

SocialistWorker

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JUSTIN HARPER CANADA'S CORPORATE COALITION

*My
party cuts
healthcare
so we can cut
corporate
taxes*

*I support
Bill C-51 to
erode your
civil liberties*

*Forget the
planet,
long live
tar sands
& climate
chaos*

*Billions
for warfare,
not jobs or
childcare*

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More than 25,000 marched in Quebec City



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Facts & figures

0
Number of times the federal budget mentions First Nations or climate change

15
Minimum wage demand that united workers in 230 cities across the US, 15 cities across Ontario and 40 countries around the world on April 15

20
Jail term in years for poor and racialized woman who had a miscarriage and sought medical help

20,000
Number of Japanese Canadians interned during WWII for “national security”

22,000
Number of migrant who have died crossing the Mediterranean since the year 2000

25,000
Conservative estimate of the number of people who joined the Act on Climate march in Quebec City

75,000
Number of people who protested austerity in Montreal on April 2

135,000
Number of Quebec students on strike at the start of April

\$12 billion
Budget increase for the Canadian military over the next decade

In their own words

“Our herring is our future and we must protect it by whatever means necessary.”
Heiltsuk Nation Chief Marilyn Slett

“It’s entirely depend on fiscal sleight of hand...a total of \$7.5 billion in shell game transactions. Without those three fiscal tricks, the reported balance would be a \$6.1 billion deficit – not a \$1.4 billion surplus.”
Unifor economist Jim Stanford on the “balanced” budget

“I have dedicated myself to trying to draw great people into politics.”
Justin Trudeau on Bill Blair, former Toronto police chief who presided over G20 police brutality, a series of killings of people of colour, and the racist policy of carding

“I’m a Liberal.”
Justin Trudeau on supporting Bill C-51 that attacks civil liberties, much like the Liberal Bills C-35/36 did after 9/11



Victory for Heiltsuk nation

by VALERIE LANNON

On April 2, the Heiltsuk First Nation, located on BC’s central west coast, scored a huge victory over the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and billionaire Jimmy Pattison.

Through a series of militant actions, the Nation and its allies forced DFO to back off its plans to open the herring fishery in a sensitive area in the Nation’s territory.

Background
Ignoring the demands of the Heiltsuk First Nation, and without any consultation, DFO opened the commercial herring-roe seine fishery on March 22.

The Heiltsuk people have survived off herring fish for millennia and also made a living selling herring-roe to Japanese markets in more recent years.

But commercial (as opposed to indigenous, traditional) over-fishing has taken its toll and the Heiltsuk Nation has called for a ban on herring fisheries this year in what is known as Area 7. Herring fisheries had already been closed in two other contested regions this year after neighbouring First Nations obtained injunctions.

“We must put conservation first. We have voluntarily suspended our community-owned commercial gillnet herring licenses for this season to allow stocks to rebuild, but DFO and industry are unwilling to follow suit,” said Kelly Brown, director of the Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department.

“We have exhausted all means of negotiation

with DFO,” stated Chief Councillor Marilyn Slett. “Our herring is our future, and we must protect it by whatever means necessary.”

Greg Thomas, the chair of the Herring Industry Advisory Board, said there are plenty of fish. But the Heiltsuk claim herring stocks are on the verge of collapse. “We don’t trust the DFO science. It’s very industry driven,” said Carrie Humchitt, a former legal adviser for the Heiltsuk and a logistics coordinator for the spawn on kelp fishery with the First Nation’s Gladstone Reconciliation Society.

Resistance
When DFO would not listen to the cautions and demands issued by the Heiltsuk, community members took direct action to defend herring stocks. They took their boats into their traditional waters to block entry by commercial fishers.

In an open letter to Jim Pattison, owner of the Canadian Fishing Company, the Heiltsuk wrote, “The Heiltsuk Nation owns two gillnet licenses, but we will not be leasing them this year due to conservation concerns. In a community with high unemployment such as ours, this decision was not taken lightly. It is a sacrifice we must make now in order to safeguard for our future.”

Both Chief Slett and Kelly Brown locked themselves in the DFO office on nearby Denny Island.

Allies
The Heiltsuk people received strong support from a variety of sources. There were been statements of solidarity from

the neighbouring Kitasoo/Xaixais Nation, the Council of the Haida Nation, Coastal First Nations, Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Heiltsuk leadership also noted solidarity from the labour movement: “We appreciate the leadership and understanding of the situation that the United Fisherman and Allied Workers’ Union – Unifor has shown by its recommendation to its members not to select the Central Coast as an area to fish herring this year, as outlined in an open letter to the Council of the Haida Nation, the Heiltsuk Tribal Council and BC commercial herring fishermen dated January 20, 2015.”

And solidarity has also seen unity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the streets of Vancouver and Victoria.

In Victoria, protesters held a rally outside Save-On-Foods, a supermarket chained owned by billionaire Jim Pattison. His Canadian Fishing Company, or Canfishco, holds a large number of herring licenses. On top of ignoring Indigenous calls for sustainability, Pattison routinely exploits the commercial fishers themselves by paying the lowest possible amount for their catch.

Fifty protesters occupied the busy downtown intersection outside DFO’s Vancouver office and four activists temporarily locked themselves down in the office itself. Protesters have also been active around the local Canfishco plant.

As NDP MP Nathan Cullen noted, “The Heiltsuk have repeatedly stated they

will not consent to herring test or commercial fisheries because their traditional knowledge and scientific data show the area cannot sustain both traditional and commercial fisheries. The law is very clear that Aboriginal harvesting rights must take priority over non-Aboriginal interests when conservation concerns exist.”

“I stand in solidarity with the people from the Heiltsuk Nation, who have continually fought to defend herring stocks they have harvested for countless generations,” said Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada.

The Tories?
Tory Fisheries Minister Gail Shea claimed that “openings are based on science and do follow the cautionary approach,” which would be a first for the Tories, given their devotion to all extraction industries — whether under the ground (oil), on the ground (forests) or underwater (fisheries).

Pacific Wild founder and wildlife photographer Ian McAllister speculated as to why the federal government might be aggressively pushing the re-opening of the herring trade.

“It may have something to do with pipeline politics. This government is testing the mettle of coastal communities. It’s hard to imagine the long history of peaceful demonstration that the Heiltsuk have conducted, why they think they are just going to turn this into something, bigger,” he said last week.

Jailed for failed pregnancy

by LAURA KAMINKER

Last month, four decades of anti-woman, anti-abortion hysteria in the US hit a new low.

Last August, an Indiana woman sought medical attention after a premature delivery resulted in the death of the fetus. The emergency-room doctor called the police. In April, that woman was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

From *The Guardian*, “A 33-year-old woman from Indiana has been charged with the feticide and fetal murder of her unborn child after she endured a premature delivery and sought hospital treatment.

“She is the second woman in Indiana to be charged with feticide following the prolonged criminal prosecution of Bei Bei Shuai, who lost her baby when she tried to kill herself.

Women’s rights advocates see the decision by prosecutors of St Joseph County, Indiana, to apply feticide laws against Patel as part of the creeping criminalization of pregnancy in America. At least 38 of the 50 states have introduced fetal homicide laws.”

These laws were never intended to “protect the unborn child”. The laws are being used exactly for their intended purpose: to police and punish women. Especially - or exclusively - low-income women. Because let’s be clear: the US’s “war on women” is also a class war. Women who can afford private treatment will never be subjected to these humiliations. On the other hand, with the middle class shrinking and poverty burgeoning throughout the US, increasing numbers of women must fear these nightmare scenarios.

What would policies intended to “protect the unborn child” look like? Laws that gave us: Fresh, healthy food that every person could afford. Free quality pre-natal care. Free quality medical care for every person. Free childcare for the children already born. Jobs that pay a true living wage. Clean water.

Policies intended to protect children - in any stage of their lives - don’t criminalize pregnancy.

Canadians take note: a fetal personhood law was floated as a private member’s bill in the Harper government. The MP who sponsored the bill admitted that its purpose was to “recognize the humanity of the unborn child”. The recent sentencing in Indiana is the direct outcome of that kind of language enshrined into law.

The bill was defeated after public outcry.

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Harper and migrant deaths

by Jesse McLaren

“We found, literally, a floating cemetery. Bodies were everywhere. With the dinghies we had to literally slalom among the corpses,” said a medic who tried to rescue migrants from a ship that sank in the Mediterranean last month.

Over 22,000 migrants have died since the year 2000 trying to reach Europe, and numbers are rising. Last year more than 3,000 migrants died, including 500 when a boat sank near Malta. This year 1,500 have already died, including more than 1,200 this month alone. But the dominant response has been to blame the victim through a racist war on migrants, rather than address the roots causes of Western foreign and domestic policy—including Canada’s.

Militarism and fascism

As Laurens Jolles, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Italy explained, “If one really wants to tackle the problem and ensure that there are less deaths, then the thing to do is to look at providing legal avenues to come to Europe.”

But with an economic crisis, the 1% is looking for scapegoats. Last year Italy cancelled its Mare Nostrum search-and-rescue program, and now migrants are being labelled a terrorist threat requiring a military response—including drones. This racist response will only worsen the situation for migrants, while reinforcing the real threat of fascism across Europe.

The Italian Parliament is pushing for a naval blockade of Libya,

a demand previously only coming from the far-right Northern League. British Prime Minister David Cameron wants to send British forces to Libya to “smash the gangs” responsible for migrant ships—language that reinforces the right-wing UKIP and fascist British National Party. French President François Hollande is mimicking rhetoric of the fascist National Front in equating migrants with terrorists, claiming that “By fighting these traffickers, we fight terrorism and by fighting terrorism we fight these traffickers.”

So the response to a humanitarian tragedy becomes part of the Islamophobic “war on terror.” Mohammed Ali Malek—which the Globe and Mail described as a “bearded Tunisian” (as if his choice of facial hair had any relevance)—is being charged with multiple manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and aiding illegal immigration.

But criminalizing migration is not a solution, it is part of the problem. As Aurelie Ponthieu from Doctors Without Borders said, “We are amazed to see that the huge means and resources allocated to declaring war on smugglers are not equally invested in saving lives. Focusing on keeping people out by cutting their only existing routes is only going to push people fleeing for their lives to find other routes, potentially even more dangerous.”

Harper’s complicity

The Harper government’s silence towards the latest tragedy speaks to its complicity—both in waging wars that drive people from their homelands and in preventing them from safely arriving and being

welcomed.

According to the International Organization for Migration, “In 2014, those dying in the Mediterranean have tended to be from west and central sub-saharan Africa; the Middle East and North Africa, with most originating in the Syrian Arab Republic, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Egypt; and the Horn of Africa...Many are fleeing countries embroiled in conflict and known for widespread human rights abuses; in 2013, 63 per cent of all detections of irregular arrivals to Europe by sea were from the Syrian Arab Republic, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia.”

Canadian foreign policy is implicated in all these.

Somalia has long been the target of Western imperialism—including Canadian soldiers in the 1990s and US drones now. For more than a decade Canada occupied Afghanistan—which the Liberals started and Harper repeatedly extended. Harper has been a staunch defender of Israel—including cutting humanitarian aid to Gaza and defending every Israeli assault. Harper invited Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak to Canada for the G20 meeting in 2010, supported the dictator until the day he was overthrown in 2011, and has been silent towards the violence of the new dictatorship.

After arming the Libyan dictator Gaddafi, the West launched a war to contain the revolution against him. In order to protect Canadian companies like Suncor and SNC-Lavalin, Harper joined the 2011 war in Libya—where the Canadian military played the role of “Al-Qaeda’s air force.” In 2013 Canada

joined the war on Mali on behalf of Canadian mining corporations like Barrick Gold (who have since hired former Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird). Canada sold weapons to Saudi Arabia, which armed sectarian groups to undermine the Syrian revolution, and is now joining the dictator Bashar Al Assad to bomb the resulting extremist groups. Meanwhile Harper’s handpicked ambassador to Jordan has been implicated in transporting ISIS recruit to Syria.

All these wars have been labeled “humanitarian interventions.” The fact that thousands are risking their lives to flee the resulting violence shows the true nature of Western intervention. But instead of ending wars, occupations and arms sales the West is criminalizing migrants.

Harper’s domestic policy is part of this war on refugees. When a ship of Tamil migrants feeling the genocidal Sri Lankan state arrived in 2010 the Tories criminalized them. Despite the Syrian humanitarian crisis, the Tories have hardly let any Syrian refugees arrive. The Tories have scapegoated refugees to justify gutting refugee health care and distracting from the \$36 billion cut to healthcare. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been used to exploit migrant workers and now arbitrary timelines and lists of “safe countries” have been used to further deport migrants.

Instead of criminalizing migrants we need to stop the criminal wars they are fleeing. Instead of closing the borders and deporting migrants we need to open the borders and welcome them. Instead of blaming migrants we need to blame the 1% who thrive on wars and racism.

Canada vs campesinos

by CRAIG FRAYNE

Transnational capital depends on uprooting those closest to the land. In contrast to rural areas that have been fully swallowed by agribusiness, many Latin American campesino (peasant/landless farmer) organizations challenge the dominant narrative of markets, urbanization and development.

They refuse to grow the handful of export crops demanded by agro-monopolies and commodity speculators; they lead resistance to GMO seed, extractive or tourism industries that seek to patent and commercialise the commons; and engage in civil disobedience to defend their right to the land.

This is why campesinos are being evicted, threatened and murdered in Honduras.

Campesino organizations are targets because they are united and unrelenting in their struggle for alternatives to capitalist-driven uneven development that continues to be a disaster for the rural population of Honduras, 75 per cent of whom live on less than \$1.25 per day.

The 2009 capitalist coup

In 2008, President Manuel Zelaya began moving forward on the land reform process with a Decree that would grant titles to campesinos who had inhabited and worked land for more than 10 years. Zelaya also enacted other measures that enraged the ruling class, including a 60 per cent raise in the minimum wage, and a proposed new mining law requiring stricter environmental regulations, higher royalties and community consent.

These measures came to a halt in June, 2009—with military patrols, tanks and aircraft overhead; electricity, phone lines and media cut; armed forces stormed the home of Zelaya and put him on a plane to Costa Rica. All Latin American countries, the EU and much of the world condemned the coup, with the exception of Canada and the US.

The Clinton State Department worked behind the scenes to legitimize the coup on behalf of corporate interests. Canada was even less subtle in acting on behalf of investors, by helping rewrite the country’s mining laws and signing a bilateral trade agreement with the post-coup government.

The coup government privatized utilities and infrastructure; privatized education as part of a broader attack on the teacher’s unions, and undermined labour laws. It devised “Model Cities”, the brainchild of advisors with ties to the former Reagan Administration, as autonomous economic zones where the constitution would not apply. It granted hundreds of hydroelectric and mining concessions, mainly to US, Chinese, and Canadian investors.

Rural campesino and indigenous groups have been at the forefront of resistance to the coup and subsequent commercialization of Honduran territory. The consequence has been executions, forced disappearances, torture, death threats, attacks, and harassment.

Arab socialists condemn war on Yemen

At midnight, between March 26 and 27, 2015, warplanes belonging to ten Arab and Muslim (Pakistan) countries, led by Saudi Arabia, launched a raid Yemen, under the pretext of dealing with the sectarian Yemeni militia (the Houthi rebels) believed to be linked to a foreign state, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which threatens to take control of all of Yemen and overthrow the elected authority represented by the Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi...

During the Arab spring, the Saudi Kingdom played a crucial role in quashing the peaceful Yemeni

uprisings, by applying pressure with the help of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to impose a settlement, which led to the departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, but kept the regime’s apparatus intact and untouched. This paved the way for Saleh, after a long period of hostility, to join forces with Houthi militias, taking control of the capital Sanaa, followed by most of the provinces and regions of Yemen. However, the Houthis are now the allies of the Iranian regime and carrying out the plans of the Ayatollahs, whose nationalist aspirations of a broader Empire is

loaded with religious ideology and armed with the weapons of sectarian division...

It is clear that the primary victims of the attack will be the civilian population, which has nothing to do with any of the parties in the conflict, added to the devastation of facilities, infrastructure, and the military capabilities of the people of Yemen. This is all in a country considered one of the poorest in the Arab region and the entire world...

The revolutionary Marxist organizations signatory to this statement, strongly condemn the various acts of aggression carried

out by Houthi militias in alliance with the military, which is still controlled by the former tyrant of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and strongly supported by the Islamic Republic of the mullahs of Iran. These organizations also condemn the recent onslaught perpetrated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its allies in this brutal criminal process and calls for the cessation of hostilities between all the parties involved and the withdrawal of all foreign military presence from Yemen.

This is shared from al-manshour

Capitalism and precarity

A recent interview with American socialist Charlie Post on *Jacobin* questions one of the common sense ideas among many sections of the left today—the notion of the precariat.

Essentially this is the notion that there is an underclass of workers who receive minimum wage or lower, have no benefits and work part-time. According to the conventional wisdom this group is completely separated from workers who have full time employment and more secure working situations.

The underlying logic of this argument is that neoliberal capitalism has triumphed over ordinary workers’ ability to fight to set the terms and conditions of their exploitation, that workers in unions with higher wages and good benefits have been “bought off” and have left the “underclass” behind, and that the only option is for this underclass to fight on alone, most often outside the traditional union structures. By extension, this theory of the precariat also posits the “labour aristocracy” as being primarily male, white and existing in the rich Western countries.

Fight for \$15 and a union

Recent events in North America put the lie to these theories of despair. On April 15 working people across North America (and the world) demonstrated and went on strike for two demands: a \$15 minimum wage and fairness, including the right to form a union.

Across the US in recent months we have seen low-paid workers (disproportionately women and people of colour) rise up against employers like Walmarts and McDonalds, whose enormous profits depend on their cheap labour.

The fight for \$15—which has the support of unions like SEIU and UFCW—has galvanized the entire labour movement in a way that we haven’t seen for decades. It is simply not true that there is a privileged group of workers in some mythical workplaces somewhere immune to the downward pressures of rampant neoliberalism.

All you need to do is look at the incredibly low level of unionism inside the US to understand that whether you work in an auto plant or a McDonald’s you cannot be sure about your future, about paying the rent or about the future of your children.

In Canada there is a higher rate of workers in trade unions, which is a good thing, but this trend is moving downward with the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs over the last few years.

As the *Jacobin* interview proclaims, “We are all precarious now.” What does this mean? It doesn’t mean that there is no difference between the situation of a worker who is in a union and has some benefits and some kind of job security and a worker who toils for minimum wage or less with no job security and part-time hours.

But it’s necessary to see that these workers have a common interest in defending each other’s ability to organize, to demand decent wages and working conditions and to fight back against vicious bosses.

Oppression and precarity

Low-paid Black, Latino and white workers in the US are fighting exactly for the right to organize unions in their workplaces and to demand better wages and conditions. By so doing they are also fighting for their brothers and sisters already in unions to maintain what they have won and to stop the slide of wages and conditions that has been ongoing for the last 30 years.

Their struggles can also shake the complacency of the trade union bureaucracy, who often go along with the notion of precarious work and the impossibility of fighting global capitalism, because it means that they don’t need to organize a real fightback against the attacks on the working class.

It is definitely true that oppression (in the form of racism and sexism) means that workers of colour and women are often at the bottom of the heap when it comes to the kind of jobs that are available to them. You can see this from the participation in the April 15 rallies and from those taking the lead in the walkouts and one-day strikes of recent months.

As McDonald’s worker Katherine Cruz said at the April 15 rally in Boston, “We work really hard to make \$8.75 and not be able to live. I feel like we should all—not only McDonald’s, not only fast-food workers—everyone that lives off minimum wage should make more, so we can all support our families, support ourselves.”

The fight for a decent minimum wage is a fight for the entire working class because the downward pressure on wages and conditions affects us all. In February 1917 the Russian Revolution was launched by a group of women on International Women’s Day who stormed the bakeries demanding bread for themselves and their families. Their action was the beginning of a movement of the whole class of Russian workers who would eventually storm the barricades and begin to shape a new society where they hoped oppression and exploitation could be ended forever.

Although their revolution was eventually destroyed by the joint forces of Stalinism and military opposition by 14 capitalist countries, the goal of ending exploitation and oppression is alive and well today in the hearts and minds of those fighting for their right to a decent minimum wage, to be able to join unions alongside their sisters and brothers and to so much more besides.

INTERNATIONAL



Anti-racism in Australia

by JAMES SUPPLE, AUSTRALIA

The racist, anti-Islam “Reclaim Australia” rallies managed to attract a few hundred people each on Easter Saturday—but they are a dangerous sign that months of Abbott’s official racism and dog-whistling is giving encouragement to the far right.

The far right organisers of the rallies went to considerable lengths to show a softer face—saying they were not racist and they were not against all Muslims—only the extremists. But it was their extremism that was on display at the rallies.

The racist protests openly targeted Islam, with official demands including banning the burqa, halal food and sharia law.

Sherman Burgess, who calls himself “the Great Aussie Patriot” was a speaker in Sydney, and his racist videos have been posted by the “Reclaim Australia” Facebook pages nationwide. Burgess is a member of the Australia Defence League and has links to a range of neo-Nazi groups.

Despite the desperate appeals from the organisers to leave neo-Nazi regalia at home there were banners from the street-fighting English Defence League in Sydney, skinheads sporting Nazi tattoos in Melbourne, and a man with a Greek Golden Dawn t-shirt in Brisbane. Well-know Nazi Jim Saleam, self-styled leader of the Australia First Party, attended the Sydney protest.

In Brisbane, Pauline Hanson addressed the rally.

The “Reclaim Australia” rallies

were met by counter-demonstrations across the country—although it was only in Melbourne that they were clearly outnumbered, 800 to 500. In Canberra, there were 25 of them and 30 anti-racists, while in Sydney around 120 anti-racists to their 250, with similar figures in Brisbane. In Perth, 120 anti-racists confronted a protest of 400.

The anti-racist counter-rallies were important to confront and expose the far right that is behind Reclaim Australia. But we will need to organise larger numbers if they mobilise again.

Like its counter-parts overseas in the UK or Pegida in Germany, the far right in Australia is now attempting to use Islamophobia to build its support. Mainstream Islamophobia, fuelled by Tony Abbott’s contempt for Aboriginal people, his notion of “Team Australia”, scare-mongering about national security and efforts to blame and scapegoat the Muslim community, has laid the basis for racist ideas to become more acceptable. Abbott’s racism has already led to increased violent attacks on Muslims and mosques.

The nationally co-ordinated rallies are the first time in recent years that the far right has drawn any substantial numbers to their demonstrations. Most of those present were not hard core Nazis. The far right is attempting to draw a slightly bigger crowd of bigoted Islamophobes with the aim of turning them into racist thugs.

The anti-racist counter-rallies were important in sending a signal that their

attempts to mobilise on the streets will be resisted. Pauline Hanson and One Nation were beaten last time both by mobilising against their public meetings as well as pointing to the racism from John Howard and his policies that created divisions and fuelled it.

In Germany counter-demonstrations that have outnumbered the Pegida anti-Muslim protests have thrown the racists into crisis.

In Melbourne, where anti-racists outnumbered them and heckled everyone trying to get to their rally, the Reclaim Australia organisers have taken to Facebook to complain about their treatment.

The far right have called a protest against halal food in Sydney next weekend. We need to confront them wherever we can. If Reclaim Australia tries to call rallies again, we need bigger anti-racist protests supported by unions, Greens and Labor Party members. Shamefully, while ALP leader Bill Shorten said fears of sharia law were “exaggerated”, he didn’t condemn the racism of Reclaim Australia.

Most importantly, to keep the right on the run, we have to keep up the fight against Abbott—to fight his budget cuts, stop the Islamophobia, end the terror scare-mongering, free the refugees, and stop his attacks on Aboriginal rights.

This is shared from the Australian socialist organization Solidarity

India: nuclear vs people power

After supporting US war criminal George Bush and Israeli war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, Harper welcomed Indian war criminal Narendra Modi.

Modi was chief minister of Gujarat during the 2002 pogrom that killed 1,000 Muslims. The group Sikhs for Justice tried to have him charged during his visit, and an Ontario Court found there was enough evidence to start criminal proceedings. But the Attorney General of Ontario intervened. According to Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, legal advisor to Sikhs for Justice, Modi “escaped trial on the charges of torture under Canadian law only because of the Attorney General’s last-minute intervention.”

Harper and Modi share much in common: they scapegoat Muslims, they ignore violence against women (while the Indian government banned the documentary India’s Daughter that exposed rape culture, Harper has refused to investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women) and

they serve corporate interests.

Nuclear war

While the West has threatened war to prevent Iran from acquiring one nuclear weapon, the biggest nuclear powers in the world have been quietly supporting nuclear proliferation in Israel, Pakistan and India—none of whom have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Canada has a long record of complicity, supplying the uranium for the atomic bombs that the US (the greatest nuclear threat) used to kill hundreds of thousands in Japan in 1945. The mining itself in the North West Territories also killed Indigenous communities with cancer.

While Harper calls Iran the “biggest threat to world peace,” he doesn’t seem to mind giving mountains of uranium to a violent Hindu nationalist in an arms race with Pakistan. The claim that the uranium will not encourage nuclear war was debunked just hours after the deal was signed, when India

test-fired a missile capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Nuclear power heightens two existential threats: nuclear war and the climate crisis. Some claim that nuclear power is a “green alternative” but this ignores the huge carbon emissions from mining and refining uranium, not to mention the radioactive toxic waste that’s produced. Nuclear power is completely intertwined with fossil fuels, including the idea of using it to power the tar sands.

People power

But there are movements challenging inequality, in the streets and at the ballot box. On February 10 the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, “Common Man’s Party”), won a landslide victory in Delhi—crushing Modi’s BJP party by promising to end corruption, provide access to services, and improve safety for women. Two weeks later they slashed power tariffs by half and supplied free water, two of their election promises.

WWII internment of Japanese Canadians

Kim Koyama discusses the history and legacy of internment, and the lessons for today

Following Japan's December 7, 1941 attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, racism and paranoia toward the Japanese were at an all-time high.

Canada and the US rounded up all residents of Japanese descent on the west coast (20,000 Japanese Canadians) and forcibly relocated the entire populations to internment camps located away from the coast.

Internment

Japanese Canadians were competitive in the fishing industry and this was an opportunity for non-Japanese to steal their business and profit. All fishing boats belonging to Japanese Canadians were seized.

Japanese newspapers were shut down—except for the *New Canadian*, which was allowed to operate in order to disseminate government edicts and other information to the Japanese Canadian community. Cameras and radios were confiscated and cars had to be surrendered.

The entire community was put under curfew. Once the population was evacuated, homes, businesses, property, cars, and all possessions left behind were sold at bargain prices.

Adult males were the first to be moved. They were sent to road camps where they did manual labour. Shortly after, the women and children were sent to the prison camps. This separation of families made the ordeal especially traumatic.

The government of Canada declared all Japanese Canadians to be “enemy aliens”—this despite the fact that the majority of the population were of the second-generation: they had been born in Canada and were thus Canadian citizens.

Both the Canadian and American governments had to move quickly to find sites for the prison camps; preferred locations would be far from the Pacific coast, isolated, and able to accommodate entire communities. Some of the communities were initially housed at racetracks in former stables—each family assigned a horse stall to live in, with little privacy. Others were moved to ghost towns or purpose-built camps, to live in tents or hastily built wooden shacks.

My mother and her two sisters shared a bed and would huddle together with a hot-water bottle for warmth. Bathing had to be done in communal baths; although segregated by sex, it was a humiliating routine for many.

Despite being treated as the enemy, many Japanese Canadians wanted to show their loyalty to Canada during wartime. Many young men felt the best way to prove their loyalty would be to enlist in the war effort. Although the Canadian authorities refused to allow this, it was through a request from the British army to the Canadian government that Japanese Canadian men were allowed to enlist. Britain was hoping to use the men as interpreters, and yet—in one of the greatest ironies of WWII—many of these men (like my father) did not speak Japanese very well.



Despite the wartime racism, there was a growing sentiment from the general population as the war progressed that the internment was wrong. In 1944, with increasing pressure from the media, the Canadian government began to move Japanese Canadians out of the camps.

There were two choices offered by the government (aside from remaining in the camps, which some chose over the alternatives): be deported, i.e., move “back” to Japan—a place three quarters of the population had never been—or move further east across Canada, away from the coast. For most, the move east was the preferred choice, as they felt leaving the only country they knew was not an option.

Japanese Canadians were still required to register with the RCMP at age 16. When my mother turned 16, her family had re-settled in Ontario. She had to travel alone by train to the nearest RCMP office. She was fingerprinted, and then the RCMP officer grabbed her face and brusquely turned her head from side to side to look for any identifying marks. One of her worst memories was of the school day shortly afterward when her class was interrupted by an RCMP officer who came into the room and walked to her desk to hand-deliver the identification card. She was dismayed to see that along with her photo and fingerprints was the term “enemy alien.”

(This intentional humiliation is a tactic which is still used today by Canadian authorities against Muslims, to spread racism and justify military spending and campaigns in the Middle East.)

Release from the camps brought relief, but wartime racism was still at a high, and with all of their property and possessions

gone, there was the challenge of finding homes, jobs, and trying to re-establish a normalcy in their lives. The Canadian government would not trust or allow Japanese Canadians to return to the west coast until 1949. (Also in 1949, Japanese Canadians would finally be given the right to vote.)

Legacy

The impact of the racism of this period had lasting effects on the community. Aside from the large west coast cities of North America where Japanese immigrants had initially settled, there are no visible communities of Japanese—no Japantown or Little Tokyo—not even in the largest cities.

In 1977, Japanese Canadians celebrated the centennial anniversary of Manzo Nagano's entry into Canada as the first Japanese immigrant. The year was marked by special events, including a national youth conference held in Toronto which drew participants from across the country.

It had taken this long before the older generations started to talk, but once they did, there was a growing call for justice and redress. Those who had been interned—both in Canada and the US—demanded an apology and monetary compensation from the government. It would take 11 years before the fight was resolved. In 1988, Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney offered a formal apology to Japanese Canadians and a settlement of \$21,000 per person..

Also in 1988 was the repealing of the War Measures Act that allowed anyone to be detained indefinitely without charges or due process. It was this statute which had made the internment possible. But the War Measures Act has simply been replaced.

Today

Many of us like to think that Canada is a “kinder and gentler” nation in which we now know better. Yet these sentiments and assumptions have been and continue to be disproven by successive governments which display racist policies, aided by a population which is easily swayed by whichever racism is being currently promoted by the authorities and mass media.

The current atmosphere of Islamophobia—especially since 9/11—has resulted in heightened discrimination against and victimization of Muslims, Arabs, and generally anyone with brown skin or a Middle-Eastern appearance. With the “Secret Trial 5”, five Muslim men endured years of imprisonment and extreme hardship under “Security Certificates,” which, like the War Measures Act, allowed for indefinite detention without charges or trial. The accusations alone stirred up fears and racist sentiment; more than a decade later, the effects are still being felt.

Suspiciously, these cases—on the front pages of mass media for days—often coincide with government campaigns to gain public support for Canadian military interventions in the Middle-East, or for increased security measures.

People in Canada—particularly Muslims—are being taken into custody and held indefinitely without charge or trial, and these actions are overwhelmingly condoned by the Canadian government. Parliament continues to see new bills put forth which will curtail civil liberties, supposedly to protect us from a foreign (read: non-white) threat. These actions are presented as a concern and benefit to all, but in reality they harm everyone.

“People in Canada—particularly Muslims—are being taken into custody and held indefinitely without charge or trial, and these actions are overwhelmingly condoned by the Canadian government. Parliament continues to see new bills put forth which will curtail civil liberties, supposedly to protect us from a foreign (read: non-white) threat.”

QUEBEC AGAINST AUSTERITY



Faultlines in the Quebec student strike

We are now witnessing the third strike by Quebec university and college students within 10 years. This is not a new tradition: Quebec tuition fees were frozen at the lowest levels in Canada as a result of successive student strikes across Quebec for decades.

But in the span of a generation, and during an era that has marked the move from neoliberal “globalization” into austerity, these strikes have posed an increasingly urgent question: how can a student strike spark something bigger, a strike that mobilizes the entire community and that has labour unions at the heart of it?

At the start of April 2015, 135,000 Quebec students were on strike after very little lead-up time compared to the last student strike in 2012 – which lasted months but also took much longer to build up to. But in that build-up there was a lot of time to prepare students to make a concrete connection between their immediate demand – repeal of a tuition hike – and the bigger picture of the commercialization of education.

Three years later, week two of the strike saw 75,000 people converge in the streets of Montreal under the general banner of anti-austerity, called by a student organization but with visible support by unions and community organizations and with nothing but glowing reports in the media about the level of popular support from all walks of life. Today, how could you not aim higher than before?

Measure of success

In 2005, students succeeded in winning the repeal of a law transforming grants into loans. At the same time, there was a massive community and labour mobilization against Jean Charest, then Liberal premier of Quebec, including a series of one-day illegal general strikes, which included non-unionized workers, and a series of local union votes in favour of an unlimited general strike that was never realized. So although the students succeeded in their goal, the votes to end the strike only narrowly succeeded on many campuses because the context seemed to offer a bigger fight against Charest.

Again, in 2012, there was tremendous success in defeating the tuition hike that was the focus of the strike, the repressive legislation that was put in place to quell the movement, and the rejection of the Liberal government immediately responsible. Community and neighbourhood organizations were formed beyond student ranks, with broader demands, and popular tactics like the banging of “casseroles” (pots and pans) on street corners at the same time every night. Waiting in the wings, however, were the equally treacherous Parti quebecois, who indexed tuition to inflation and introduced an austerity budget of their own. They in turn were replaced by the current Liberal austerity premier, Couillard, and again the question was: what next.

Since then, the context in Quebec has been one of increasing labour unrest, from massive mobilizations over employment insurance cuts, to work to rule against attacks on municipal pensions, to a brewing fight between the government and the entire provincial public sector that may come to a head in the fall. And the word “austerity” is being used by

unions, community groups, students and the environmental movement to try to unite behind a common banner. In particular, an official “Common Front” has come together to try to create a political front for the half a million public sector workers who may be in strike position in the fall.

There should be every reason why the student movement should want, this time above all, to coordinate its strategy with labour. But just at this time there is increasing fragmentation within the student movement over this very issue.

Strategy

Over the Easter long weekend, the Executive of ASSE, which had been the core leadership of the 2012 strike, simultaneously resigned and was removed by the membership as a result of their position that the movement should consider a tactical retreat, or a pause, in the strike movement.

The reasons were: to wait for the fall, when all major public sector unions might be in a potential strike position with government over the eviscerating of their agreements; the approaching end of the school term; and the growing divide between the radicalism of the movement in Montreal as opposed to the regions outside.

All good reasons to reflect on strategy, but the timing was problematic. There had been a campaign for a spring strike for months, but without clear leadership other than a broad coalition called the “Spring 2015 Committee,” unelected and unaccountable to any of the student federations and proclaiming to be a committee of students, workers, and the unemployed. It struck a chord: there was an appetite for a spring strike. But it wasn’t even across campuses, and wasn’t tested through months of preparation as in 2012.

Meanwhile, the FEUQ, the other major player in the 2012 strike, is facing disaffiliation from core members like the Université de Montreal over the lack of “direct democracy” through general assemblies as opposed to the “representative democracy” offered by FEUQ. They are not looking to join ASSE, but to found a new student formation.

As in the past, this strike was decided by democratic votes at the local level in student general assemblies: both in a first, limited mandate, and in a second round of “reaffirmation” votes to extend the strike by either another limited period or for unlimited strike.

Positive strike votes and reaffirmation votes were not completely confined to Montreal or to other urban centres, or to campuses or programs of study considered to be more “radical.” But there is a real divide between the more advanced sections of the movement in parts of Montreal and others. Some strike “reaffirmation” votes have failed due to lack of information about what is going on in the movement as a whole, the approaching summer and option of a fall restart, and some because of a lack of a clear immediate goal apart from defeat of the government’s entire austerity agenda.

The Couillard government is of course trying to exploit these divisions by appealing to the “silent majority” to attend the local student assemblies and vote down the strike.

Unity

Despite this inevitable strategic debate within the movement, there was nothing but unity shown on the April 2 march of 75,000. In defiance of a Montreal municipal ordinance, the march did not declare its itinerary to authorities. Signs on the march read: this government did not give us their itinerary, why should we give them one?

But the movement needs an itinerary, and that’s what’s not clear. The tactical question of pushing for the spring or waiting for the fall is only the first of many big questions before it.

What will be the measure of success? The demands of the strike are not ones that can be achieved by students alone this time: the reversal of Quebec’s entire austerity (and energy) agenda will require a much larger social force. But how does the movement set benchmarks for success along the way?

One of the benchmarks may be the process of building unity itself: both within the student movement and between students and labour. But that’s not an easy basis to win strike votes.

There are plans for illegal strikes by some faculty in the CEGEPs (colleges), under the anti-austerity banner, and these might be an important sign of what’s possible. But there is still no sign that the big union leadership is in any way willing to throw in its lot with the students for a “social strike” against austerity. The fall confrontation, if there is one, may fall far short of student expectations.

What’s next?

Over the coming months there will be an attempt to keep the strike momentum going from the spring into the fall.

While the union leadership may not have the same appetite to follow the students right now, the base of union members may see things differently, not to mention those who identified with the student movement in their neighbourhoods in 2012. In fact, the student movement may help to pry open the differences within the labour movement about how to challenge austerity.

In the meantime, there must be unconditional support for those students facing expulsion and other discipline by campus administrations for picketing, for those facing worse as a result of defying legal injunctions, and those who have been brutalized by police in the last few weeks. Both the student and labour movement must stand united on this, as they did against attempts in 2012 to terrorize dissent, whether by legislation or police brutality. There must be absolute unity on this question, regardless of any disagreement on others: it is key to the future of dissent, and can unit the movement on that basis.

One of the slogans of the massive general strike of 1968 in France was: “students are the spark, workers are the flame.”

It may take longer than expected by the changing cohort of the student movement in Quebec to see this spark turn into a longer-lasting flame, but in many ways it already has, and continues to burn.

Chantal Sundaram assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the new Quebec student strike, and the challenges of linking with the labour movement and the left alternative party

Québec solidaire: the ballot and the street

The conference “Rage Against the System: Marxism 2015” in Toronto on April 25 welcomed via Skype representatives of parties challenging the austerity agenda at the ballot box that have emerged from the movement: Siriza and Podemos. Ironically, the least well-known in English Canada may have come from next door in Quebec.

André Frappier, a four-time Montreal riding candidate for Québec solidaire, the relatively new anti-neoliberal and anti-austerity party that is running at 16 per cent in the polls and who was also NDP candidate with the Jack Layton team in 2004, and a 30-year activist with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, spoke about trying to be a meaningful voice for the growing anti-austerity movement in Quebec.

André spoke on a Skype panel about radical left parties, along with militants from Greece and Spain linked to Siriza and Podemos. All three talked about the thirst for an alternative to the austerity parties on offer at election time, but also the need to maintain a living link between those alternatives and the movement that spawned them.

Québec solidaire is of course not nearly as close to state power as Siriza and Podemos, and so does not feel the same pressure to compromise. But its challenge is to sink deeper roots in the labour movement and student movement: although it has positioned itself consistently not only as Quebec’s only anti-austerity party but also one with an uncompromising anti-neoliberal agenda, it has yet to displace the hold of the mainstream parties, especially in the regions outside Montreal, despite the growing anti-austerity sentiment throughout Quebec.

André talked about the way that Québec solidaire became a force of attraction for student leaders of the 2012 Quebec spring movement to join the party: they brought with them a wealth of experience from that movement into long-term involvement in QS riding associations and other political structures. And yet, the main leadership of the student movement is officially committed to a non-partisan position even in relation to radical left parties.

And although many prominent trade union leaders have run as QS candidates, there has yet to be a real shift at the base. QS’s goal is not just votes at election time but to attract workers and students into the active life of the party, which aims to be “a party of the ballot and of the street.”

But André also spoke of the real challenges for students today in trying to recreate the “Quebec Spring” movement of 2012 and to take it further when the labour movement is not

The spark and the flame

Another “Rage Against the System: Marxism 2015:” panel on “Quebec and Austerity” took the discussion further about the relationship between the student movement and the labour movement in Quebec.

The panel included Marc-Édouard Joubert, with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Montreal local, and Vice-president of the Montreal Labour Council (FTQ), and two militants from the CEGEP de l’Outaouais, Laurence Lauzon and Valerie Villmaire.

Marc-Édouard believes that the formation of the Front Commun with every major public sector union in Quebec does present a very real prospect for a climax of struggle when many reach legal strike positions in September and October. He talked about the union-led demonstration against austerity last November 29 as an important sign of the ability to mobilize civil society against the provincial budget (even though some students felt that demonstration was too staged and didn’t appear to be raising the stakes in the movement) and then about the student-led April 2 demonstration as an escalation that was able to mobilize unions and social movements.

He recalled that unions that engage in illegal strike actions face heavy fines, so it’s hard to get past the limitations of legal negotiations. But he said there are a number of other current labour struggles that show increasing pressure from the base of unions on their leadership, and that the CEGEP teachers who voted to engage in a “greve sociale” or “social strike” against austerity as a whole without the official support of their leadership have shown another option for resistance. He said the student strike of 2012 had an impact on what many trade unionists feel willing to do, and that despite the lack of a single large demonstration May Day will see several local “economic disruptions” that are not being publicized ahead of time.

Valerie began her remarks by saying that it’s not clear to many of her generation whether the students actually won in 2012. The victory against the hike and getting ride of the Liberals was short-lived, and many are now not sure whether

they’re just starting from scratch again, no further ahead. At her school, in the sparsely-populated Outaouais region, the strike vote was lost even though there were two options: the first, for a one-week strike with option to extend, lost by a significant margin; the second, for a one-day strike on May Day, lost narrowly at 53 per cent. Of the 28 CEGEPS where teachers voted to engage in strike action on May 1, only 9 will be struck by students.

At the CEGEP de l’Outaouais, a scholl of 5,000, 78 per cent of the student population voted, but it was only by referendum vote, in sharp contrast to the method of mass student assemblies that was the strength of 2012. Valerie and Laurence felt the vote was too rushed and did not provide the time for debate and one-on-one conversations that took place in 2012 and at some other schools this time. The university in the region, UQO, which has a number of faculties on strike, has been holding meetings and teach-in’s every day in public spaces on campus. All told, 66 campuses voted in favour of “reconduction” (reaffirming initial strike votes and extending the strike.)

Laurence, also at the CEGEP de l’Outaouais, said the debate is not about austerity but about the tactic of the strike. The student union there is firmly anti-austerity, and not trying to stifle debate, but there is a sense that this is not leading to a real social strike as opposed to trying to connect with a labour movement that could be largely focussed on narrow union demands. Students are being asked to put their faith that it will lead to a broader fight against austerity, as they themselves take action against this very broad agenda without immediate demands of their own.

Also, for the more radicalized end of the student movement, who see that austerity is a symptom of neo-liberalism or even capitalism, the strike tactic seems reactive and short-term (and it must be remembered that student strikes are not uncommon events in Quebec). How can the movement deepen long-term consciousness? And how do you defend the public sector without defending a state that runs it with inefficiencies, an

ready to follow them. He feared it was a tactical error to try to do so this spring, and that the students are becoming increasingly isolated.

He acknowledged that there is no guarantee that the fall will be a better time to win support from unions, and that the 75,000 people who rallied in the streets of Montreal on April 2 showed that clearly “there is something there right now,” as does the vote by teachers at 28 out of 40 CEGEPS (colleges) to engage in an illegal strike against austerity on May Day. He deplored the decision by unions not to hold a single, large, national May Day rally in Montreal this year for the first time in three decades.

Québec solidaire shares the challenge of the anti-austerity movement itself: to sink deeper and wider roots into all the regions of Quebec, it’s campuses, and its workplaces.



QS leaders elected to the National Assembly: Amir Khadir, Françoise David and Manon Massé

inability to deliver services to those who need it most, and ultimately repression against those who want to restructure it?

Laurence and Valerie posed a question that many students are probably asking: how do we stop repeating the past and go forward? When are the victories just band-aid solutions that seem to go nowhere and when are they ones that push us through the wound? The fact that the next steps for the movement as a whole in Quebec will not answer these questions is less important than the fact that many Quebec students and workers are asking them.

Marc-Édouard, Laurence and Valerie are all committed to finding ways to engage that discussion in their communities in a broad and patient way. It may require creative strategies, like a picnic against austerity in the Gatineau-Outaouais region that engages both students and regional unionists and community activists who have organized many recent local protests against austerity in recent months with record numbers in a small community. In 2012, neighbourhood organizations in Montreal did similar things to keep momentum going during the summer months and to engage the community beyond students.

In workplaces and unions throughout Quebec there may or may not be informal networks to make that same discussion happen towards the fall. But that will be the challenge in making the Front Commun real for rank and file workers catching up with the questions students are asking. The answers can only be collective, through the experience of the months ahead, which is not predictable.

What is predictable is that the ferment against austerity in Quebec will not dissipate any time soon, and the important thing is to find ways to follow it and be engaged with it, within Quebec or from afar.

Did the students win in 2012? They won much more than a victory against a particular tuition hike or a particular government: they won the right to ask the right questions.

Harper and Oliver deliver Bay St. budget

The lapdogs at the Canadian Taxpayer Federation were quick to praise the Tories for having the “discipline to get back to a balanced budget.” But this discipline was imposed entirely on the 99% and our planet, in order to benefit the 1%.

To hide this wealth transfer the Tories had to resort to their usual doublespeak, as part of balancing the budget—which Finance Minister Joe Oliver says is “the only way to ensure long-term prosperity for Canadians.” But the Tories neither balanced the books in any arithmetic sense, nor did they release a budget in terms of an accurate portrayal of costs and cuts to people and the planet.

Corporate doublespeak

The Tories are delivering spending and cuts with double-speak in an attempt to hide their true meanings:

- * a \$750 “Public Transit Fund” that will promote privatization
- * \$1.2 billion tax cut for “small business” that applies to any corporation making less than \$10 million annually
- * \$8 billion “universal childcare benefit” that does nothing to ensure universal childcare and that will primarily benefit those without childcare costs
- * \$12 billion increase in “defence,” which will be used to launch offensive campaigns around the world like wars that have emboldened extremists in Libya and Iraq, or training (including of Nazis) in Ukraine
- * “savings” by increasing the TFSA contribution to \$10,000, which will disproportionately benefit the rich and cost the federal government as much as \$15 billion annually
- * \$27 billion in health care transfers to the provinces over the next five years, which is actually a \$36 billion cut

‘Balance’

The Tories hide all these gifts to Bay Street in the language of “balancing the budget,” a trick learned from Liberal Paul Martin when he savaged public spending in order to reduce corporate taxes and inflate military spending in the 1990s. Unifor economist Jim Stanford exposed the latest corporate arithmetic:

“It is entirely dependent on a fiscal sleight-of-hand. There is a \$1.4 billion reported surplus. But that’s only because the government diverted \$2 billion out of its normal \$3 billion contingency reserve (apparently things are so stable in the world economy these days there’s no need anymore for so much symbolic “protection”). They siphoned \$2.1 billion from the GM shares. And then perhaps most offensively of all, they raided \$3.4 billion from the annual operating surplus of the EI system. (That surplus is created by the denial of benefits to over 60 per cent of unemployed Canadians; the appropriate response, especially with growing layoffs around the country, would be to fix that problem -- not raid the EI cookie jar.) That makes a total of \$7.5 billion in shell game transactions. Without those three fiscal tricks, the reported balance would be a \$6.1 billion deficit -- not a \$1.4 billion surplus.”

Budget for people and the planet

Not only is the budget not balanced, but it’s hardly a budget. Despite the hundreds of pages in the document, what’s most shocking is what’s not included. As CUPE summarizes,

“There’s nothing to address the real priorities of working Canadians:

- * Nothing to create good jobs, reduce inequality or boost the economy.
- * Nothing to improve retirement security or public pensions, such as the CPP, or to improve Employment Insurance.
- * Nothing to improve public health care.
- * Nothing to increase the availability of affordable child care for families.
- * Nothing to increase tax fairness or reduce inequality.”

Then there’s the climate budget that the Tories continue to unbalance through their billion dollar subsidies to the tar sands. There’s no accounting for the economic costs of climate change—which are projected to cost \$5 billion in 2020 and up to \$91 billion per by 2050—let alone the current damage that can’t be reduced to dollars in what’s being done to Indigenous communities through tar sands and fracking. While the more than 500 pages of the budget mentions oil more than 100 times, there is not one mention of First Nations or climate change.

There is \$80 million for “safety and environmental protection and greater engagement with Canadians,” but this is given to the National Energy Board—infamous for rubber-stamping pipelines, ignoring safety and environmental protection and disregarding the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations. And the budget continues cuts to the Coast Guard, despite the recent spill in Vancouver.

The only way to ensure long-term social and economic prosperity for the 99% is to balance the climate budget with good green jobs and support for Indigenous communities leading the climate justice movement. This requires disciplining the 1% and their political representatives.

ANALYSIS



The roots of Al Shaabab

by HASSAN MAHAMDALLIE

The killing of 148 students at Kenya’s Garissa University College by Somali Islamist insurgents Al Shabaab marks the latest episode of bloodletting in a cycle of violence into which the region has been locked for some time.

Frequently, commentators have announced Al Shabaab to have been finally routed by African Union AMISON “peace-keeping” forces and US military strikes, only to see the group bounce back and launch attacks inside Somalia and across the border into Kenya.

History

There is an historical precedence. At the turn of the 20th century Somali nationalist Sayyid Muhammad Abdullah Hassan led a 20-year holy war against British colonialism. Hassan’s aim was to unite the different clans, kick out the colonists and achieve self-determination. Dubbed “the mad Mullah” by the British, he was in fact a military genius adept at guerrilla warfare and inflicted heavy casualties on the British. In 1910 the British, desperate to avoid their own soldiers being killed, launched a proxy war to get rid of him once and for all.

They armed “friendly” clans, who instead of taking on Hassan descended into bloody feuding and banditry, tipping Somalia into utter chaos. This resulted in a terrible famine that by 1912 had killed a third of the population. Hassan’s forces were only finally crushed in 1920 when Winston Churchill, Britain’s secretary of state for war and air, ordered the newly formed RAF to bomb the insurgents.

UIC

Fast forward to late 1990s. Out of the chaos and suffering of the Somali civil war, made worse by a botched UN and US military intervention (the Black Hawk Down saga), arose various Islamist groups. They formed the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), and set up a rudimentary (albeit brutal) system of government based on existing clan structures overlaid by Sharia courts.

For the first time in a decade there was some kind of stability and the beginnings of civil society in the areas run by the UIC, covering the capital Mogadishu, south and central Somalia.

The UIC contained moderates as well as hardliners, but we can only speculate as to whether elements could have formed the basis for a renewal of Somali society. Post 9/11, Bush decided that the UIC were the equivalent of Al Qaida – they weren’t – and had to be crushed, without putting US boots on the ground. As in the early 1900s “friendly” warlords were armed, this time by the US to take on the UIC but were defeated.

But in 2006 its leaders made the mistake of provoking Ethiopia, the sub imperialist power in the Horn of Africa.

Al-Shabaab

The US gave the nod to the Ethiopians to invade Somalia on its behalf, bombing from the air and then occupying what was left of Mogadishu with 14,000 troops. They drove the UIC out into the bush where some regrouped, returning in more extreme form as al-Shabaab. The brutality of the occupying force and the insurgency it provoked saw the civilian population tipped into a huge humanitarian crisis.

Meantime the US was cultivating former Somali warlords and corrupt politicians at various “peace conferences” before anointing them as the transitional government in exile. Rival factions had their militia weaponised by the US and supported by mercenaries who weren’t that interested in distinguishing between civilians and insurgents.

Despite the fortune poured into Somalia to halt Al Shabaab most people, particularly in the south, continue to live in dire poverty. Life expectancy is around 50 years, among the worst in the entire world.

The escalating brutality that accompanied the Ethiopian/US occupation – detention, torture, civilian deaths, drone strikes, special forces operations etc – served as a recruiting sergeant for Al Shabaab. It turned into an African version of the Taliban – battle-hardened, experienced in hit-and-run tactics and now ideologically aligned with Al Qaida, and more recently Isis.

There is also a large Somali population in Kenya, originally refugees pushed over the border since the civil war period of the late 1980s onwards. Young Somalis particularly are looked upon by the Kenyan government as potential terrorists and harassed by the police and the army – driving some of them into the arms of Al Shabaab. This process was accelerated when Kenya joined Ethiopia in 2011 and also invaded Somalia.

In one sense Al Shabaab is only a reflection of the policy by the US and its regional proxies, that violence is somehow the solution to the tragedy facing the long-suffering Somali people and the families and survivors of the Garissa massacre.

This is shared from SW (UK)

Revolutionary greetings from Kobanê

With warm regards of workers from Canton of Kobanê, the Canton of revolution, resistance and martyrs, on first of May, the commemorating day of struggle and resistance of Workers against tyranny and oppression, and exploitation of capitalism!

The revolution of Rojava, was a historical departure point in workers’ and oppressed people’s struggle in the middle east and all over the world, to repossess the political authority; and it was the revolution of women, youth and workers to establish a new system based on transition of power to people as the true owners of it.

As well as our resistance against ISIS-terrorists and their international supporters is not only to protect our people’s human life and dignity, but also is the resistance to defend the achievements of revolution and self-demonstration-system which is based on radical democracy and elimination

of hierarchical organizations.

Now, through heroic battles of our comrades in “protect units of people” (YPG) and “protect units of women” (YPJ), terrorists are driven out from the city, but attacks on suburbs areas and blocking of the canton’s roads is still continuing. Our resistance has entered a new more difficult phase and that is the phase of restoring social life to Kobanê, under attack and economical and logistical siege, such situation in which more than 80 per cent of the city’s structures and vital infrastructures have been destroyed.

The history of class struggle shows that the union of the workers has no geographical boundaries, as we recognize our resistance against savage terrorism and its international sponsors, as the resistance in representation of all people throughout the world. International solidarity of workers, is the historical necessity and a material field to defend the class achievements

and to struggle shoulder by shoulder against domination and oppression of capitalism.

We, the workers and association of the Canton of Kobanê, commemorating workers’ and oppressed people’s libertarian and egalitarian struggles all over the world, and appreciating your support and solidarity with our resistance against terrorist attacks, invite our worker comrades, syndicates, trade unions and all the libertarians, to participate the practical solidarity with the revolution of Rojava and the resistance of Kobanê, and invite you to join us in this historical situation to protect the achievements of the revolution!

Long live libertarian struggles of people around the world!

Long live international union of the workers of the world!

This is shared from the Administration of the Kobanê Canton



Good Kill exposes drone terrorism

MOVIE

Movie: *Good Kill*
Director: Andrew Niccol
Reviewed by: Jesse McLaren

While American Sniper glorifies the Iraq War, Good Kill exposes the brutality of drone warfare from Afghanistan to Yemen.

Writer/Director Andrew Niccol has made a number of dystopian films about individuals trying to escape societies dominated by repressive technology.

In *Gattaca*, Ethan Hawke tries to make it to space, in a society where DNA imperfections are used to restrict career opportunities. In *The Truman Show*, reality TV has become an entire city watching Jim Carey, who gradually realizes his world and tries to escape. In *In Time*, lifespan has become actual currency, and a working class Justin Timerlake fights to overturn its unequal distribution. But in *Good Kill*, the dystopian world of drone warfare is already here.

Game of drones

Niccol shows the absurd reality of drone pilots, wearing flight suits while they sit safely in their cubicles, assassinating people with the push of a button and then returning to the comfort of their homes. Ethan Hawke plays a former fighter pilot who becomes increasingly dissilusioned with his new

job as a drone pilot, killing in the deserts of Afghanistan from the deserts of Nevada.

Drone warfare is increasingly removing those doing the killing form the environment of war at the same time as it is expanding the list of possible victims—now in countries not even declared war zones, and targets based on patterns of behaviour and “pre-emptive self-defense.”

Recently Obama apologized for the “fog of war” that resulted in the mistaken drone killing of two Western hostages in Pakistan. But drone warfare has allowed the US to bomb Pakistan at will, without formally being at war, and Obama did not apologize for the countless Pakistanis killed through dones--both intentially and unintentionally.

But despite the attempt to sanitize murder through technology, it still has an impact on those pushing the button. Ethan Hawke identifies with those he is watching, but his only interaction with them is carrying out orders to kill and count the body parts. As a result he goes through the series of options available to soldiers.

Spectrum of resistance

He initially adopts a cynical attitude to the futility of war: when a cop asks “how’s your war on terror going” he responds, “kinda like your war on

drugs.” When he accidentally kills a child his commander instructs him to block it from his mind saying “you just gotta keep compartmentalizing... I don’t want you getting gun shy.”

When this fails he retreats from his family into alcohol, unable to explain or justify his job, while asking to be reassigned to his former riskier job as a fighter pilot.

While his more racist colleagues have no problem killing, he finds support from a newer soldier (Zoe Kravitz), who gets the most anti-war lines of the film and encourages him towards the most difficult option: resistance.

Of course Hollywood can’t bring itself to make a truly anti-war film. *Good Kill* reinforces myths of the passive Muslim women in need of violent white saviours, and nostalgia for “good war” before drones. But by Hollywood standards it’s a good alternative to the glorification of war, showing instead the terrorism of war and the potential of soldiers to resist.

Faced with war resisters, the military hope that drones will remove the human element, but even this technology can fail. To paragraph Bertold Brecht, “General your drone is a powerful vehicle, it can unleash death from the sky. But it has one defect: it needs a pilot.”

MOVIE

Austerity and the process of struggle

Movie: *Two Days, One Night*
Director: Dardennes Brothers
Reviewed by Jesse McLaren

After a woman returns from a medical leave of absence due to stress, she discovers that her boss put her fate to a vote: rather than welcome her back her co-workers voted to each receive a 1000 Euro bonus. Having won a recount, she now has the rest of the weekend-two days and one night-to convince her co-workers to forfeit their bonus so she can have her job back.

This is the plot of *Two Days, One Night*, the excellent film by the Dardennes brothers, which won an Oscar nomination for Marion Cotillard.

The writers/producers/director duo have made a number of films about working class life in Belgium, including immigration, unemployment and anti-fascist resistance.

In their latest film they show the impact of austerity on a small community, and the process of struggle of one woman trying to win her job back.

Filmed like a documentary in a

simple style, the viewer feels right next to the main character on her struggle to win back her job.

Capitalism and austerity

Though focused on one person the themes of the film are universal: the capitalist drive to exploitation, squeezing profits out of workers and firing them when they’re no longer needed; the way in which bosses pit workers against each other, which disproportionatly affects oppressed groups like women, racialized groups and disabled people; and the faulty choices of austerity that demand one section or another of the 99% make sacrifices without ever questioning the profits of the 1%.

The fact that this happens at a workplace making solar panels is a reminder that while changing what society produces is necessary to solve the climate crisis, this has to be combined with changing how production is organized and who controls it.

The process of struggle

In a typical Hollywood film there would be one evil enemy and one born hero who in one rousing speech rallies everyone to victory, solving

all the world’s problems. Not so in this film.

Instead it shows the process of struggle, both internal and collective. Cotillard has just returned from stress leave and being told her coworkers voted against her, and needs encouragement from family and friends to fight. She battles her own self-doubts and needs to build her confidence over time, with peaks and troughs.

Through this process she discovers the analogy the revolutionary Leon Trotsky made years ago: every workplace has one reactionary worker who will always scab on their coworkers and can never be won over, one progressive willing to fight from the start, and three in the middle who can be won to either side.

Cotillard finds immediate support from a few, violent hostility from one, and a large number in the middle. She has to win the argument for solidarity over narrow self-interest, a process that not only develops her own self-confidence and experience but also changes others in unexpected ways.

At the end the lesson is not one of immediate victory or loss, but of the individual and collective potential of struggle.

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Jason Kenney, Warlord

Welcome to the first installment in a new occasional series starring Canada’s unloveable Warlord, Minister of Defence Jason Kenney.

Unloveable is, in Kenney’s case, not an insult but a statement of fact. He is on record having sworn an oath of celibacy, only fitting for a man who is more Catholic than the Pope. But more about his religious fervour in future episodes. On to Kenney’s lust for war.

Iraq

Since his appointment to the Defence portfolio in early February, Kenney has been revealing in Canada’s holy crusade against the Saracens.

In the beginning, Canada’s ill-defined military adventure in Iraq was purported to consist of a six-month foray to train somebody to do something, and that it all was supposed to end in April. At the time of his promotion to Warlord, Jason Kenney all but admitted that these terms—six months, do some training, in and out—was not enough for him.

“I think our orientation on this is pretty clear, we want to play a significant role there. The precise nature of our contribution in the past six months would not necessarily be the basis of an extension, we have to look at that very carefully, but our basic position is clear: we think Canada has a role to play in fighting this terrorist organization.”

Note to Generalissimo Kenney: repeated use of the word “clear” in the midst of gibberish does not make it so.

As the deadline for this excursion to Iraq neared, the “clear” nature of the involvement became even murkier. Canadian Sgt. Andrew Doiron was killed by “friendly fire” on the front lines of the Iraq war. Doiron was killed by Kurdish allies—and three others Canadian soldiers wounded—when they showed up unannounced at a checkpoint and responded to a hail in Arabic instead of English.

The Kurds report that the unmarked car carrying the Canadians was coming from the war zone, not the rear. And their actions were in clear violation of protocols, resulting in the shooting.

In response Jason Kenney was less than clear, as usual, saying that Doiron’s death had “nothing to do with combat.” Isn’t it odd that getting shot to death in the middle of a war zone has nothing to do with combat? Kenney promised an inquiry, but the terms and the timing of said investigation were left vague.

Syria

Predictably the six-month deadline for Canada’s involvement in Iraq came and went, with the Tories using their parliamentary majority to extend the mission. But that wasn’t enough for Harper and his Warlord: they had to get their war on in the nightmarish quagmire of Syria as well. And with the extension of the war, the feeble pretense of this being a training mission was kicked to the curb. This was to be active warfare starting with air strikes. Unlike previous Iraq airstrikes, the target was not a dump truck.

The problem for Warlord Kenney is that a majority of Canadians (55 per cent according to an April poll) oppose going to war in Syria. And only a dwindling minority (39 per cent) support extending the military intervention in Iraq.

To convince Canadians of the need to bomb Syria, Kenney told the press: “There are only five coalition partners doing air strikes against ISIL terror targets in eastern Syria. The United States is the only one of those five that has precision-guided munitions. That is a capability the Royal Canadian Air Force has, so one of the reasons our allies have requested we expand our air sorties into eastern Syria is because with those precision-guided munitions our CF-18s carry, we can be more impactful in the strikes we make against ISIL.”

One problem: Kenney’s argument was complete bullshit.

Sadly, both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates possess “smart” bombs. Worse, even the somnambulist Parliament Hill press corps knew it was bullshit, and called Kenney out.

Did Kenney admit his mistake and apologize? Hey, didn’t I tell you up front that Jason Kenney is more Catholic than the Pope? That makes him even more infallible. No, the fault lay with the military brass. The Warlord explained, on the floor of the house, that he “wasn’t given accurate information” by DND.

Jason Kenney is unable to be clear about Canada’s deepening involvement in the “war on terror”, because any such clarity would put him starkly at odds with most people across Canada. He has to use gibbersih instead of argument. When that fails, he uses outright lies. When caught in the lie, he lies again to shift the blame onto underlings.

Ukraine

This in not an isolated incident for the Warlord, it is his modus operandi. Remember how, in March, Kenney breathlessly informed the House that Canadian frigates in the Caspian Sea, part of NATO’s intervention in Ukraine’s civil war, had been “buzzed” by Russian planes and confronted by warships. It was front page news, and somehow justifies sending Canadian soldiers to train and advise the Ukrainian military.

What didn’t make front page news: NATO officials said nothing of the kind ever happened. Kenney lied again, to promote the war.

So now 200 Canadian soldiers are headed to Ukraine, where Dmitri Yarosh, head of the neo-Nazi Right Sector party has just been appointed special advisor to the chief of Ukraine’s military, and fascist units are known to be integrated into the army. Asked whether Canada would end up giving training and advice to fascists, Kenney said: “We’re not going to be in the business of training ad hoc militias. We will only be training units of the Ukrainian National Guard and army recognized by the government of Ukraine.”

The Warlord lies again. The new budget rewards him with \$11.8 billion in additional military spending.

WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

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

Socialism and workers' power

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

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

Oppression

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

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

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

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

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

Internationalism

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

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

Elections and democracy

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

Reform and revolution

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

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The Revolutionary Party

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

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



Activist calendar
movement events

May Day Events

Vancouver: 5pm Clark Park
Toronto: 5pm Nathan Phillips
Ottawa: 4pm at Human Rights
Monument

Events across Quebec:
visit <http://nonauxhausses.org/2015/04/12/1er-mai-calendrier/>

WE > TAR SANDS

ACTION FOR JOBS, JUSTICE
AND THE CLIMATE

July 3 - 5 across Canada

organized by 350.org

visit 350.org/july
for more information

International Socialist events



Sunday May 3, 5pm
North Toronto
call 647 869 7651 for details



Anti-war study group
Monday May 4 @ 6:30 pm
OISE – 252 Bloor St West –
Room 3311



Tuesday May 19, 7pm
Steelworkers Hall: 25 Cecil St, Toronto

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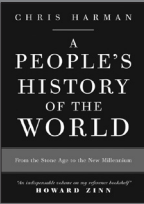
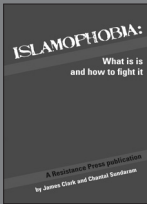
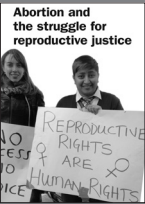
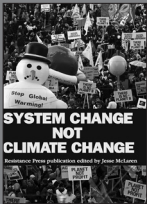
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SOUTH KOREA STRIKE

by KYUNG-NOK CHUN, SEOUL

Some 270,000 workers in South Korea took part in a one-day general strike on Friday of late April.

They are members of the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Some 100,000 took to the streets nationwide.

Strikers included teachers and public service workers. They defied threats by the state that it would prosecute any government employee who took part in the walkout.

President Park Geun-hye wants to make it easier to sack workers, cut over-time pay and public service pensions.

The government has been hit by a series of scandals. Prime minister Lee Wan-koo was forced to step down this week after being accused of accepting bribes. He was in office for just two months.

Last week's general strike is the opening shot of a long hoped for fightback.

The usually more moderate Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) has withdrawn from talks over the attacks on workers.

There are now plans to follow up the strike with a joint KCTU and FKTU rally in late May and another general strike in June. But bigger, more drawn-out strikes are needed.

Revolutionary socialists and union militants have to push to translate the anger at the bottom into initiatives that can pressure union leaders to act.

CONFERENCE

Around 130 people took part in *Rage Against the System: Marxism 2015*, the annual conference of the International Socialists in Toronto

In the opening plenary on Friday night, "Stopping Harper's Agenda," Indigenous activist Vanessa Gray exposed the environmental racism of tar sands, social justice activist Shaila Kibria-Carter warned about the threat of Islamophobia, labour activist Rob Fairley stressed the importance of the Save Canada Post campaign to undermine Harper, and reproductive justice activist Carolyn Egan discussed the World March of women and the July climate justice mobilizations.

The opening panel also fundraised for Vanessa and her organization Aamjiwnaang and Sarnia Against Pipelines.

The Saturday plenaries opened with activists from Spain, Greece and Quebec solidaire discussing anti-austerity movements and radical left alternatives.

There were then a dozen discussions on struggles against exploitation, oppression, imperialism and climate chaos, and a lunch panel discussion on the NDP and "strategic voting."

Saturday night featured the Toronto premiere screening of "Fennario: The Good Fight," with Q&A with playwright David Fennario, followed by socialist hip hop with MC Mohammad Ali.

On Sunday, 30 participants joined interactive workshops on skills for socialists.

TORONTO RALLIES FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS



by VALERIE LANNON

In three separate actions workers in Toronto rallied on April 15 for \$15 and fairness, which launched the campaign across Ontario as part of a global day of action to raise the minimum wage.

In the US with fast food workers walked off the job in 230 cities demanding \$15 and the right to form a union. As McDonald's worker Katherine Cruz said at the rally in Boston, "We world really hard to make 8.75 and not be able to live. I feel like we should all—not only McDonald's, not only fast-food workers—everyone that lives off minimum wage should make more, so we can all support our families, support ourselves."

The actions included a die-in at a McDonald's in New York to say that black lives matter and workers lives matter, with minimum wage disproportionately affecting people of colour.

There were solidarity actions in 40 cities around the world, including protests in Dublin and London and strikes in Italy and Amsterdam.

In Ontario workers launched the \$15 and Fairness campaign, with over a dozen actions in 10 cities across the province. In Toronto there were three actions today. SEIU workers rallied outside McDonald's headquarters in solidarity with workers in the US, and McDonald's staff brought out smoothies in support. At Pearson International Airport workers with Unifor, CUPE, Teamsters and PSAC united to demand \$15 and fairness. Leaflets at the airport explained that for airport workers fairness means proper

advanced notice for all shift, a minimum number of sick days, the same benefits for part-time/temporary/casual/contact as permanent full-time workers, and an end to contracting out. And about 250 energetic people from union, non-union and student backgrounds attended today's rally in front of the office of the Ontario Ministry of Labour, organized by the Workers Action Centre.

Toronto rally

Outside the Ministry of Labour, OFL President Sid Ryan pointed out that hundreds of thousands of people make only minimum wages, so labour supports this campaign. He looked to Seattle's success with the \$15 minimum wage campaign, and said this rate should be the absolute minimum.

David Anderson, from UNITE H.E.R.E. Local 75 spoke about how some youth work to survive, while some work in order to go to school and improve their lives. Either way, the minimum wage is too low.

Deb Henry is a UNIFOR member who works at a Metro supermarket. She read out the formal definition of "precarious", showing how it perfectly describes the life of many workers. She stated, "We need decent, stable and enough hours of work. Instead there are no guaranteed hours so how do you plan your life or get another job? There is a struggle to find child care because of the unpredictable hours. It used to be normal to have full time jobs and this should be our right."

Alastair Woods from the Canadian Federation of Students said "Following

our dreams has turned into a nightmare, with high tuition costs and precarious jobs. We are told we are being unrealistic and offensive. But what is really offensive is precarious work and the low minimum wage. We need to build a society that is stable and equitable."

Jim Deutsch, a member of Health Providers Against Poverty noted, "Income has a huge impact on health, and neoliberalism increases inequality." In supporting the \$15 and Fairness campaign, Deutsch condemned the minimum wages paid in health facilities.

Jim Anders of OPSEU reminded the crowd, "An injury to one is an injury to all. So support this campaign because every worker will benefit, and the bosses can't divide us. The campaign is also important to make it easier to join a union."

Marta Jaramillo, a new immigrant to Canada and a member of the Workers Action Centre told the crowd about her first job in Canada where there was no protection, and where the boss said her complaints would mean she wouldn't get another job. After she was fired, she made a claim with the Ministry of Labour, which took her side. "But the boss still hasn't paid. Often there are no penalties."

Socialist hip hop artist Mohammed Ali got the crowd going with his rap about precarious work.

The rally ended with notice that some folks were going inside the government building to present a clock to the ministry, "because it is time for change!"

Visit 15andfairness.org

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Austerity in Ontario

A huge fight is brewing between the provincial government, teachers and the Ontario public sector.

The Liberal government tried to put a progressive gloss on its campaign in the last provincial election. The NDP chose not to rally around issues such as a \$14 minimum wage and voters turned away from them, particularly in Toronto where they lost three seats. This led to a majority Liberal government with Kathleen Wynn as premier.

Budget cuts

The true colours of the Liberal Party are now being seen and it is pressing hard to deliver a "balanced budget" by 2017, doing away with the deficit in a ruthless manner.

This is the method and the mantra of neo-liberals all over the globe, and in this province the government wants to cut \$2 billion from the budget this year.

This is of course on the backs of the people of the province through cuts to services, and to those who work for the province through layoffs, privatization and wage freezes.

Along with other sectors this will have a devastating effect on health care spending, particularly affecting hospitals in the province.

The Ontario Health Coalition has pointed this out in recent policy papers and announcements of drastic changes. The Ontario Nurses Association has shown that over 60,000 nursing hours have already been lost.

Teachers

The provincial government is also taking on the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the teachers unions. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) has already called for rolling strikes, after months of negotiations that have gone nowhere. Teachers in Durham and Sudbury have already struck and others are prepared to go out. They are concerned about rising class sizes which will have a major effect on the quality of education and of course will lead to job losses.

Teachers have taken job action in British Columbia because of the deterioration

in education. Smaller class sizes have been shown to improve learning. I remember very well classes with over 40 students when I was in public school and we don't want to go back to those days if we are interested in quality education and the attention that individual students deserve. The teachers are fighting for the community. They went into the profession because they care about the students and that's why they are striking.

Public sector workers

The same is happening to public sector workers who are employed by the government. Spending is increasing by only 1.4 per cent which is really a freeze when inflation is taken into account. OPSEU has been calling rallies and demonstrations pointing out the effects on public services. There is the possibility of an all out strike later in the year and the effect on the community has been front and centre in their campaign.

The other piece of the neo-liberal agenda that we are seeing is the privatization of public assets, a hallmark of neo-liberal governments. The Wynn Liberals intend to sell off their majority share in Hydro One, which will line the pockets of private business and undoubtedly lead to higher costs for the consumer.

CUPE is taking this on. Public ownership must be maintained and CUPE is fighting this with strong community support. Once an asset like this is gone, it's gone for good.

We have also just been through two tough strikes by education workers at the University of Toronto and York. Teaching assistants and contract workers took on both universities because of the impact of the cuts to education. They felt their students were feeling the brunt of the attacks and of course their working conditions and wages were being affected as well. These were hard fought strikes that made gains.

We have to continue to provide the solidarity necessary to push back and win when public sector workers fight back.



Socialist Worker

CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW

On April 11, tens of thousands joined the Act on Climate march in Quebec city, territory of the Huron-Wendat, demanding climate justice.

The previous week the climate justice movement in Quebec scored a victory in stopping TransCanada from using Cacouna as a terminal for its Energy East pipeline. Days previously an oil spill in Vancouver highlighted the urgency of transitioning off the oil economy.

On April 11, tens of thousands marched in Quebec City ahead of a meeting of the Premiers. Police gave an estimate of 25,000 people but there were likely 10,000 more, an endless sea of humanity.

Organized by dozens of organizations it included 100 buses bringing people from across Canada and Quebec.

Quebec

Quebec's history of resistance to national oppression has made it the site of the largest social movements across Canada.

In April 2001 Quebec City was the site of the largest anti-globalization protest in Canada, when 70,000 people from across the country protested the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

In 2003 Montreal had the largest anti-war protest of a quarter of a million people, which helped stop Canada from going to war in Iraq.

Then in 2005 a mass student strike stopped an attack on education.

In 2012 students went on strike again, and made links with other social movements. On Earth Day, April 22, of that year 300,000 protested austerity and attacks on the environment.

Since then former student strike leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois has



helped build the climate justice movement in Quebec against the Energy East pipeline.

The April 11 protest took place in the context of the latest student strike, but also of rising indigenous sovereignty movements.

Indigenous

As a member of the Huron-Wendat nation said, welcoming the demonstrators, "I remember a march in 2013 for Idle No More when we had 71 people. Now we are 25,000." At the end of the march people held up red squares (the symbol of the Quebec student movement) to form a human thermometer representing the rising temperatures.

Like the People's Climate March last fall (which brought 400,000 people to New York City), this march

united the 99% for climate justice. As a speaker from the Femmes Autochtones du Quebec explained, "The earth doesn't belong to us, we belong to the earth. We need to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We need you and you need us. We say no to tar sands, and pipelines."

There were Indigenous groups from across the country, including the Yinka Dene Alliance on the west coast and communities from ground zero of the tar sands.

As Melina Massimo-Laboucan explained, "If Energy East goes ahead there will be more destruction, more poisoned water, more violations of Indigenous rights. We need to stop tar sands, stop Energy East, stop Kinder Morgan pipeline, and win a better world for all."

Alternatives

As Stephane Guilbault from Equiterre said, tar sands proponents claim the climate justice movement says no to everything. "But we say yes to public transportation, yes to retrofitting buildings, yes to jobs before profits."

There were contingents from the labour movement, including Steelworkers from Toronto, and speakers from the FTQ, CSQ, CSN and others. As the speaker from the FTQ said, "economic development can't happen without regard to everything else. We need to say no to the tar sands and stop climate change. We want sustainable development that supports communities, so that workers aren't held hostage. We need to invest in green jobs and support communities through this transition."

Ontario premier Wynne and Quebec premier Couillard have agreed to a cap-and-trade deal that will do nothing to stop global warming, while the BC premier skipped the meeting to speak to the World Bank and IMF about her carbon tax—an equally ineffective strategy to deal with a crisis rooted in capitalism.

The mass climate march exposed these inadequate measures and also targeted the Harper government, with "Stop Harper" placards throughout the crowd.

It was a real missed opportunity for the NDP, who should be exposing both Liberals and Tories and calling for green jobs not tar sands.

But the climate justice movement is shaking up federal politics. While the Liberals and NDP initially

supported Energy East, the movement has burst a leak in their positions—but for different reasons.

The Liberals, the twin party of Canadian capitalism, have said that Energy East lacks "social licence" and would like to convince Bay Street they are the party that can win it back.

The NDP, associated with the labour movement, have opposed some pipelines from a jobs perspective. As their motion to the House of Commons a few months ago said, "the proposed Port of Gros-Cacouna oil terminal, which will be used for the sole purpose of exporting unprocessed Canadian oil, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy through the loss of well-paid jobs, will constitute an unacceptable environmental threat to the St. Lawrence ecosystem, including the beluga whale population, and therefore, is not consistent with the principle of sustainable development, and must be rejected."

This shows the NDP can be pushed to oppose the pipelines, but also highlights their contradictory position of counterposing the export of unprocessed oil with the domestic refining and use. This reinforces the false dichotomy between jobs and the environment, and ignores tar sands expansion. Local refineries are devastating for Indigenous communities like Aamjiwnaang, tar sands expansion drives climate chaos regardless of whether the oil is exported or not, and green alternatives promote far more jobs than the oil industry.

If the NDP campaigned to divert the billions invested in tar sands into green alternatives, they could be a megaphone for the movement and expose both Liberals and Tories as puppets for Big Oil.

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Adding to recent climate justice victories, mass opposition has stopped TransCanada from using Cacouna, Quebec as a terminal to take tar sands east through the Energy East pipeline.

Four months ago mass protests drove Kinder Morgan from taking tar sands west through Burnaby Mountain, at least for now. Then last month the mass movement against Keystone XL pushed Obama to veto the pipeline trying to take tar sands south.

Attention then shifted to TransCanada, which want to use its Energy East pipeline to pump more than a million barrels a day of tar sands oil east. Like the other pipeline proposals this would expand tar sands that destroy Indigenous communities and accelerate climate change that destroys the planet. In

addition, the proposed terminal in Cacouna, Quebec would devastate the local beluga whale population that is already endangered.

Opposition

Fearing similar opposition that has stalled other pipelines, TransCanada hired a public relations firm to fabricate "grassroots advocacy" to support its pipeline. But this failed.

As Andrea Harden-Donahue from the Council of Canadians summarized, "Thousands were mobilized to march several times in Cacouna against the port. Dozens of municipalities are calling for a review or rejecting the project. Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois' crowd funding effort for a local grassroots group opposing the pipeline hit over \$300,000 in a matter of days. A successful injunction

against the port driven by a number of Quebec environmental groups. There was a federal NDP motion against the port. Even Quebec and Albertan Premiers have said the port needs to be away from belugas. And clearly Quebec public opinion clearly not onside with the project."

As a result, TransCanada announced it will not use Cacouna, but will try to find another port—which will delay the pipeline by two years. TransCanada claims that "our decision was certainly not made because of opposition," as if oil executives miraculously grew a heart for beluga whales.

Clearly the opposition did work—otherwise TransCanada wouldn't have tried to manufacture its own movement. And clearly TransCanada doesn't care

about whales—otherwise TransCanada would cancel the terminal for Energy East in Red Head, New Brunswick, home to the endangered right whale.

The Tories and Liberals are driving full-steam towards climate chaos—including supporting tar sands and pipelines at the federal and provincial levels, while trying to criminalize opposition through Bill C-51. The NDP, under pressure from the movements, is slowly shifting its position.

The delay in Energy East comes at a time when oil prices have fallen and oil companies have fired hundreds of workers. At the same time there's growing awareness of the need and possibility of a just transition to green alternatives—which create far more jobs and don't destroy the planet on which we depend.