such as paid sick leave, fairer hours and successor rights for workers. In February, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio pledged to begin work on a \$15 minimum wage ordinance for all workers in the city, and Portland city council amended its Fair Wage policy to establish a \$15 minimum wage for the city's directly-hired and contracted employees.

None of this would be taking place were it not for the growing confidence and willingness to fight of the lowest paid members of the American working class—bolstered by the solidarity offered by the organized labour movement.

### Seattle

Seattle-area workers achieved the first \$15 minimum wage breakthroughs. Residents in the Seattle suburb of SeaTac voted on November 5, 2013 to adopt Proposition 1 that implemented a \$15 minimum wage as well as providing a modest number of paid sick days, requiring employers to offer additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new staff, and, significantly, requiring employers retain employees for at least 90 days if the business is sold.

Meanwhile, right next-door in Seattle, Kshama Sawant put the Fight for \$15 at the centre of her bid for city council. Her campaign not only helped defeat incumbent city Councilor Richard Conlin—himself a Democrat—but also forced the Fight for \$15 right into the centre of Seattle's mayoral contest.

As David Goldstein describes: "By October, the three-pronged \$15 movement—the fast-food strikes, the SeaTac \$15 initiative, and the insurgent Sawant campaign—was dominating local political headlines. Eager to win both street cred and labour endorsements, both candidates in Seattle's hotly contested mayoral race suddenly jumped on board, promising a \$15 minimum-wage ordinance if elected ... The movement turned the November election into a referendum on the \$15 minimum wage, and the message from voters was clear."

The new mayor, Ed Murray, immediately implemented a \$15 minimum wage for all directly-hired and contracted employees of the City of Seattle, a move that raised the wages of approximately 600 people. He then helped forge legislation that will bring all workers in the city to \$15 an hour between 2017 and 2021. It is expected that one in every four Seattle workers—or more than 100,000—will benefit from the minimum wage ordinance.

The pay increases for the 600 public-sector city workers (and those funded by city contracts) could be understood as a down payment on the ultimate goal of winning decent wages for all workers. By contrast, had the Seattle movement started by campaigning only for those 600 city workers, it is doubtful the movement would have been as effective, because it would not have had such broad class appeal.

Seattle's municipal campaign can't simply be transplanted into Canada. Because cities don't have the legal authority to make laws that apply to all workers within its boundaries, a statutory approach in the Canadian context can't just focus on a city; it must focus on the province. And that requires a united, province-wide campaign for a common standard.

To do otherwise, leaves workers in precarious employment to the tender mercy of their individual employers. And because such workers lack bargaining power in individual worksites, their employers will have little reason to "do the right thing" in the face of moral pressure from the outside. Effective campaigns must aim to force employers into compliance, either through a collective agreement or through law; it is this that gives the workers a stake in the outcome of the campaign and creates an incentive to participate.

### The class raises the floor, unions set the bar

The growing gap in living conditions between workers in decent jobs and workers in low-wage, unstable, temporary, and involuntary part-time employment is a strategic threat to the gains union and non-union workers have won together. There is an urgent need for a working-class project to rebuild the floor in wages and working conditions. And engaging workers in small workplaces, in unstable and low-wage employment is a critical strategic question for the labour movement.

As David Rolf, President of SEIU Local 775 and a leader in the SeaTac \$15 initiative, explains: "We can't be the movement that's just about us. The labor movement that workers flocked to by the tens of millions in the 1930s wasn't known for negotiating 500-page contracts. They were known for fighting for the eight-hour day, fighting to end child labor."

This insight reminds us all that workers join unions—and pay dues—when they see the need for organization as part of a larger project to improve working conditions. Unions are a means to an end, not the end itself. And we must remember that all union contracts and labour laws reflect a particular balance of class forces at any given moment.

The challenge for unions in general is that, while solidarity from unorganized workers (or differently organized workers) is increasingly crucial to winning workplace collective bargaining demands—and setting the bar higher for wages and working conditions—it is not always clear to union members how to develop campaigns that will improve conditions for workers without unions (or for those in unions who lack bargaining power). This is especially significant when one considers the fact that in Ontario the minimum wage has been frozen for 12 of the past 20 years. The minimum wage increases that have occurred didn't trickle down accidentally from individual collective bargaining victories; the increases came as a result of deliberate, united, working class effort that made provincial, legislative change the central focus.

This approach is a bit different from regionally focused living wage campaigns. While regional living wage campaigns help expose the gap between what workers earn and what they need to live decently in their particular locale, these campaigns call for voluntary compliance, and therefore tend to focus on employers that are progressive, stable or big enough to extend wage improvements, while leaving the worst employers unmoved.

And on a cautious note, the regional diversity inherent in living wage calculations opens a door that allows some employers to claim they are paying too much, rather than not enough. As a case in point, last September, *Maclean's* magazine explicitly called for the creation of local minimum wages, noting two Canadian jurisdictions where the author claims the minimum wage is too high.

### Minimum wage campaigns across Canada

In less than two years, the Ontario Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage won two historic milestones. In June 2014, the general minimum wage increased from \$10.25 to \$11.00 an hour and, in November that same year, the Ontario government was forced to index the minimum wage annually to keep up with increases in the cost of living. The first cost of living increase will take effect October 1, 2015 when the general minimum wage will be \$11.25.

The campaign has provided non-union and union workers an opportunity to unite across workplaces and across the province. This is the kind of common struggle that most quickly allows unionized workers to shed their pre-conceived notions of charity and pity toward low-income workers, and helps low-income workers lose their resentment and bitterness toward unionized workers.

Two years ago, some in Ontario were hesitant to embrace the idealism of a \$14 minimum wage and in the 2014 election the Ontario New Democratic Party refused to endorse it. Yet thanks to the Ontario and US movements, a Fight for \$15 campaign has been launched by the BC Federation of Labour and by labour, students and community groups in Nova Scotia. Even the federal NDP feels confident enough to make a \$15 federal minimum wage part of its election platform and hundreds of canvassers will be door-knocking on this issue in the lead-up to the federal election next October.

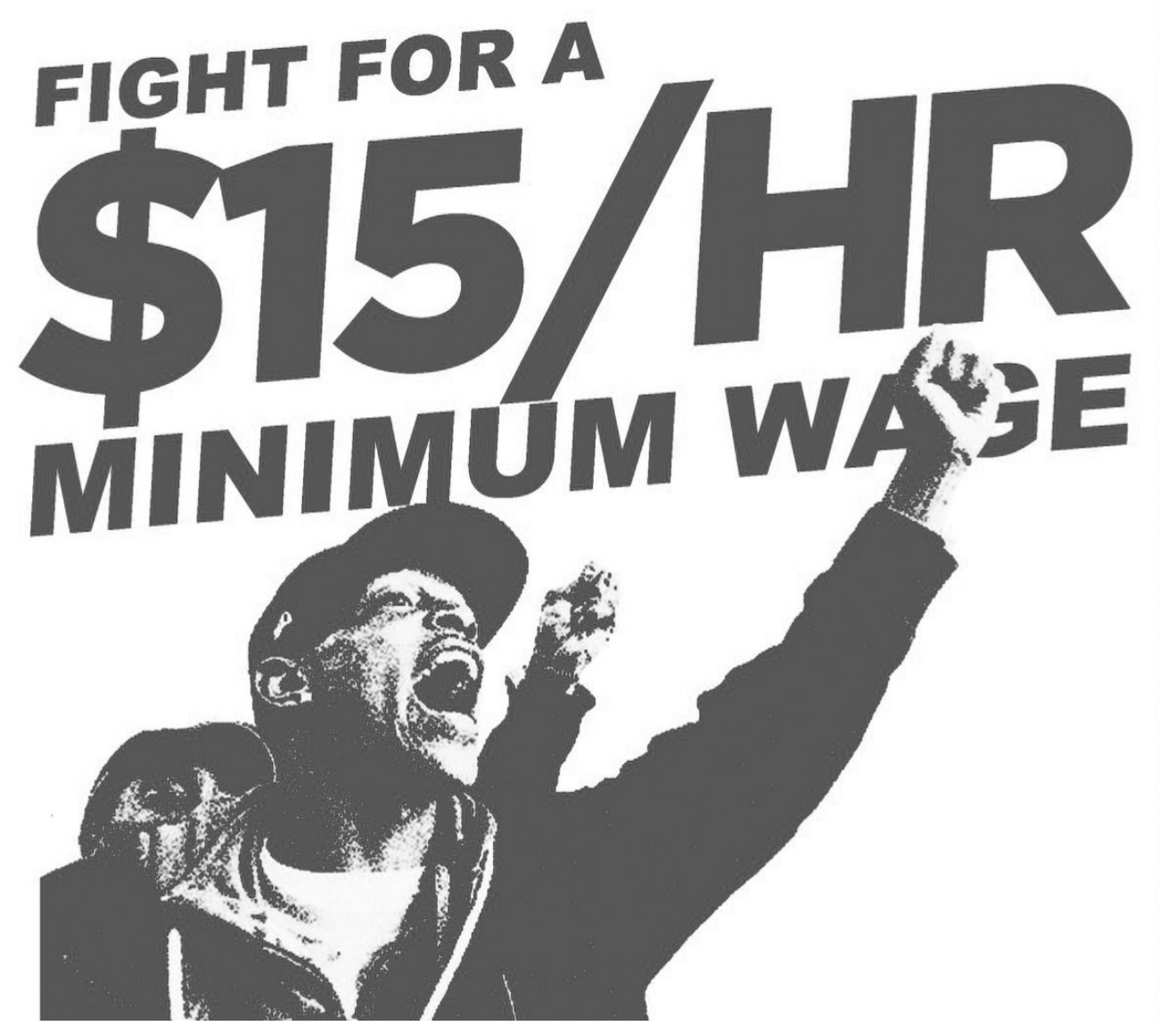
### Fight for \$15 and Fairness

The Fight for \$15 movement is clearly resonating with union and non-union workers: in Ontario, labour and community groups in more than 25 towns and cities are launching the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign—where fairness means a modest number of paid sick days, fair hours and scheduling, measures to make it easier to join unions, and meaningful enforcement of employment laws so that all workers have dignity and respect at work.

These aspects of fairness are critical in light of the Ontario government's recently announced 18-month public consultation on employment laws. As OFL President Sid Ryan notes, the consultation offers Ontario workers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to affect meaningful, provincial statutory change.

The next global day of action for the Fight for \$15 is set for April 15, 2015 when union and non-union workers across North America—and indeed the globe—are mobilizing for decent wages and decent work. This kind of convergence of movements is relatively rare in history; seldom do we get a chance to unite concrete working-class struggles across provincial and national borders.

Visit: [raisetheminimumwage.ca](http://raisetheminimumwage.ca), [15andfairness.org](http://15andfairness.org), (ON); [www.fightfor15bc.ca](http://www.fightfor15bc.ca) (BC); [fightfor15.org](http://fightfor15.org) (US); [april15.org](http://april15.org). To register for the Common Front Anti-Poverty Assembly visit: <http://wearontario.ca/index.php/antipovertyassembly/>.





## The niqab ban and Tory scapegoating



From distracting from their anti-choice or anti-climate policies, to promoting war and attacks on civil liberties, the Tories attack on women wearing niqab is classic scapegoating and must be opposed.

### 2011 scapegoat

In September 2011, Harper used the 10th anniversary of 9/11 to declare “the major threat is still Islamicism,” inventing both a word and a threat to justify the catastrophic occupation of Afghanistan and war on Libya. Racism from above encouraged racism from below: in November of that year Inas Kadri was assaulted in Mississauga and had her niqab ripped off her face, while the attacker yelled “leave your country. Go back to your country.”

What was the response from her local MP, Wladyslaw Lizon? Instead of challenging hate crimes he urged Jason Kenney to ban women wearing niqab from citizenship ceremonies. Using the same racist and sexist paternalism that justified the occupation of Afghanistan, Kenney announced the ban the following month, claiming “we want women to be full and equal members of Canadian society.” This from Kenney, a life-long anti-choicer, and the rest of the Tory party—who have denied pay equity and childcare, cut refugee health for pregnant women, and attacked abortion rights, including Lizon calling for the RCMP to investigate abortions as homicides.

As a spokesperson for the Canadian Council of American Islamic Relations said at the time, “I can’t think of anything more damaging to women’s equality and women’s rights than removing their freedom of choice. So I think it was an easy political point to score and at the expense of a vulnerable group of women.” As a classic example of scapegoating, the niqab ban also served another purpose: distract from the Tories killing the Kyoto protocol. December 12, 2011, the same day as Kenney loudly announced banning women wearing niqab from citizenship ceremonies, the Tories quietly withdrew from Kyoto.

### 2014 hysteria

This year a federal court judge just struck down the racist ban, explaining that it “interferes with a citizenship judge’s duty to allow candidates for citizenship the greatest possible freedom in the religious solemnization or the solemn affirmation of the oath.” This time it was Harper himself who led the attack, claiming the niqab is “offensive” and an expression of an “anti-woman culture.” So after having supported sexist warlords in Afghanistan, imposed a “maternal health plan” that denied abortion, and refused to investigate more than 1,000 missing and murdered Indigenous women, Harper claims to be a champion of women’s liberation.

This niqab ban has nothing to do with secularism. In 2012 Tory MP Larry Miller defended the Lord’s prayer to council meetings saying: “For months now we have had to suffer and listen to how reciting the Lord’s Prayer at Grey County council has somehow bruised the rights of one of its residents and of how the county is now being sued in order to get it to stop this terrible injustice... Tradition is something that we should all be proud of. Tradition can be of a cultural nature, a family tradition, religious or linguistic traditions or one of many other traditions too numerous to mention. If something ain’t broken, don’t fix it. Is the present practice really hurting anyone or anything? If the answer is no (and it is no) than things should stay as they are.”

But when it comes to the niqab, Miller called on Muslim women to “stay the hell where you came from”—as though Miller, a non-Indigenous person of Irish descent, has more rights in Canada than Muslim women. Not only is the niqab ban xenophobic but it also reinforces the denial of indigenous sovereignty.

### Stop racism, stop war

While CSIS and a Canadian embassy, as well as Canadian military campaigns, have been implicated in ISIS recruitment, the Tories are eager to demonize Muslim women in order to justify Bill C-51 and the extension and expansion of Canadian military intervention. But there have been recent mass rallies across the country against Bill C-51.

As OFL president Sid Ryan said at the Toronto rally, “Do not allow Stephen Harper to divide us. Do not allow him to divide us on the basis of religion. Do not allow him to demonize the Muslim community, and do not allow him to demonize Muslim women. We have to stand in solidarity with the Muslim community, stand up to Stephen Harper and say we will not allow an act of racism to divide our nation.”

To oppose Bill C-51 we need to oppose the Islamophobia and war that drives it.

*If you like this article, register today for Rage Against the System, a weekend conference of ideas to change the world, April 24-26 in Toronto. Sessions include “Stopping Harper’s agenda,” “Imperialism and resistance,” and “Secularism, Islamophobia and the new racism.”*

## ANALYSIS



## Security certificates are the pilot project for Bill C-51

by JESSICA SQUIRES

**Under the current (pre-C51) so-called “Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act” the government can detain, without charge, for years on end, non-citizens, without giving them the right to know the “case” (if there is one) against them.**

No crime need have been committed. The information upon which CSIS bases its allegation that the detained person “may” at some point in the future pose a threat to national security is kept largely secret. Only special advocates—court-appointed and security cleared lawyers—can see the secret information, and even they cannot see all of it; nor are they allowed to cross-examine the information’s human sources. Much of the original source information was destroyed, and although courts have ruled that illegal, they have still allowed CSIS to use that information in certificate cases.

There are currently three Muslim men detained under security certificates in Canada, none of whom have committed any crime anywhere in the world, and all of whose lives have been irrevocably changed for the worse. The security certificates are a deportation method, and all three face possible torture or death if returned to the country of origin—a practice banned in international law. Yet the government is seeking to do so anyway.

To summarize, the main features of security certificates are: arbitrary detention; deportation to torture; used primarily against Muslims; place

huge powers in the hands of CSIS to control the process; and withholding of information.

Sound familiar? It should—these are among the main features of Bill C-51 as well; and C-51 will make all of these things worse. Arbitrary detention will continue. Deportation to torture—continues. Used against Muslims—just listen to the rhetoric. Powers in the hands of CSIS—under C51, almost nothing is not allowed; if a CSIS action would, in their opinion, breach the constitution, they can ask for a warrant; these actions can be done domestically or abroad. Withholding of information? Now even worse, and aspects of C-51 write over Supreme Court rulings about access to original information.

The threat now goes beyond non-citizens to affect all people living in the country calling itself Canada.

When the Liberals first passed the Anti-Terrorism Act after 9/11, we said it would be bad. It was not as bad as we thought when enacted, because we resisted it; but it was still bad. We’ve seen deportations, increased detentions of immigrants and refugees, drummed-up fears of Islam and Muslims and Arabs and other racialized people, increased surveillance of citizens and non-citizens, and groups ranging from Raging Grannies to Greenpeace to indigenous rights activists labelled possible threats to national security.

This bill is part of a pattern. It goes back before the Harper government by years and years. It’s about justifying

foreign and domestic policy to attack unions, social justice activists, peace and environmental movements—and about justifying wars in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq.

History tells us that CSIS itself was created after the RCMP secret police undertook dirty tricks in Quebec and elsewhere. CSIS and the RCMP secret activities have always been about squashing dissent.

### Resistance

There is a metaphor—the boiling frog—which is overused, but very apt in this situation. The analogy is that a frog placed in a pot of water is fine. As the water is heated up it does not notice it is being cooked until it is too late. It’s time for people on this continent to jump out of the pot.

This government uses laws and the legal process to do whatever it wants. That means we also have to use the legal process to fight back. But it is incredibly limited, and increasingly so when the actions we might wish to challenge are not even subject to public scrutiny. The only thing that will work is action in the streets. C-51 may make us a threat to the state, but that does not make our actions illegitimate.

We must not succumb to division. Protest is legitimate. Islam is not the enemy. Take action. Do more than sign petitions. Keep attending rallies. Bring two friends to the next one. No matter how bad this law we must continue to exercise our rights.

## To protect water, fight environmental racism

by CATHERINE GENDRON

**March 21 was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the day after, March 22, was World Water Day. The fact that these two days of recognition are side-by-side brings attention to a major concern in Canada.**

Canada has an alarming and unequal proportion of First Nations communities currently under Drinking Water Advisories. In fact, Health Canada has indicated that as of January 31, 2015, there are 136 Drinking Water Advisories in effect within 93 First Nations communities, excluding British Columbia.

Living under such advisories is an affront to our basic rights—water is a basic need, and yet Canada is deficient in its water services, particularly in relation to First Nations.

Neither water amount nor population size causes these water advisories: Canada has approximately 9 per cent of the world’s renewable water supply, and less than 0.5 per cent of the global population. Instead, it is clear that our water treatment plans and priorities are inequitable.

Recently, Winnipeg and Gatineau were both under water advisories. It took only two days for the advisory to be lifted in Winnipeg, and four days to be lifted in Gatineau. However, many First Nation communities have been under water advisories for years.

Why is it that treatment for water can be so quickly achieved in certain areas, yet on reserve residents must live under water advisories for an unforeseeable future?

These disparities are not accidental but a direct result of Canadian col-

onialism, which not only deliberately underfunds First Nations but also unleashes oil corporations on their territories. The tar sands occupy land Indigenous land the size of England, wasting three barrels of water for every one barrel of oil, and producing toxic tailing ponds that contaminate the water.

There is no question that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experience separate and very different access to safe water, and this has to change. We need to share our knowledge about these vast differences and advocate for justice and quality health.

When all people share equal access to basic rights, each one of us benefits from the health and empowerment that ensues.





# Fighting rape culture in India

## DOCUMENTARY

*India's Daughter: the story of Jyoti Singh*  
Directed by Leslee Udwin  
Reviewed by Gurkirat Batth

**This documentary pertains to the events that occurred in New Delhi, India, where six men violently raped Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old medical student, in a bus in 2012.**

By interviewing her family, one of her rapists, the gynecologist who tried to save her, those who organized protests and lawyers who worked to change the laws, the documentary gives a vivid picture of rape culture and resistance.

As illustrated by the comments made by the rapists and the defense lawyers, it is made extremely clear that women are treated as inferior to their male counterparts. Rape is used to set women straight and “teach them a lesson.” Her rapist showed no remorse and instead blamed her for her own death claiming, “A girl is far more responsible for rape than men... when being raped, she shouldn’t fight back.”

One of the defense lawyer said that “we have the best culture and

in our culture, there is no place for a woman.” Though the Indian government has banned the documentary (and Youtube complied by removing it from its site), there’s nothing specific to India about rape culture. The documentary ends with statistics of rape around the world, including Canada where more than a third of women are sexually assaulted, only six per cent of which are reported to the police.

Jyoti’s mother blames rape culture, which viewers around the world will recognize: “Whenever there’s a crime, the girl is blamed. ‘She should not go out. She shouldn’t roam around so late or wear such clothes.’ It’s the boys who should be accused and asked why they do this.”

It’s difficult to watch a documentary about such a brutal crime, but India’s Daughter also shows the inspiring resistance. It interviews Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women’s Association, who explains the mass protests that exploded to demand justice for Jyoti and all the other victims and survivors of rape: “Almost immediately, the students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University—there’s a very powerful student union and student movement

there, so student organizations and the union from there—immediately came out on the streets to protest on the same day... Immediately, almost from day one, it had stopped being about this case alone. It had become about rape culture and about women’s generalized anger against being told that they could do something to actually remain safe.”

The documentary shows mass protests of people chanting, “long live woman’s freedom, your freedom, my freedom,” and carrying signs reading “Don’t teach me what to wear. Teach your sons not to rape.” While the police felt pressure to punish Jyoti’s rapists, at the same time they tried to quell the protests. But they continued for a month, forcing the government to set up a committee and challenge laws that narrowly defined rape.

As Jyoti’s father said, “Jyoti has become a symbol. In death, she has lit such a torch that not only this country, but the whole world got lit up. But at the same time, she posed a question. What is the meaning of ‘a woman.’ How is she looked upon by society today? And I wish that whatever darkness there is in this world should be dispelled by this light.”

pristine natural habitat. The inhabitants think Kirk is a god; a white god that demonstrates superior technology, as Indigenous women bow down to him.

They do give a nod to *Star Trek* by noting that not all their episodes were like this. The budget of *Star Trek* was slashed in season three, and many of the good writers left. *Star Trek* is known for being pretty progressive in terms of race. In this episode colonial stereotypes are horrifyingly obvious, but at the same time these space-wise Métis make it pretty hilarious. Kirk basically takes over a culture by falling into a machine and building a lamp; it’s hard not to poke fun at that.

It’s important to realize that these women actually enjoy science fiction. The idea behind the podcasts is to give themselves and the rest of us an awareness of how these themes come up all the time in science fiction. Later in season two Molly and Chelsea plan to reclaim science fiction by exploring what an Indigenous future could look like 300 years from now.

The best thing about these podcasts is Molly and Chelsea’s use of humour, and their refusal to be bound by stereotypes and sexist ideals. In the beginning of each episode in the first season they start by opening up a bottle of wine that usually has some tie-in with the show; like *The Patriarch*, or a western wine for a western themed show. Some listeners

raised arguments against drinking the wine, claiming it perpetuated stereotypes. But rather than bow to the pressure, Molly and Chelsea rightfully pointed out that this would never come up were it a non-native show. Instead, they chose to model responsible social drinking and challenged stereotypes that Indigenous people can’t handle alcohol.

As the show evolved in season two, there was less drinking, only because Chelsea is pregnant. The fact that they can speak about her pregnancy so openly right at the beginning of the season reflects their commitment to bring feminism into the podcast; Chelsea often refers to her experiences as a mother in the show. They also encourage others to start their own podcasts and continue to use this tool against oppression.

Ultimately *Métis in Space* is a satirical look at the limitations of Western conceptions of the future, and our inability to see Indigenous people as part of that future.

So if you find yourself getting caught up in the belief that the Earth can’t heal from what you do after watching Supernatural, or start thinking that Indigenous people couldn’t build their own monuments after watching an alien conspiracy show, it’s time to tune in. *Métis in Space* to the rescue!

You can find their podcasts at <http://www.indianandcowboy.com/metis-in-space-podcast/>

## LEFT JAB

John Bell

# Harper lets loose his rabid dogs

**Thanks to a mono-maniacal devotion to the chimera of energy superpowerdom, Stephen Harper and his Tories have driven the Canadian economy into the dumpster. With the election deadline looming he has one hope: to make you so afraid you won’t risk changing horses in midstream. Terror is the message, 24/7.**

Of course it isn’t entirely new, since Harper’s regime has been slavishly pro-Israel and anti-Islam from the get-go in 2006. Militarism is at the heart of Harper’s project, and that requires wars, and those require enemies, and Muslims are handy and easily identifiable. But as the economy has worsened the chorus of fear-mongering has become more frequent and shrill. And that chorus has reached a climax of sorts with the tabling of Bill C-51.

## Barking on command

Before cataloguing some of the stupid, slimy and downright racist pronouncements emanating from the Tory caucus, it is worth reminding ourselves that none of Harper’s cohort—neither back benchers nor cabinet ministers—is allowed to speak unless they faithfully stick to the message approved by the Prime Minister’s Office.

You don’t have to take my word for that. I refer you to *Irresponsible Government: the Decline of Parliamentary Democracy in Canada*, written by former Tory MP Brent Rathgeber. Embarrassed by Harper’s bungling of the F-35 fighter jet purchase, Rathgeber criticized his own party in his blog. Almost immediately the phone rang, and a member of Harper’s cadre demanded the blog post be removed. When the MP’s assistant refused, the voice on the phone said: “You don’t understand. I’m calling from the PMO.” In Rathgeber’s words, under Harper the role of Tory MPs is “cheerleading and barking on command.”

There are 3,300 communication staffers working for the Harper government, estimated to cost taxpayers \$263 million this year alone. They monitor media of all sorts (Hi guys!), including the social media accounts of Tory MPs.

That’s the context. Here’s the particular.

## McCarthyism

Recently a Tory non-entity like Winnipeg MP Lawrence Toet sent a mailout to all his constituents containing this survey question:

- I agree with my MP Lawrence Toet. We must take additional action to protect Canada from terrorism.
- I disagree. Terrorists are victims too.

So much for serious debate. My point is that, while Lawrence Toet is a little cruder than some of his more noteworthy Tory colleagues, he is right on message, barking on command.

Instead of dealing with legitimate concerns over the anti-democratic provisions of Bill C-51, Tory MP Diane Ablonczy launched into a racist attack on the National Council of Canadian Muslims. She used her bully

pulpit to accuse the NCCM of supporting “Islamic terrorist groups”, particularly Hamas. Her performance was rightly described as “McCarthyesque.”

The NCCM is currently suing former PMO spokesperson Jason MacDonald, who made similar accusations in public. They have consistently opposed using violence as a tactic to achieve political aims. Their only “crime” is to oppose Harper’s slavish support for Israel, and to support human rights for Palestinians.

The message and the method is clear: if you oppose this legislation you must support terrorism. You either stand with Harper or you stand with terrorists.

When Carmen Cheung of the BC Civil Liberties Association raised concerns about lack of transparency and oversight, Tory MP Rick Norlock responded: “Is there any degree of checks and balances that would satisfy you? Are you simply fundamentally opposed to taking terrorists off the street?”

Then it was Greenpeace’s turn. Tory MP LaVar Payne confronted Greenpeace executive director Joanne Kerr with: “The purpose of the act is sharing for national security threats, so it makes me wonder if your organization is a national security threat?”

## Women’s rights

The desperate, cynical tactics of fearmongering, racism, slander and innuendo are not restricted to the Bill C-51 hearings. On International Women’s Day, newly minted Minister of Defence Jason Kenney tweeted: “On #IWD2015 thank you to the @CanadianForces for joining the fight against #ISIL’s campaign to enslave women & girls”. He illustrated his point with photos of Muslim women being paraded in chains.

One problem, the photos actually illustrate women voluntarily reenacting the Muslim equivalent of a passion play. The story celebrates the heroism of women descendants of the prophet Mohammad who faced martyrdom. The photos themselves have been circulating on the internet for years, predating the existence of ISIL. No apology or retraction was forthcoming from warlord Kenney.

The Tory myth that Canada is warring in the Middle East in defence of women’s rights and freedoms jarred with events at home. Toronto woman Zunera Ishaq won her court case over Tory demands that she be forced to remove her niqab face covering to take her citizenship oath. The court’s judgment was met with a full chorus of Tory barking dogs.

Pretending to fight to free Muslim women in Syria, while subjecting them to scapegoating in Toronto. Pretending to export democratic “values” abroad at the point of a gun, while trampling them at home. Trying to distract us from the economic disaster they’ve wrought with racism and war hysteria. The barking dogs of Harper’s Tory caucus are starting to foam around the mouth, and there’s only one way to deal with rabid hounds. Time to put this government down.



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.



RAGE AGAINST THE SYSTEM

Marxism 2015

April 24-25, 2015  
Ryerson University, Toronto

Organized by the International Socialists| [socialist.ca](http://socialist.ca) | [reports@socialist.ca](mailto:reports@socialist.ca) | [@socialist.ca](https://www.socialist.ca)

FRIDAY APRIL 24 at Ryerson Student Centre (55 Gould St, Toronto)  
7:00 pm \*Stopping Harper's agenda

SATURDAY APRIL 25 at Ryerson Student Centre(55 Gould St, Toronto)  
10:00 am \*Radical left parties: Syriza, Podemos, Quebec solidaire

11:30 am

- \*Black and brown lives matter: racism and police brutality
- \*Festival of the oppressed: the history of the Russian Revolution
- \*Precarity and the fight against austerity
- \*Why is capitalism in crisis?

1:00 pm \*Election 2015: the NDP and strategic voting

2:45 pm

- \*Colonialism and Indigenous resistance
- \*Quebec against austerity
- \*Imperialism and resistance
- \*How should radicals organize? The united front and the revolutionary party

4:15 pm

- \*How do we stop rape culture?
- \*Secularism, Islamophobia and the new racism
- \*The fight for climate jobs
- \*Capitalism's gravediggers: the working class and socialism from below

7:00 pm \*Nuit rouge: art and revolution  
Screening of Martin Duckworth's new documentary "Fennario: the good fight" about Dave Fennario's anti-war play Motherhouse

SUNDAY APRIL 26 at OISE (252 Bloor St W, Toronto) room 2199  
2-5pm \* Tools for radicals: skills for socialists workshops

For more information and to register visit [www.rageagainstthesystem.ca](http://www.rageagainstthesystem.ca)  
For more events visit [www.socialist.ca/events](http://www.socialist.ca/events)

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Do you oppose exploitation, war,  
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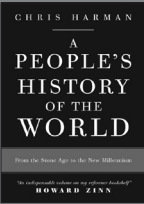
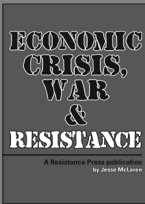
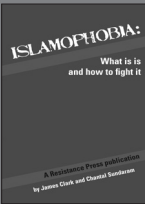
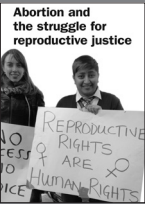
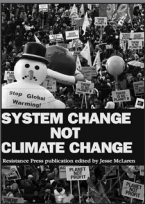
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## NORTHERN FOOD/HUNGER

by VALERIE LANNON

**You can eat nutritiously in the far North. If you're a millionaire, that is. Chicken kiev perhaps? Chicken is a mere \$65 a pound. Coleslaw on the side? That cabbage will cost you \$28.**

According to the Canadian Press: In 2014 the unemployment rate among Inuit in Nunavut was 16.5 per cent, double the average rate in the rest of the country. Percentage of the population receiving welfare: 49.1, the highest in the country. Percentage of Inuit households considered food insecure: 70. That's eight times the national average.

In 2012, Nunavut residents protested outside their local stores, and some reported price reductions as stores were shamed into cutting back on their price gouging—at least temporarily. One resident reported on Facebook: "Bought an avocado for 1.99 (was 5.99 for one) green onions 2.19, cranberry juice 4.99 from 18.99." The protests exposed that North West Co's food stores increased their profits by five per cent that year, in part due to "strong food sales growth in our northern markets."

## The Tory connection

Harper chose Inuk member Leona Aglukkaq to be his environment minister in 2013. When first elected in 2008 as the Tory MP for Nunavut, she was as minister of health, making her the first Inuk in Canadian history to be named to the federal cabinet.

While holding the health portfolio, Aglukkaq gave signals of her future abysmal role as environment minister when she refused to sign the Vienna Declaration on drug policy reform—which supported harm reduction strategies like safe needle exchange programs and safe injection sites. She has shown no support for the Idle No More movement, calling on Chief Theresa Spence to give up her hunger strike in December 2012.

It is typical of the ruling class to find a member of an oppressed group to do the bidding of the 1%.

Under pressure from northern residents, the government introduced the "Nutrition North," a food subsidy program. Even the auditor general has concluded that it is not working. In February 2015, Aglukkaq stated that it is the responsibility of food retailers to administer the subsidy program. Talk about the fox watching the hen house. There is nothing in this arrangement that would stop retailers from doing what they want with the subsidy.

Stopping not only Harper but the entire neoliberal agenda that undercuts public services will be needed to address a myriad of social problems, including exorbitant food costs in the north. As with climate justice, this is a great opportunity for residents of north and south, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to sustain a joint campaign that would ensure residents everywhere have access to affordable, nutritious food.

## QUÉBEC: 100 ACTIONS CONTRE L'AUSTÉRITÉ/100 ANTI-AUSTERITY ACTIONS



by LAURENCE LAUZON

**La semaine du 22 au 27 Février fut très agitée! Dans le cadre de la semaine d'actions dérangeantes contre l'austérité, plus de 100 actions de mobilisation ont été posées à travers le Québec, sans faire exception de la région de l'outaouais!**

Le samedi 21 février 2015, au centre des aînés de Gatineau, se tenait une rencontre entre les députés Libéraux de la région à laquelle devait assister Philippe Couillard. Pour cette occasion, un groupe de manifestant s'est rassemblé devant le centre, tentant à la fois de bloquer l'entrée aux députés et de faire entendre leur mécontentement. On y retrouvait des membres de syndicats, et aussi de quelques étudiants et des travailleurs du communautaire. Sans être agressifs, les manifestants ont su montrer une belle intensité, malgré le fait qu'ils n'étaient que 150 environ, ce qui a fait fuir notre premier ministre. Celui-ci a accusé les manifestants d'avoir de mauvais arguments et d'utiliser l'intimidation pour arriver à leurs fins. M. Couillard ne s'est donc pas présenté par «mesure de sécurité», suivant la recommandation des nombreux policiers qui se trouvaient sur place.

Plus tard dans la semaine, le mardi 24 février, un regroupement organisée par les étudiants du comité de mobilisation de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais a permis de

rassembler près de 200 personnes, surtout des étudiants et des travailleurs du communautaire devant le bureau de la députée municipale, à partir d'où ils ont marché pendant quelques heures, bloquant le trafic sur plusieurs boulevard importants dont le boulevard Saint-Joseph. L'ambiance était encore une fois d'une grande intensité, car les gens sont fâchés et ne veulent pas perdre leurs acquis sociaux. Les policiers ont escortés les manifestant de manière très respectueuse, ils sont justement touchés par les mesures d'austérité du gouvernement libéral eux aussi.

-----  
**The last week of february was very exciting. Over a 100 anti-austerity actions were taken, throughout Quebec, as part of the action agaisnt austerity week. The Outaouais region was no exception.**

The Liberal deputies of the region held a meeting, Saturday February 21, at the "centre des aînés de Gatineau". Philippe Couillard, Quebec Premier, was supposed to attend. A group of protesters jumped at the opportunity to have their voices heard, and tried to block the entrance to the meeting. The group was mainly composed of union members, and a few students and community workers were among them. Despite the fact that they were only 150, the activists managed to scare off

Couillard, without resorting to violence. He accused the protesters of having no arguments against austerity and claimed they had to resort to intimidation to reach their goals. He said he was worried for "security reasons," and decided to follow the recommendations of police officers and cancel the meeting.

Later the same week, tuesday February 24, a less spontaneous protest took place. Many weeks of preparation were put in by the "comité de mobilisation de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais." This resulted in about 200 protesters showing up. There were a few students and union members once again, but most of the activists were community members, worried about the cuts to welfare, healthcare and help to the people who need it the most. The protest started in front of the office of Maryse Gaudreault's office, the liberal party delegate for the region. The protesters walked down St-Joseph boulevard and blocked rush hour traffic for a few kilometers. Once again, there was a lot of energy coming from a small group of people, who don't want to lose already minimal services they have. There was no trouble with the police, they escorted the protesters in a respectful fashion, closing streets ahead of time. They are also affected by the austerity measures in place.

## Mass anti-austerity protest in Ireland

**On Saturday March 21st 80,000 people marched into O'Connell St Dublin.**

The protest was made up of several streams - some starting at Heuston Station, Connolly Station and from Merrion Sq. The #m21 anti-racist protest which began at the Central Bank also joined the huge Right2Water protest.

This turnout is a huge slap in the face for the Fine Gael Labour Government. They thought they could wait this movement out- hoping that by pushing the bills back to April that we would run out of steam. After the January 31st protests the State thought they could repress our movement through a combination of black propaganda, injunctions and

arrests.

They wanted to scare off the middle ground by presenting the movement as a minority of trouble makers but the biggest mass movement in recent Irish history continues to pull enormous numbers of people onto the streets. No protest movement in recent history has been able to pull such numbers out on successive demonstrations.

With confidence on a high after this protest our job now is to get out into the communities with the same passion we witnessed on the streets of Dublin today and enthuse everyone we know to join us in boycotting this double tax when the bills land in April. The SWP as part of People Before Profit

Alliance will be knocking on doors and building a huge show for non-payment which will finish off Irish Water once and for all.

Political alternative  
This movement is about more than just water though- this is a movement of a newly empowered people who are questioning the very nature of the Irish political system. We need a clear out of the mainstream parties and a new radical left. People Before Profit have published a letter to all left wing activists calling for the genuine radical left to come together and form a new alliance.

*This is republished from Socialist Worker (Ireland)*

## STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

## Bottles not cans!

**The strike at Crown Products in Toronto is now over eighteen months old. 120 workers have fought through two hard winters against a ruthless company which is clearly punishing them because they have resisted to their vicious attacks.**

Only two of the original strikers have crossed the line. They have consistently resisted the employer's concessions.

The company had earlier awarded the workers a prize for being the most productive plant in the chain and yet when negotiations started they wanted to implement a two-tiered wage structure for new hires. This would have adversely affected a younger generation of workers who were prepared to work hard for a decent wage.

Many of the Steelworkers in the plant were second and third generation.

Working for Crown was a family tradition and they were treated like dirt by the company.

The CEO based in Philadelphia makes \$12 million a year and is more than happy to cut the wages in a profit making company to make the bottom line look even better for the stock holders. Management is hell bent on creating a low wage economy for working people. The callousness and greed shown by Crown is indicative of the mind set of corporate Canada.

## Solidarity

Last weekend a monthly day of action took place with rank and file Steelworkers and allies in the broader trade union movement leafleting beer stores across the province. They were asking people to drink their beer in bottles not cans to put economic pressure on the company. The response was overwhelmingly positive with purchasers showing their bottles as they left the store.

The company has 140 locations across the globe. They have locked out workers in Ghana and

have fired others in Turkey for having the audacity to form a union. The Turkish workers rallied in support of their brothers and sisters in Toronto. The same happened in the United Kingdom and the United States.

At this recent day of action members of teachers unions, CUPE and OPSEU came out in support appreciating what the stakes were in this battle between the robbers and the robbed. If Crown gets it's way here, it will be a signal to both private and public sector employers that this is the time to attack the very heart of our unions.

Crown is involved in basic union busting, constantly moving the goal posts in negotiations. They went from a two tiers wage demand to lowering the wages of the entire workplace and stating that they would take back only a handful of those who went on strike.

The strikers started occupying Liberal MPP's offices demanding that the government step in and force Crown to bargain. Other unions such as Unifor came together with the Steelworkers members, putting pressure on the government. Bombardier workers have been regularly on the line.

Two weeks ago the Minister of Labour blinked and called an inquiry into the Crown strike. It's anyone's guess what will come from this but the public pressure is mounting on the company and workers are staying strong on the lines. They have been actively supporting the TA strike of CUPE 3903 at York University and other labour disputes.

The strength of these workers, the 5600 marchers against austerity in Toronto for International Women's Day, the renewed mobilization of the student movement in Quebec are all signs of the deep seated unrest in Canada and Quebec. Anywhere where people are struggling could become the spark for a larger fight back, as we have seen in other area of the world.



# Socialist Worker

## Rallies coast to coast to coast say STOP BILL C-51

**On Saturday March 14 there were rallies from coast to coast to coast against Bill C-51. The surge in opposition—in 70 communities from Yellowknife, to Victoria, to St Johns—has led to a sharp fall in support for the bill, from 82 per cent in February to 45 per cent now.**

The rallies have also exposed the Liberals for supporting the Tory secret police bill—just like when the Liberals imposed their own “anti-terror” law in 2001—and made it clear people do not want to amend the bill, but to stop it.

### West coast

More than 1,000 rallied and marched in Victoria. As an elder from the Cowichan tribes said to loud applause from the crowd, “Our people have been fighting terrorism since the 1400s, ever since the Europeans came over to our land...Harper is the worst terrorist in this country.”

A thousand rallied and marched in Vancouver, where anti-poverty activist Tamara Herman explained, “What’s ‘national security’ in this country built on? It’s built on 500 years of colonialism, it’s built on a legacy that includes Japanese internment camps, the Chinese head tax, bans on homosexuality, and laws that would be considered ridiculously sexist today. Even though these laws were part of ‘national security’ back then, what did people do? They stood up and fought like hell.”

### Winnipeg

Another 1,000 rallied and marched in Winnipeg, where Crystal Green from



Grassroots Indigenous Water Defense explained, “the truth about Bill C-51 is they want the land and the resources, and it’s us Indigenous peoples and our title to the land is what stands in the way to extractive industry—industry like tar sands expansion, fracking, logging, mining... They will try to stifle dissent but they will not succeed.”

As NDP MP Pat Martin said, “Harper has undermined the ability of your elected representatives to act on your behalf in the House of Commons. You have to take it to the streets. Sometimes civil disobedience is civil defense, and there’s never been more

justification to show civil disobedience.”

### Saskatoon (report by Catherine Gendron)

Hundreds attended the march, which began at the City Hall Civic Square in the core of downtown.

There were representatives from law, who argued the fundamental attack on our protected Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our constitutional right to protest. There was also an NDP candidate who spoke to the issue of politics and fear. Nina Wilson, one of the founding members of the Idle No More movement also spoke and one quote particularly stood

out. She said to the crowd that “now you know how it feels to be Indigenous” as the range of Canadians who can be viewed as a threat to “economic security” will expand under Bill C-51. Other speakers included representatives from the student community, the labour community as well as a representative from the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan.

### Toronto (report by Paul Stevenson)

Around 4,000 people joined the Toronto protest against bill C-51 at Nathan Phillips Square. The energy was angry and defiant and brought together dozens

of groups that have or will be attacked by the new legislation.

Activists from the Idle No More movement led the rally and march by pointing out that C-51 will simply mean that everyone else will be criminalized just as Indigenous land defenders have been. There were strong messages of support and solidarity from Sid Ryan of the Ontario Federation of Labour and Marie-Clark Walker from the Canadian Labour Congress. Environmental groups, NGO’s, anti-war campaigners and many more joined and brought their own signs to the event. It had the sense of a movement on the rise.

### Ottawa (report by Chantal Sundaram)

The Ottawa-Gatineau rally against C-51 was attended by people from all walks of life and political stripes, who heard connections made between this “anti-terrorist” bill and all the legitimate reasons you might have reason to dissent against current government policy on a range of issues.

After the rally in front of the PM’s Office, the crowd of close to 1,000 converged on Parliament Hill and lined the steps to the Peace Tower changing “Kill the Bill” and “Reject fear.”

### Halifax (report by Robert King)

A hundred people, some carrying placards and banners, gathered in the square. There were some musicians among the crowd, some with drums, others with guitars, etc.

The speakers represented various groups and political parties. Megan Leslie NDP MP for Halifax reiterated the dire implications for activists, such as in the environmental movement, First Nations, etc. if Bill C-51 becomes legislation. Other speakers included a representative from Labour Council, a First Nations activist, an Acadia University professor who’s been doing humanitarian work in Columbia, a spokeswoman from the Green Party, and a representative of the hactivist group Anonymous. All the speakers added to the clear message that the passing of this Bill will be a catastrophe for democracy and rights and freedoms and that it must be opposed vigorously.

We can’t just amend it, we must end it.

## Quebec spring returns

by Chantal Sundaram

**On Saturday March 21, the start of spring, thousands rallied at Place Emelie Gamelin, the “Tahrir Square” of Quebec’s Maple Spring of 2012, to launch a re-start of that movement, this time in the form of a “social strike” against austerity.**

The rally was the first of a series of protests planned every Saturday in the square next to the University of Quebec in Montreal, to continue until Quebec “austerity Premier” Couillard “listens to us.” All the rallies will be under the banner of “anti-austerity” but will have different targets each week. The first on March 21 was billed as a demonstration against austerity and oil, with a focus on pipelines.

### Strike

But it was also the launch of a new student strike movement led by ASSÉ, which began the following Monday with 45,000 students on strike across Quebec. As in 2012, the movement set strike vote thresholds to be met in order for the strike to begin, while other strike votes were still being held. As in 2012, this strategy is intended to build momentum and encourage the strike votes still being held by the example of successful rolling strikes. The first 45,000 (which surpassed the initial threshold of 30,000) included more than the “usual suspects,” such as medical students.

It remains to be seen just how much momentum will pick up, but the strike votes are taking place this time in the context of a much

broader movement against austerity that has seen trade union-led demos in the thousands in recent months against Couillard’s policies as a whole, the possibility of a major union confrontation in the public service, and the Front Commun—a new coalition between unions and civil society that could have the potential to make real the call for a “grève sociale.”

An indication of this was the main contradiction on the March 21 demo itself. Phalanxes of police recalled the brutality of 2012, and there was a flavour of that exercised on the march.

### Police

But what was different this time was that every cop, from the mediators to the regular duty officers to the riot squad, were covered head to toe in stickers—

red square stickers. But theirs said “On n’a rien volé (nous). Libre négé.” (WE’RE not the ones who have stolen anything. Free negotiations). What this is about is Bill 3, the bill that threatens the pensions of municipal workers, including police and firefighters. They have been working to rule in many disruptive ways for more than a year.

This doesn’t change the cops’ role as defenders of wealth and power and maintainers of the peace for those who hold it. The police themselves made this clear with vicious attacks on students, including shooting a young woman in the face with a tear gas canister.

But repression has so far failed to stop the strike. Meanwhile there are mass protests planned for April 2, a climate protest April 11, and May Day.

